

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the first issue of our new web-friendly format. These pages contain just a short blurb about each topic. If you wish to read more of a particular item, just click on the title or the word “more” at the end. When you wish to return to this page, just X out of the new window or click the “back” button on your browser. We hope you like our new format. To send bouquets or brickbats, click [comments](#).

VOTING QUESTION

We want to know how accessible independent (private) schools are in your area. Please help us by participating in the poll [here](#).

After you have voted, you can give us more context by clicking on [comments](#).

HELPING YOUR STUDENT

[Internet-Based Help for Teaching Students to Read](#)

From now on, we will have a regular feature listing web-based resources to help with instruction in a particular subject. We have chosen to begin with reading, as it is the most important of all academic subjects. Students who struggle with reading are handicapped in almost every other subject, including math. A student’s reading ability at the end of grade 1 is a powerful predictor of future academic success, salary, health, even length of life. To access our list of resources, click [more](#).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Improvement in Ontario Test Scores May Be Due to Easier Tests](#)

The Ontario government is proclaiming that its students are doing better and better on the provincial tests of student achievement. For some reason, though, the government is failing to disclose that significant changes have been made to the testing, changes that are all in the direction of making the tests easier to pass. [more](#)

[Problems With Special Education](#)

A recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Ottawa Board of Education does not have a coherent, overall plan for special education. I would suspect that Ottawa is typical of the way most special education is managed in Ontario. [more](#)

[Co-operative Learning Can Be Done Right](#)

Of late, many teacher training programs across Canada seem to have abandoned the belief that competent instructors need a repertoire of teaching styles. Student teachers too often arrive in the classrooms of associate teachers prepared to engage students only in co-operative learning activities. [more](#)

WEB-SITE OF THE MONTH

[Interviews with Reading Experts](#)

Each issue, we will draw your attention to a special web-site and tell a bit about it. This month, we highlight [Children of the Code](#), a web-site with a great deal of information about teaching reading, including interviews with over 100 leading neuroscientists, psychologists, reading researchers, educators, historians, and more. There is a fascinating interview with Dr. Todd Risley that includes a discussion of the .78 correlation of a child's IQ at the age of three with how much that child's parents had talked to him. [more](#)

FEATURE ARTICLES

[Faith in High Scores](#) by Malkin Dare

Every year, we rank the major English-speaking school boards on the basis of their results on the provincial tests. This year, the rankings reveal that the Catholic school boards are doing far, far better than their public counterparts. [more](#)

[Markets Versus Monopolies in Education: The Historical Evidence](#)

by Andrew Coulson (*"Education Policy Analysis Archives"*, Vol. 4, No. 9, June 12, 1996)

This is a very long article on the likely effect a free market would have on modern education. Historical evidence suggests that schools are more responsive to parents and get generally better results if they are exposed to competitive markets. [more](#)

[Phonics First – Or Bust](#) by Malkin Dare

Most people know that it is important to use systematic phonics when teaching children to read. But did you know that if a child is taught to read by another method, he will probably never become a good reader? Find out why by clicking on [more](#).

[What Brain Research Can Tell Us about Reading Instruction](#)

by Kerry Hempenstall (*"Learning Difficulties Australia Bulletin"*, 38(1), 15-16)

This is a very clear and simple discussion of the latest brain-imaging studies on reading acquisition. This research strongly suggests that our brains are configured in a way that makes systematic phonics the method of choice. [more](#)

[The Expert Mind](#)

by Philip E. Ross (*"Scientific American"*, August 2006)

This article draws on studies of the mental processes of chess grandmasters, to show how people become experts in other fields as well. It turns out that effortful study is the key to achieving success in chess, classical music, soccer, and many other fields. New research has indicated that motivation is a more important factor than innate ability. [more](#)

[The Agony of American Education](#)

By Lisa Snell (*reasononline*, April 2006)

Many people are aware of the extensive school choice available in Edmonton, Alberta, but do not realize that San Francisco offers school choice that is in some ways even more extensive than Edmonton's. This article describes the San Francisco experiment, along with additional information about school choice in general. [more](#)

WHAT'S NEW?

