

March 2006



CAROLYN MORAS
CHAPTER PRESIDENT

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IT'S YOUR DUTY!

Please remember to vote
for a CML.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"Phi Delta Kappa International, the leading advocate for public education, promotes quality education for all as essential to a democratic way of life by providing innovative programs, relevant research, visionary leadership, and dedicated service."

Reading the Program and the Foundation Reports on the following pages reminds us that our chapter strives to bring this mission statement to life. A belief in public education is a beginning; comprehension of the issues is important to ensure a strong public system. The broader our base of information, and the more exposure we have to various aspects of an issue, the more we can turn information into knowledge. Public education needs everyone, regardless of their role, expanding their knowledge base for informed decision making.

A big issue everywhere is testing and assessment. Building deep understanding comes from many things: experience, reading, hearing different perspectives first hand, research, and from history. These aspects help us acquire a context for changing views and purposes, and very importantly, internalizing the link between learning and assessment. To help layer our viewpoints, research and assessment has been the focus of U of T chapter's professional offerings this year and continue at our AGM with Lorna Earl being honoured as Outstanding Educator. Currently, Lorna is Researcher in Residence at Ontario's Ministry of Education, a role to which she brings a vast research background, especially in the area of assessment and its place in learning.

If we look at public education's role in preparing students for the future, Lorna provides a succinct descriptor: "the essential purpose of education: learning – learning to create, solve problems, think critically, unlearn and relearn, and to care about others and the environment." To Lorna, "Understanding is knowledge in action. Students who understand can take knowledge, concepts, skills, and facts and apply them in new situations where they are appropriate." In earlier publications, and in her recent books, she has made the tight connection between assessment and learning clear, supported by massive assessment research as well as research about learning.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Phi Delta Kappa International, University of Toronto Chapter will be held on **Wednesday, April 19, 2006** at the Faculty Club, University of Toronto at 6 pm for the following purposes:

- To receive the report of the Treasurer
- To receive the report of the Nominating Committee
- To elect officers and Members of the Governing Council for the coming year
- To transact such other business as may properly be brought forth before the meeting

March 16, 2006

Originally Published: Jan. 9, 2006

Carolyn Moras, President



**SUSAN SEIDMAN
FOUNDATION CHAIR**



**PROFESSOR RUTH
CHILDS PRESENTING
IS IT CHEATING?**

**PHI DELTA KAPPA
WAS MENTIONED!**

The Gallery of Canada: First Nations opened at the Royal Ontario Museum on Wednesday, January 18, 2006 in the presence of the Honourable James Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. When His Honour was introduced, in addition to his titles and honorary degrees, we were delighted to hear the Outstanding Educator Award from Phi Delta Kappa being mentioned. Around five hundred major donors were present.

~ Edward and Jocelyn Badovinac

FOUNDATION REPORT

Foundation - what a good name - everything rises from the foundation. The foundation must be solid for the rest of the structure to stand.

So it is with PDK, and U of T chapter. The chapter gives several awards at different levels. (More about these later.) Each award not only benefits an individual student, but also serves for outreach, profile for the chapter, and membership recruitment. In addition, each award provides an opportunity for chapter members to connect with each other in the service of both the chapter and international, and indirectly, the teaching profession. The process deepens and broadens professional understandings, and through this dialogue refines pedagogical values. It is with pleasure that University of Toronto Chapter announces the chapter level winners of the Prospective Educator/Excellence in Student Teaching awards.

A committee composed of the Award Chairs Moveta Nanton, David Keffer, and Foundation Representative Susan Seidman met to choose the successful Chapter applicants. They enjoyed the process so much they met again to judge some Region H applications that had been sent directly to International. Many thanks to them for their work and feedback on improving the process, and to Carolyn Moras for hosting the meetings.

The winner at the secondary school level is Ruth Mullen of Grimsby Secondary School. The winner at the university level is our own Kari Peters, who was initiated into PDK at our 50th anniversary. Both winners and their escorts will be Chapter guests at our Annual General meeting on April 19th. Each winner will be presented with a cheque and a year's membership in PDK. Their winning applications have been sent to International for consideration for higher level awards.

Two special thanks need to be made. Kappan Elizabeth Manker of Niagara Falls took application packages and personally delivered them to guidance counselors at secondary schools in her area. That personal contact will mean greater awareness and an increase in applications for years to come. We thank Elizabeth, hope she will continue her efforts on our behalf, and invite other members to follow her example. We'd love to give more packages to people for personal delivery and contact next year. Contact Susan Seidman if you would be willing and able to do this.

