



**ASK THE MINISTER**  
Welcome Back  
PG. 5



**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**  
Who Will Cuddle Them  
PG. 11



**SAFE SCHOOLS**  
Peace Walk  
PG. 18



**HEALTHY AND ACTIVE**  
World Record Walk  
PG. 20

# School Advocate®

Serving School Councils and the Educational Community

## Are our schools making the grade? Only six per cent of Canadians gave them an "A."



The Canadian Education Association's latest research report, **Public Education in Canada: Facts, Trends and Attitudes** calls for a national dialogue to explore how our schools should adapt for the 21st century needs of all Canadian students.

### PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION IN CANADA

The Canadian Education Association is proud to release its Public Education in Canada: Facts, Trends and Attitudes report, which contains the results of our Public Attitudes Toward Education survey.

This is CEA's fourth such survey and is based on the opinions of over 2,400 Canadians collected between January and May 2007. Commentaries are also included in this report from educational leaders based on these survey results that help provide a context to issues such as student assessment, confidence in school systems, and educational change.

In addition to the survey results, this report contains a composite picture of education in Canada, with an overview of our

**Please see PUBLIC EDUCATION on pg. 3**



Photo Credit Mary Mother Ward Catholic Elementary School, DPCDSB

## Blazing the trail to a brave new world for parents Professor Debbie Pushor offers a new way of imaging schools

Mary Lee Halverson  
Special to School Advocate®

**Here's a quick exercise to try at home.** Close your eyes and visualize walking into your school. What do you see? Where are the parents and what are they doing?

Take your time. Really think about it.

Now imagine being in a room full of parents, all focusing on this same thing, together. The place is the Stong Dining Room, York University, and the person leading you through this exercise is Professor Debbie Pushor from the University of Saskatchewan. This was the scene at the recent People for

Education Conference, "Making Connections" held in Toronto on November 3, 2007.

From the very first words she spoke, Professor Pushor grabbed her audience's attention with her passionate, humorous, and knowledgeable delivery. By the end of the session, she would blow the lid off traditional thinking about the positioning of parents in the school. Professor Pushor is a straight-shooter and she made sure that the audience got both barrels that day. It was, in short, amazing.

Continuing with the visioning exercise, Dr. Pushor invited the assembled parents to shout out what they saw in their mind's eye as they looked about their imagined schools. All around the room, images were loudly offered up.

"Parents at my school are busy photocopying" one parent said. "I see parents helping with the safe school arrival program" said another. "Our parents are sitting down with teachers for parent-teacher interviews" offered a third. A fourth shouted out, "I see parents assembled in the auditorium watching their children perform in the school concert". There were many more contributions, including parents helping with graduation, volunteering in the library, reading with children in the classroom, and more. A few brave souls confessed that they actually didn't see any parents in their school.

**Please see TRAIL on pg. 6**



## ONTARIO EDITION

Our Mission...

School Advocate promotes parental involvement and facilitates the efforts of School Councils to improve the educational experience and academic achievement of students in the publicly funded school system of Ontario.

### Music CD Fundraisers

- Top Recording Artists
- No Minimum Orders
- Earn Over 100 % Profit

Toll Free: (866) 826.1100  
www.CharityCDs.com





### Kinark Outdoor Centre's ECO CLASSROOM

...hands on eco school programs in an off the grid classroom!

**Our Programs:**

- Help schools reach EcoSchool initiatives and certification
- Integrate environmental education into the Ontario Curriculum

www.sustainablebuilding2006.ca 1-800-805-8252

need **SPORTS?**

EQUIPMENT? UNIFORMS?  
1-800-595-9408

CALL FOR A FREE CATALOGUE CODE #795

www.marchants.com

"Our school almost paid \$1150 for a Cello. Then we found out we could get the same type for under \$350."

If your school needs instruments, don't overpay...