[Provinces Should Fund Childcare Only For At-Risk Children](#)

- A C.D.Howe Institute paper entitled "[Let's Walk before We Run: Cautionary Advice on Childcare](#)" comes to the conclusion that Ottawa and the provinces should fund quality childcare programs only for at-risk children, as opposed to universal childcare. The researchers' review of the research found that children from low-income or single-parent families tend to benefit from subsidized childcare, but that the net benefits for children from stable, middle-class homes are doubtful. [more](#)

[An End to the Math Wars?](#)

- The influential US National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, which in 1989 launched the math wars by promoting fuzzy math, has unilaterally surrendered, and is now recommending an emphasis on basic arithmetic skills. [more](#)

[The Story of the \\$2 Million Comma](#)

- A punctuation blunder – a superfluous comma – may force Rogers Communications. to pay an extra \$2.13 million. CRTC regulators have ruled that a second comma in a crucial contract means that either party could cancel the contract with one year's notice, even during the first term. The sentence reads: "This agreement shall be effective from the date it is made and shall continue in force for a period of five (5) years from the date it is made, and thereafter for successive five (5) years terms, unless and until terminated by one year prior notice in writing by either party." [more](#) (*subscription necessary*)

[Teacher Certification Makes No Difference](#)

- "What Does Certification Tell Us about Teachers' Effectiveness: Evidence from New York City" is the title of a Harvard University study that matched some 10,000 teachers with six years of test results. The researchers found that there was little or no relationship between the certification pathways – traditionally-certified, alternatively-certified, members of the Teach for America program, or uncertified – that NYC teachers took to their classrooms. [more](#)

[Mandatory School Attendance for 17- and 18-Year-Olds in Ontario](#)

- "[Response to Bill 52: Implications for Home Educated Students](#)" is the title of Deani Van Pelt's presentation to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Committee of Ontario. Professor Van Pelt points out that the proposal to withhold drivers' licences from 17- and 18-year-olds who are not in school expands "the educational mandate of the Ministry of Education beyond the traditional school-aged child and beyond the traditional classroom, that is, beyond the traditional mandate of the secondary school." [more](#)

[Another Way to Cheat on Testing](#)

- "[Testing, Crime and Punishment](#)" is the title of a 2003 University of Florida study that examined out-of-school suspension rates for low- and high-performing students in 504 Florida schools. Economist David Figlio found that students who traditionally scored low on state tests faced longer suspensions during test time than the rest of the school year, while high-performing students had shorter punishments at test time. The change appeared only in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10, the very grade levels with tests that counted in terms of state rankings. [more](#)

[Both English and French Governments Going Back to Basics](#)

- Making education a national priority, both England and France are seeking a return to more traditional methods of teaching and discipline. In England, the move comes after disappointing test results after nine years of effort. In France, the reforms respond to declining standards and literacy, as well as widespread violence in schools. [more](#) and [more](#)

SQE ACTIVITIES

Demonstration Reading Project

- The Society's demonstration remedial reading project is entering its third year. The program is at a public school in the Rexdale area of Toronto, and more volunteers are always welcome. To learn more, contact [Doretta Wilson](#), 416-231-7247.

Why Canadian Education Isn't Improving

- Malkin Dare is the co-author of a new Fraser Institute paper entitled "[Why Canadian Education Isn't Improving](#)". The paper explains that monopolistic school systems cannot produce good schooling because of built-in defects that prevent them from achieving excellence. [more](#)

Saving For Post-Secondary Education

- We have linked with [KidsFutures](#)TM, a Canadian-owned and -operated company with an innovative rewards program that helps families save for their children's future college or university education costs. Members earn cash rewards for shopping with over 100 well-known product, service, and retail partner companies and brands. They can also apply for a no-fee CitiTM KidsFutures MasterCard and earn up to 2% of their purchases in rewards. The benefit to SQE is that KidsFutures will promote our logo and link to us on their web-site. The benefit to SQE supporters who use our special referral code (QUALITYED10) is a start-up bonus of \$10 in rewards. [more](#)

Choosing School Choice

- Malkin Dare is the author of an article entitled "Choosing School Choice", in which she speculates on how good schools could be if exposed to market forces. [more](#)

BOOK REVIEWS

Chalk, Challenge and Change: Stories from Ontario Women Teachers. \$28.

(Send cheque to Linda Rafuse, #9 – 5255 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, ON L7L 5X6)

This is a book that sets out to capture the heritage and history of classrooms across the province from 1920 to 1979, as told by senior members of the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario. It does so, and more. [more](#)

The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children. E.D. Hirsch, Jr. Houghton Mifflin. 2006. 169 pages.

In his latest book, Dr. Hirsch once more tackles the disastrous effect of the current "content-neutral, skills-oriented concept of education" on students, especially disadvantaged students. [more](#)

Myths and Misconceptions about Teaching: What Really Happens in the Classroom. Vicki E. Snider. Rowman & Littlefield Education. 2006. \$32 US. 214 pages.

The author identifies six myths that are blocking the development of validated teaching practices and programs. These myths affect all students, but especially hurt low-performing students – those with disabilities or risk factors. [more](#)

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