Special thanks also goes to Ron Deson, who undertook, with Susan Seidman, to help International judge over 500 direct non-chapter Prospective Educator applications. An engaging afternoon was spent reading and evaluating a batch of applications from north eastern United States.

The awards process continues with the Jackman Award with a deadline in mid April. Ruth Childs chairs this committee. The doctoral dissertation award follows, with Co-chairs Bob and Mary Hookey.

A few words about funding Foundation, both at the International and local level, are in order. The scholarships and awards PDK offers are funded by foundation gifts from members. These gifts are separate from activities such as the Kappan magazine and the International administration which are funded by membership dues.

A new PDK activity shares funds between the local chapter and International. The Walk for Education draws on support from each member sponsoring Walk team members who are physically doing the Walk. Last year, University of Toronto team walked at the International conference in Chicago representing our chapter. We held our first Walk two years ago at Queen's Park in Toronto.

An additional activity which supports University of Toronto chapter's foundation work (as well as supporting the arts and having a lovely evening,) is the Trinity Chamber ensemble concerts. PDK provides refreshments at the intermission. Concert attendees donate enough to sponsor winners' attendance at the AGM and other dinners. PDK members also support the foundation work of scholarships and awards by becoming patrons at our major events.

There are many ways to contribute to the Service aspect of PDK and support the work of our Chapter and the International Organization. To paraphrase a well-known quote, it takes many efforts to build a strong Foundation.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – CONTINUED

Listening to the various speakers at our research series, the above points were illustrated in very human terms. The February 2006 Kappan has four articles on assessment, under the title Aspects of Testing. The message is repeated that assessment is a complex issue and that assessment, teaching, and learning are tightly connected. The first article raises an interesting use of technology, Keypad based assessment for multiple choice, and supports the point by linking it to formative assessment. The second article highlights the importance of building assessment literacy among educators. The third article describes the common view of assessment time competing with class time and then goes on to describe a school where assessment is embedded within instructional and classroom practice. The fourth talks about ways of assessing that are team-based but for individual scores.

If we truly believe in public education, a conscious effort to understand issues and their complexities is necessary. "New insights don't happen by osmosis. They come from facing ideas that challenge the familiar ways of viewing issues." Earl and Katz (2002)

Recent books by Lorna Earl

[It's About Learning](#) co-authored by Louise Scott and Dean Fink (2003)

[Assessment As Learning](#) (2003)

[Leading Schools in a Data-Rich World](#) co-authored by Steven Katz (2006)



**WALTER
WINCHELL
TECHNICAL
ADVISOR**

PDK - TECH NOTE: BACK-UPS VS. BACKING-UP YOUR OWN DATA FILES

Walt Winchell, Technology Advisor

Oh yes – too often we are continually reminded (mostly by guilt of neglect) that one day we will be the victim of a hard disc crash and that we must develop and practice a diligent, disciplined back-up strategy. That being said, few take this to heart, that is until they too experience the incredible sinking feeling that follows a severe crash, in which important data is lost and is oftentimes irrecoverable. Were we to have backed-up our files on CD's or now increasingly on DVD's, or even floppy discs, Zip discs, or yesterday's tape drives, we would not be in this trouble – or would we? Back-up routines generally are at best a weekly occurrence and oftentimes less regular. Why? Because we are too busy and "hard drives are getting better..." – these are excuses, nothing more. So what to do?

Here's one solution, which requires a purchase and a new e-mail account. The purchase would be a good, reliable external hard drive (USB 2.0 recommended) with a size that seems to fit your needs. I was about to purchase an 80 GB drive when the salesperson noted that a 300 GB unit was only ~25% more expensive. I knew the brandname of the larger unit (Seagate) and did not recognize the name of the smaller one, and since the dollar difference was about \$ 30, it seemed logical. Later I found that indeed I had purchased a rather expensive drive for about 50% of what others had paid for similar units. Nonetheless, it works well and has plenty of reserve capacity. However, this is still a hard drive and it too could crash. Accordingly, the second step is the new e-mail. Assuming you are using something like Rogers or Sympatico or AOL Canada, you should look at a back-up strategy from another source, such as Yahoo.ca or gmail. I prefer the latter because they provide 2.6x the storage capacity of Yahoo and it's free. What you would do in this instance is to take a day's work (or if your usage is lighter, then a weeks work) and bundle it together in a labeled folder, perhaps by date and send the documents onto the e-mail for a second back-up (actually a third if you retain the files on your computer's HD as most do today. The advantage of this is that the data is now literally out of the office/house and safe from thieves/fire or storm damage, etc.

