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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the second 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.

If you would prefer to access a fuller version of our newsletter, click [here](#). To read it like a print newspaper, print out the full version.

Please tell us how we can improve our newsletter by clicking [comments](#).

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT TO US

Last month, we polled you to find out how accessible independent (private) schools are in your area. The results are as follows: within 1 kilometre – 19%; within 2 kilometres – 4%; within 5 kilometres – 26%; within 10 kilometres – 19%; and more than 10 kilometers distant – 33%.

This month, we want to know if you think your children received a better education than you did yourself. Please help us by clicking on [vote](#). After voting, you can give us more context by clicking on [comments](#). We will print your comments in the next newsletter, anonymously on request.

[EVERYONE CAN LEARN MATH](#)

Click [here](#) to access our list of recommended web-based resources to help with math instruction.

[MAIL BAG](#)

Our readers’ comments are always interesting and insightful. Read some of the feedback we’ve received since our last newsletter – charter schools – medical training – testing – Asian private schools – IPRC’s – and [more](#).

[CANADIAN SCHOOL RANKINGS WEB-SITE](#)

Schools vary enormously in their effectiveness. Instead of automatically sending their kids to their neighbourhood school, parents should first investigate the effectiveness of that school. Most Canadian schools are ranked [here](#).

FEATURE ARTICLES

[Those Clever Alberta Red-Necks](#)

This *Economist* article states that “over the past 30 years Alberta has quietly built the finest public education system in Canada”, while “elsewhere in Canada, especially British Columbia and Ontario, dissatisfaction with public-school standards is increasingly driving parents to pack their children off to private schools.” [more](#)

[But What if They Can't Read?](#)

This American Federation of Teachers article criticizes the common practice of setting aside a chunk of time every day for children to read silently, the goal being to improve reading fluency. But struggling readers need “modeling, repeated reading, and feedback”, not benign neglect. And even when it comes to good readers, teachers should beware of overdoing silent reading – since reading fluency is only one of the key components of reading. [more](#)

[An Ill Wind](#)

Hurricane Katrina may have been an ill wind, but it is now blowing lots of good for the children of New Orleans. Prior to Katrina, the city’s public schools were already drowning. Because the New Orleans Public School Board was unable to move fast enough to re-open many schools, dozens of charter schools have sprung up to fill the vacuum. The public school board now operates only four schools. [more](#)

[Contracting for Better Education](#)

The author is a Canadian living in New Zealand. He suggests Canadian policy-makers consider alternative delivery mechanisms like those widely used in other parts of the world. One example is contracts with independent schools to enroll students at public expense where there are not enough places at public schools. In the Philippines, there are nearly 400,000 students in such a program. [more](#)

[Math for Dummies](#)

Almost everyone knows that Singapore students do exceptionally well in math. But few people realize that math is taught in English in Singapore and that their textbooks and workbooks are available for use in Canadian schools. These materials feature the sequential mastery of skills that build on previously-acquired skills. [more](#)

[Reading for Their Lives](#)

Despite the horrible consequences of not learning to read in grade 1, more than a third of Canadian children are being allowed to reach the end of grade 1 without learning to read properly. Even though almost all children can become good readers if they are taught properly, most grade 1 teachers are not using best practices. [more](#)

WHAT'S NEW

[*Do Private Schools Result in More Racial Segregation?*](#)

The answer is a resounding NO, according to a recent survey of the research on segregation in American public and private schools. It turns out that “private schools have a much greater potential to desegregate students because they break down geographic barriers, drawing students together across neighbourhood boundaries.” [more](#)

[*Free School Lockers in BC*](#)

The BC Supreme Court has ordered a stop to the widespread practice of charging user fees in the province’s public schools. Prior to the ruling, BC parents were paying out an estimated \$15 million in fees. For example, the North Vancouver school district charged a \$40 - \$60 student fee, which included the use of a locker, and a graduation fee (up to \$45). In Alberta, the Calgary Board of Education forwards the names of non-paying parents to a collection agency. [more](#)

[*Flunking Can Be Good for Kids*](#)

A number of states and school districts, including Florida, Texas, Chicago, and New York City, have tried to curtail social promotion by requiring students to pass standardized tests before they can be promoted to the next grade. A new study of Florida students finds that retained Florida students made significant reading gains relative to the control group of socially-promoted students. [more](#)

[*Sensational New Secrets of Successful Schools*](#)

The Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire. Likewise, the success of two Baltimore schools turns out to be due to non-secrets that are neither sensational nor new. The Abell Foundation reports that these schools succeed because, for example, they focus heavily on outcomes; have a longer school day; follow clear and powerful visions; their principals have authority to make staffing and curriculum decisions. Nothing new here – except that so few public schools take advantage of this knowledge! [more](#)

[*Preschoolers on Ritalin*](#)

In response to an attempt by the drug industry to expand Ritalin use to younger children, the National Institute of Mental Health looked into its safety for children under six years old. It found that preschoolers are more likely than older children to develop side effects, and close monitoring is advised. [more](#)

[*Kids who are Confident About Their Math Ability – Shouldn’t Be*](#)

“Happiness is over-rated”, according to the author of a Brookings Institution study on the relationship between students’ confidence in their math ability and their test scores. It turns out that the countries with the best math scores have the least confident math students. [more](#)

SQE ACTIVITIES

[SQE in the Media](#)

Doretta Wilson taped a PODcast interview which will air some time in late November on TVO's new PODcast site for parents. A PODcast is an audio broadcast that people can listen to on their computers or download onto their digital audio players (for example, iPods). To access the interview, go to the [TVO web-site](#) and find the PODcast link (not until after November 13).

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Because the Society for Quality Education receives no government funding, our existence is completely dependent upon our supporters' financial assistance. This year, our principal donor drastically reduced our funding because of shortfalls in investment revenues, and we need to find additional funding in order to carry on our day-to-day operations. If you can make a contribution, we would be very grateful. You can make a donation with your credit card by clicking on [donate](#) or you can send a cheque to Society for Quality Education, 57 Twyford Road, Toronto, ON Canada M9A 1W5. Thank you for your continuing support.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Because education reformers tend to be too serious, we're providing a link to the education humour page of the Illinois loop. Click [here](#) for a bit of relief from all this anguish.

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