\$398.36



\$48.00



\$74.85



\$358.36

## BUY FROM US!

ECHO Trade / Marketing Inc.  
1515 Britannia Rd. East #215, Mississauga

Toll Free: 1.888.271.4208 Phone: 416.410.9960  
www.school-instruments.com





# 2007 Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History

## Recipients of Canada's top teaching prize announced

Canada's National History Society in partnership with Library and Archives Canada and TD Bank Financial Group announced the six recipients for the 2007 Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History.

Canada's most passionate educators created life-changing lesson plans that encouraged their students to serve as judge and jury for a monumental trial, travel back in time to explore their favourite historical figures, relive miles of memories with John Diefenbaker, solve a black super hero deficit, hum and strum their way through historical folk-songs, and unravel archives from military mysteries.

"These teachers are focused on finding ways to bring history to life for their students, and we take great pride in awarding their exemplary efforts", said Deborah Morrison, CEO and President of Canada's National History Society. "We all win if the next generation of Canadians has a richer understanding and a genuine interest in our past because of

the dedication of their innovative teachers", Morrison adds.

*The 2007 Recipients of the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History are:*

- RHONDA DRAPER** - Kelowna, British Columbia
- ROSE FINE-MEYER** - Toronto, Ontario
- SUSAN HAYNES** - Toronto, Ontario
- JOHN MACPHAIL** - Oakville, Ontario
- MONIQUE MARTIN** - Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- DAVID WATKINS** - Toronto, Ontario

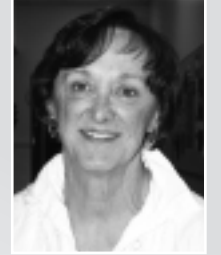
The six recipients will be awarded \$2,500, a gold medal and their respective schools will also benefit from a cash gift of \$1,000. The Awards prizes are

also made possible through the generous support of the TD Bank Financial Group.

On November 2, 2007, Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, presented the Awards at Rideau Hall. The recipients will also be honoured in the House of Commons as guests of the Speaker. Another highlight of the Award festivities is the gala dinner, and a rare insiders' tour of the Library and Archives Canada Preservation Centre, one of the program partners.



Rose Fine-Meyer, Humber College, Toronto, ON



Susan Haynes, Havergal College, Toronto, ON



David Watkins, Weston Collegiate Institute, Toronto, ON



John MacPhail, St. Dominic Catholic School, Oakville, ON

The 2007 Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History is sponsored by Canada's National History Society, which is a charitable organization dedicated to popularizing Canadian History. Canada's National History Society publishes *The Beaver: Canada's History Magazine* and *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*. The History Society also honours achievement in popular history through the Pierre Berton Award.

Photos by Canada's National History Society

## 2007- 2008 Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence honour exceptional principals, teachers and support staff

*The nomination period for the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence is here*

The nomination period for the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence is here.

Anyone can nominate school or school board staff in Ontario's publicly funded education system for any one of the six different categories below:

- Teacher of the Year
- New Teacher of the Year
- Excellent Support Staff

- Excellence in Leadership
- Lifetime Achievement
- Team of the Year.

Be sure to nominate an outstanding educator from your community. Last year fifteen teachers, principals and education support staff were named as the recipients of the first Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. More than 1,000 educators from across Ontario

were nominated for these awards.

Visit [www.ontario.ca/teachingawards](http://www.ontario.ca/teachingawards) to download a nomination package. The Ministry of Education is sending information kits to every publicly funded schools in Ontario.

Nominations will be accepted until January 28, 2008. Award recipients will be announced before the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

## Call for applications: the AMGEN Award for Science Teaching Excellence

**MISSISSAUGA, ON. - Amgen Canada announced that, for the first time, the Amgen Award for Science Teaching Excellence (AASTE) will be open to teachers in Canada.** The award is designed to recognize and honour extraordinary science teachers at the K-12 level (in British Columbia and Ontario) where Amgen has facilities, who significantly impact their students through exemplary science teaching and who achieve demonstrated results in student learning.

With a longstanding commitment to science education, Amgen established the teacher awards program to promote and encourage science excellence in public and private schools. Since the program's inception in 1992, Amgen has awarded more than \$1.7 million to educators who have made exceptional science-teaching contributions and who have significantly impacted the lives of their students. Amgen is expanding its program this year, and will honor a total of 32 teachers in California, Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Washington, British Columbia and Ontario.