This is not to say that you want to consider eliminating your conventional back-up strategy, using CD's or DVD's, but they too are subject to the triple threat alluded to above. The e-mail strategy has a second purpose – traveling and access. As long as you know how to locate your files they can be downloaded from anywhere you can get internet access. If the data is highly confidential there are encryption protocols that can be used, but this does become more complex and will often necessitate special upload and download strategies, etc.

You can also reduce the burden of the storage if you convert your files to pdf's (easy to do using newer versions of Word on XP). They will require less space and if locked cannot be tampered with by the recipient.

One other purchase you ought to consider (less than 1/3 the cost of the external HD) is a USB memory key, now available incrementally in sizes from 64 MB to 2 GB. A 128 or 256 will suffice for most and is an easy way to transport files from one machine to another, and could even be used as yet another back-up strategy (the key could reside in a safe deposit box along with CD's, etc.). It is volatile memory, meaning that it can be easily updated and deleted, whereas a burnt CD (the non-rewritable variety) is non-volatile. The key can also be slipped in with your laptop or even a briefcase without laptop to carry important data files on a trip, etc. This may be the best choice for the confidential files, as long as it is not lost.

And a disclaimer – certain organizations have very strict protocols pursuant to backing up data, where the data is stored, and who can access it, etc. Because of this the above is posited for the home office and "academic" office, but probably not pertinent for those working in HR, finance and industrial environments.



**STEPHANIE
FETTEROLF
PROGRAM CHAIR**

PROGRAM FOR SPRING 2006

Event	Date	Location	Time
Research Series, Session III "What Really Happens Between the Tests?"	Wednesday, March 22, 2006	Henry Kelsey Middle School, 1200 Huntingwood Drive, Scarborough	7:30- 9:00pm
Annual General Meeting and Presentation of Outstanding Educator Award to Dr. Lorna Earl	Wednesday, April 19, 2006	The Faculty Club, University of Toronto 41 Willcocks St.	6:00pm
Trinity Chamber Ensemble Concert	Sunday, April 30, 2006	Church of the Transfiguration, 111 Manor Road East, Toronto	7:30pm
Avro Arrow Presentation	Saturday, May 6, 2006	Downsview Aerospace Museum	1:00- 4:00pm
Spring Social	Thursday, June 15, 2006	Rocco's Plum Tomato, 1068 Islington Ave.	6:00 pm

DISCUSSION GROUP

Are you interested in joining a Kappan Discussion Group? Join some of your fellow Kappans to read and discuss selected articles from The Kappan, and connections/implications for our local Scene. An alternative idea that could make for exciting conversation, would be to use some of the assessment questions from Lorna's books. "What are the barriers in schools to using assessment as learning? Analyze assessment tasks that you use already to identify the prerequisite learnings embedded in the task. What instructional strategies could you use to scaffold their learning? How might these assessment strategies be modified to make them better motivators for student learning?" If interested, contact Stephanie Fetterolf: stephaniefetterolf@hotmail.com

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PROGRAM REPORT

Our current research series centres on assessment. It delves into the thorny problem of teachers caring about their students' learning and wanting to ensure the learning is adequately reflected in provincial testing. Ruth Childs presented her original research, at our January 26th meeting on the dilemmas teachers face. Our February panel on assessment was a stunning wake up call. John Myers gave us a historical context and Virginia Robinson described the impact on secondary teaching and learning. Tahera Walli described her children's experiences, both positive and negative, with provincial testing and described a perspective far beyond the experience educators have from their roles. Her daughter, Sakina Walli, is currently in secondary school. She has been involved in provincial testing since its inception, and opened the window wide in telling how she found the tests comfortable in elementary and unmanageable in secondary.

The third session in the series is March 22. See the enclosed flyer. Our Annual General Meeting, April 19th, closes our series on research and assessment. Lorna Earl, who has researched assessment for many years, is being honoured as Outstanding Educator.

On Saturday, May 6th University of Toronto Chapter will be co-hosting an afternoon presentation on the Avro Arrow at the Downsview Aerospace Museum. See the enclosed flyer with a bio of the presenter, Lou Wise, on the back.

We close this year's program with a social: dinner and good conversation, at Rocco's Plum Tomato at 1068 Islington. (flyer to follow)