

your comments

WINTER 2009



on Values-Driven Leadership

Dear colleagues:

I am pleased that *In Conversation* continues to stimulate professional dialogue, and appreciate your responses to the second issue, released in January 2009.

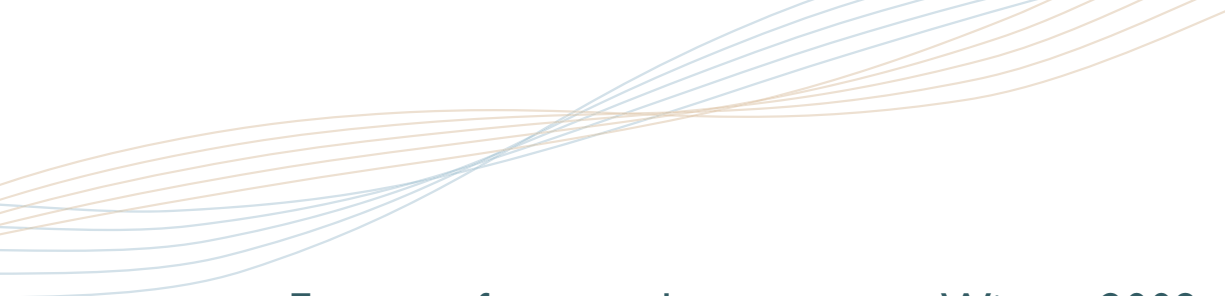
As reflected in the excerpts below, we received thoughtful commentary on values-driven leadership, the theme of this issue. We have also included a number of observations about the “habitual cynic”, also discussed in the issue, and some very stimulating perspectives on what it means to be “the best education system in the world”.

As always, I respect and appreciate your professionalism, and look forward to sharing the next issue of *In Conversation* with you.

Ben Levin
Deputy Minister



Winter 2009 Issue



Excerpts from reader responses: Winter 2009

Values-driven leadership

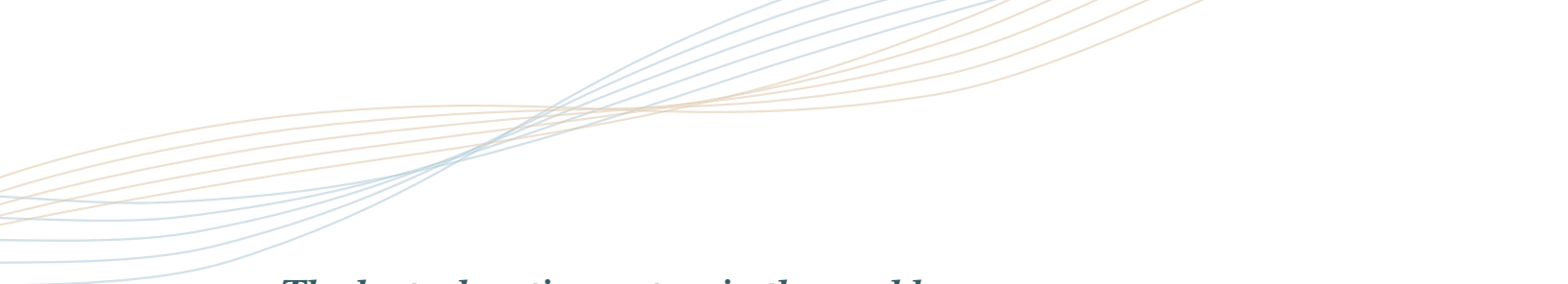
“The Winter 2009 issue written by Steve Marshall on values-driven leadership was affirming and inspirational since 4 years ago the curriculum leaders and administration at [my school] used Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great* as the foundation for our school improvement plan. The in-school leaders met in small groups and as a larger group frequently and then we reached out to our teachers through brainstorming sessions and focus groups and together established 5 Pillars that would move us forward: Culture of Discipline; Culture of Kindness and Caring; Culture of Excellence; Improvement of our Enriched and Gifted Program; Enhancement of Pride and Leadership. The pillars were focused on student and staff improvement. We have stayed with these 5 pillars and have focused our professional development, resources and energy towards enhancing these school areas. Thank you!”

“This article reflects the importance of ethics and values within our roles. There is seldom any black and white and when dealing with the grey we need to have a gap in our actions where we assess fully the impact of our decisions and processes.”

“A research study on ethical leadership, sponsored by the OCT and the University of Laval, provided a process for supporting ethical leadership. Our actions within this process are centred around three key ethics: the ethic of justice, the ethic of care and the ethic of critic. Depending on the circumstance, decisions are influenced by all three ethics with one of the three seeming to take precedence. Basically one has to have the knowledge and sensitivity to ethics, want to make a difference and then act in an ethical manner.”

“Ultimately we are always called to do what is right and not necessarily what is popular. To be a leader one has to have a well defined moral compass, a commitment to lifelong learning and much courage. And as the article states, achieving results for the right reasons.”

“[This] perspective on leadership ... is dynamic and meaningful for all educators as we strive to create the future. [These] words have particular personal relevance to me as I continue to learn the value of positive energy.”



The best education system in the world

“I know that wanting to be the best can be a motivator for a team. My concern with being ‘the best’ is that it sets up a competitive environment that implies a ranking of best to worst – a ranking that has a lot to do with resource allocation. When I consider Covey’s habits of successful people I find an emphasis on values and disciplines that promote understanding and cooperation in win-win relationships. I would hope that we could apply those values and skills on a global level.”

“I would like to challenge us to consider the role of collaboration with other jurisdictions in improving education world-wide as being a measure of value. Wanting to be the best suggests an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy. If being ‘the best’ means that we are recognized as leaders in working collaboratively with educators around the world in exchanging resources and ideas for the benefit of students everywhere, then I am all for it – in which case being labelled as ‘the best’ really becomes irrelevant. If being ‘the best’ only means out-performing others in a narrow range of indicators then I would be happy to leave that designation to those who value a hierarchy of achievement over multi-lateral cooperation.”

The habitual cynic

“What should be done about the ‘habitual cynic’? These people exist as part of our personal and professional communities. They affect not only staff but, more importantly, the student population. Students are young, sensitive and very receptive by nature, regardless of appearances. They never forget.”

“Presenting choices to the cynic may likely produce one of two outcomes: defensive resistance or a call for help. The cynical affect may actually be a cry for help, and one that we can attend to. It’s difficult for many of us to ask for help at times, it would suggest the unmentionable – that we may not feel able to meet the professional expectations placed upon us. Our role as teachers can sometimes produce a kind of isolation, one that suggests we go it alone, without the help of others. It becomes a matter of pride and self-esteem. To ask for help may show a kind of weakness that some of us aren’t ready to reveal.”

“I suggest we embrace the presence of the cynic and not avoid the ‘cloud’. If we can look through the mask of the cynic, perhaps we can see to the root of the effect. Personal and professional stressors affect us in many ways.”

“To resist the cynic may only serve to further isolate them. None of us needs this. We’re all in this together.”