"At Amgen, we are strongly committed to science education," says Dr. Daniel Billen,

Vice President and General Manager, Amgen Canada. "We have the utmost respect for those extraordinary educators who are able to inspire students to embrace a lifetime of learning. It is a proud moment for our company to bring this rewarding program to Canada to honor those science teachers who make a positive difference in the lives of their students."

In Canada, the 2 selected winners will receive the following benefits:

- An unrestricted cash award of \$5,000 CAD;
- A restricted \$5,000 CAD cash grant to the recipient's school for the expansion or enhancement of a school science program, science resources, or the professional development of the school's science teachers.

Applicants are also required to submit an innovative lesson plan that they have successfully incorporated into their classroom and can be shared with other teachers. A panel of independent judges will select the winners based on the following criteria: creativity of teaching methods; innovative lesson plan; effectiveness in the classroom and the plan for the use of grant money to improve science education resources in their schools.

A select number of the lesson plans submitted by 2008 AASTE Award winners will be

posted to Amgen's website, with the intent that other teachers will benefit from these innovative materials. Select lesson plans from 2007 AASTE Award winners are available for download at no cost; educators are encouraged to review and implement any of these plans into their own curriculum.

Those interested in applying should visit [www.amgen.com/citizenship/aaste.html](http://www.amgen.com/citizenship/aaste.html) for more information. Applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2008 to be valid. Winners will be notified in May 2008.

As a leader in innovation, Amgen Canada understands the value of science. With main operations located in Mississauga, Ontario's vibrant biomedical cluster, and its research facility in Burnaby, British Columbia, Amgen Canada has been an important contributor to advancements in science and innovation in Canada since 1991. The company contributes to the development of new therapies or new uses for existing medicines in partnership with many of Canada's leading health-care, academic, research, government and patient organizations.

### About Amgen

Amgen discovers, develops and delivers innovative human therapeutics. A biotechnology pioneer

since 1980, Amgen was one of the first companies to realize the new science's promise by bringing safe and effective medicines from lab, to manufacturing plant, to patient. Amgen therapeutics have changed the practice of medicine, helping millions of people around the world in the fight against cancer, kidney dis-

ease, rheumatoid arthritis, and other serious illnesses. With a broad and deep pipeline of potential new medicines, Amgen remains committed to advancing science to dramatically improve people's lives. To learn more about our pioneering science and our vital medicines, visit [www.amgen.com](http://www.amgen.com).

### TRAIL from page 6

away from the institutionalized, ritualistic, and often public interactions between teachers and parents typical of most school landscapes, to an emphasis on building trust and relationships in ways which are much less formal and more intimate."

It's a story of success; a community coming together in true partnership.

Dr. Pushor fervently believes that, instead of looking outward at families or communities as the reasons for low parental engagement or unsatisfactory student outcomes, schools have a responsibility to look inward at their own assumptions and beliefs. Brett Adams, a former School Counselor from Princess, agrees, saying, "And so it's an attitude change. It's also an invitation to go out and say, 'I don't know the answer'. To actually say 'I don't have the answer to bullying, I don't have the answer to attendance problems. I need

your help.' To honestly go out and say (to parents), 'I need your help, can we find a solution?' As opposed to (us) as the experts saying, 'I have the answers, you'll listen to me, this is what (we're) going to do'. That's not engagement. Engagement is going out and saying 'I truly don't know the answer, help me and we'll work together and go in a direction'."

Without question, this type of engagement takes time, energy, and a willingness to be vulnerable. It's about relationship-building - a subject Dr. Pushor doesn't hold back on. She refers to her personal experience of the typical five minute high school parent-teacher interview. Looking squarely at the parents in the room, she stirs them up by asking, "What message does this send to you?" "How does it make you feel?" She then challenges them to take that first step: to ask the teacher, "Is this really the kind of relationship you want to have with me?"