

**YOU SHUDDA BEEN THERE! REPORT ON OUR CURRENT RESEARCH SERIES**

The first two sessions "Promoting Academic Achievement through Personal and Social Responsibility", were at OISE.

**Session # 1**

**Roots of Empathy - Learning to Care: One Child at a Time**

More than 60 Kappans and guests came to hear Mary Gordon, Founder and President, Roots of Empathy on October 26. The powerful presentation was highlighted by stories and a video from CBC featuring the programme as it works in real classrooms with parents, teachers, children and babies. Among the key messages:

- the connections between emotion and cognition, and the value of developing "emotional literacy"
- the need to treat all with dignity and humanity
- listening to and communicating with children even before they can speak - they can let us know what they think and how they feel
- peers and their capacity for empathy (or callousness) so they need support in the former. This goes back to the origins of co-operative learning and the recognition of social interdependence and the search to help people interact for the better.
- the need to give children permission to speak from their hearts

As a parent and now grandparent I found it all quite moving.

Mary also cited the work of Richard Tremblay, Professor of Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Psychology at the University of Montréal, on the development of aggression (a Google search, including Amazon.com will get you samples of this work).

**THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD IS PILOTING A ROOTS OF EMPATHY PROJECT IN A NUMBER OF SCHOOLS SO LOOK FOR RESULTS OF THIS IMPORTANT WORK. [WWW.ROOTSOFEMPATHY.ORG](http://WWW.ROOTSOFEMPATHY.ORG) OFFERS DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME AND THE IDEAS SHAPING IT.**



**Presenter Mary Gordon  
founder of Roots of Empathy**



**This participant won an autographed copy of  
Mary's book Roots of Empathy. Programme  
Co-Chair, Susanna Tang presented the book.**

**2010 PDK Awards Essay**

What has caused you to choose a career in education? What do you hope to accomplish during your career as an educator? How will you measure your success?

Every year PDK sponsors two awards designed to recognize future leaders in education. Both the Prospective Educator and Excellence in Student Teaching award candidates submit an essay answering the above questions.

The Prospective Educator award is open to all secondary school students. It gives students interested in becoming a teacher the opportunity to focus and express their thoughts about why they want to pursue a career in education. The essay question changes each year, and it is always exciting to read about what has inspired our current students to follow in our foot steps. It is also an excellent opportunity to introduce our future educators to PDK as the winner receives a student membership to PDK.

The Excellence in Student Teaching award is open to Teacher Candidates from faculties of education across the province. The essay question is posted in late November and candidates respond with the perspective gained from their teaching experiences and especially their first practicum.

From a chapter viewpoint it is a fantastic opportunity to attract new and fresh perspectives to the U of T chapter. The winner is given a one-year membership to PDK and often gets involved in many chapter activities. Past winners have acted as photographers at PDK events, chairs of the PDK ChalkWalk for Education, and awards committees. As a past Excellence in Student Teacher winner, both at the chapter level and international level, I have gained valuable insight through my association with my fellow PDK colleagues. I hope I too have been able to give back to the chapter!

**By Kari Peters, presenter on April 7 (see flyer) on session 3**

## Session #2

### Together We can make a difference

I thought that the first session would be hard to match. Nice to be proven wrong. Session 2 on November 26 with Elizabeth Sinclair-Artwell, Superintendent, Peel DSB was a WOW! for the 30 + who attended. Elizabeth's inspirational message mixed with data and stories, and reinforced by two former colleagues in the audience clearly illustrated the chronicle of an elementary school in crisis that was in danger of closure. Not only did test score improve but, more importantly, morale for teachers and the empowerment of teachers, parents, and students rose dramatically. How was this done? Hard work over a number of years on many fronts: students, staff, parents and community, and a culturally responsive curriculum. Summarizing the presentation is a challenge in so few words but here are some interesting ideas!

- when the principal had to discipline students she would go to the classroom, but when students went to the principal's office it was for confirmation and celebration achievement
- literacy and numeracy were key even before EQAO brought in the test and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariate came into being
- most students were bused to the school so staff went into the community by taking turns on the buses. Parents met teachers in the community; later parents who were fearful of schools before volunteered in the school— some even returned to school for further education
- in addition to a curriculum based on principles of "cultural proficiency" there was a strong spiritual component based on respect, love, and trust
- all this without compromising on achievement

From time to time I surveyed the room and many people were taking notes (as was I).

What a powerful learning experience for all of us!

With such impact from the first two sessions in this series I can't wait for the third one.



**Membership Chair Lis Horley-McLeod and Secretary Marilyn Hahn signing in registrants.**



**Presenter Elizabeth Sinclair-Artwell, Superintendent Peel DSB.**



**Zico Castello won a copy of the PDK cartoon book. Sandra Poczobut, ChalkWalk Multimedia Chair, presented the book.**



**Charis Newton-Thompson, Manager of Curriculum Review, TDSB and Linda Lake, VP of Maplewood HS.**