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#### Buzz Around The Bee



Once again PDK is supporting Spelling Bee of Canada.

This is our service activity which provides valuable volunteer experiences while affording important literacy practice for Spelling Bee participants.



#### President's Message – Tim Rudan

It is a pleasure to serve as your new president; I whole-heartedly thank Bev Freedman for her exemplary leadership over the past two years. With her continued support as well as the support of the chapter executive I expect the transition will be smooth.

On a personal note, I am experiencing a career transition. After a three year secondment at York University I am returning to the classroom.

Working with pre-service teachers at York University helped connect me to PDK. It made me aware of the ongoing need for leadership and partnerships. *We invite you to share your leadership experiences.*

I am looking forward to the chapter's upcoming annual events which include the October 5 ChalkWalk and our exciting Research Series. This year's series focuses on Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century. I am very intrigued how new challenges for teaching will shape learning in the digital age.

As an educational organization, how do we respond and embrace new technology in order to support PDK's mandate for leadership, research and service? This is not just a matter for our chapter but for all educators which is why the executive sees the importance of maintaining communication with our sister chapters in Canada and the United States.

I wish everyone a productive and inspiring start to the new school year.



Moveta Nanton

#### Chalk Walk "Walk for Education"

Saturday, October 5, 2014

@ Wilket Creek Park  
(Leslie St & Eglinton Ave.)

We are looking forward to your support for the Chalk Walk. This is our Chapter's main fundraising event. Once again, we have partnered with the Spelling Bee of Canada.

The funds raised pay for our Chapter awards. This edition of our newsletter demonstrates award winners giving back to PDK.

Boni Thompson, 2012 Doctoral Dissertation winner, wrote this month's Research Findings. Ken Hoffman, our 2013 Henry Jackman winner, a musician and a teacher, points out "...Life's enduring meaning comes from the pursuit of understanding...". Nehal Patel, our 2012 Susan Seidman, Excellence of Student Teaching Award winner, handles the communication aspects for the Programme Committee, co-chairs ChalkWalk and a PDK Spelling Bee chapter.

***Join us on Saturday, October 5 at Wilket Creek and/or send us a donation for this important PDK /Spelling Bee event.***

Contact Co-Chairs

Moveta Nanton [nanton@sympatico.ca](mailto:nanton@sympatico.ca)

Nehal Patel [nehal\\_patel\\_88@hotmail.com](mailto:nehal_patel_88@hotmail.com)



### Learning from Research, Democracy and the Past

We live in a democracy.

This was the opening statement of my dissertation, for which I took a bit of a beating at my doctoral defence. I believe the lively reaction was due to the preponderance of belief across academia that our democratic culture has been strong-armed by

consumerism, neo-liberalism, and a post-welfare milieu of every man for himself. In fact, government by "corporatocracy" is the term coined by Christine Sleeter (2008) that aptly describes the prevailing belief that democracy at this moment in time has been hoodwinked, held hostage and disabled by a growing group of corporate interests, flush with hidden cash, who wield unconscionable influence. George Fallis (2007) refers to this group as the "new Patricians" reflecting their concern with their personal corporate and financial interests and their tragic lack of concern with democratic values, processes or expectations.

I am certainly not here to disagree. The prevailing opinion is based on a multitude of well documented and theoretically debated explanations. For instance, Trevor Norris (2011) with his book "Consuming education: The end of politics" is just one example of a philosopher of education who has taken the time to analyze and theorize what has and is happening to education across the western world. David Berliner (2014) on the other hand, has long studied everything to do with measurement and education. His latest publication is a cold hard look at just how badly America is likely to fare in the face of the soon to be realized 2014 NCLB deadline.

A good sample of localized stories that demonstrate the harm done to public education generally, and to particular students and educators across America can be found in "Pencils Down" (Au and Tempel, 2012) a jolting read that reveals some of the unsavoury aspects to education that are a result of our strident accountability frameworks. Even academics that once supported sweeping reform through high-stakes standardized testing and other accountability requirements now look with dismay on the havoc that has been wrought on public education. "It seemed like a good idea at the time," Diane Ravitch (2010) tells us when discussing her volume, "The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education."

Although I agree with many of the arguments such as Norris' that democracy is under duress, and the resultant neo-liberal onslaught on education represented by harsh and punitive accountability mandates are taking a severe toll on public education across America, I am also a little more hopeful than my academic colleagues seem to be.

I am hopeful because we do in fact live in a democracy, such as it is. And democracy is always a work in progress. Whatever victories democracy has won, they have never been delivered on a silver platter. Each victory has been hard-won and required persistence and determination in working to win over others, to fight the good fight. The unparalleled political theorist and philosopher, Hannah Arendt, wrote, "We are not born equal, we become equal...Our political life rests on the assumption that we can produce equality through organization because man can act in and change and build a common world, together with his equals" (Arendt, 1976, p. 301).

This insight by Arendt came to mind as I read this year's Brown Lecture authored by the highly respected Vanessa Siddle Walker (2013). Her comprehensive look at the role of black educators in the decade's long fight for equality in education, before *Brown v. Board of Education* makes for fascinating reading. The article is a sobering play by play of the tenacity and organizational genius on the part of groups of people who shared common principles, believed in the justice of their cause and never lost hope. Their confidence in the latent power of groups of people working together, growing membership and support even in the face of adversity and long years of hardship is a testament to all of those who came before us, and built a world where we are the beneficiaries of their foresight and drive. Walker shows through her painstaking research that when local groups of educators felt disheartened about their lack of progress toward their goals, the national organization stepped up to provide support and encouragement. And when the national organization was desperate for funds,

the local groups quietly redoubled their efforts to help out. Most of the local actors in this decade's long journey are unnamed and lost to the quiet rectitude of time and history, but as Walker shows, their collective contributions were the foundation that kept the dream of justice for black students alive.

There is a cardinal lesson to be learned from the story Walker tells. It would be difficult to argue that the conditions under which those generations of black educators found themselves were easier or less harsh than contemporary, frustrating conditions found in localized areas in America. Yet somehow those resilient people, despite their human weaknesses, their inevitable internal battles and the ongoing resistance they continuously faced, managed to forge ahead together because of the principle of justice they all adhered to. In effect they are a prime example of what Hannah Arendt referred to as exercising freedom by working "in concert with others".

The research that Walker undertook to put together this window into history was long and exacting. We need to sit up and pay attention because what we learn from it is invaluable.

The challenges we face today in public education can be addressed in exactly the manner that black educators undertook to change their own circumstances. They worked together. They thought creatively. They planned. They organized. They supported local and national leaders who had the courage to keep pushing forward in the face of daunting obstacles. They looked past their own internal differences and focused on the principle of justice that they shared and

### Research Findings (Continued from p. 2)

individually and collectively aspired to. They believed that sooner or later justice must prevail because at the end of the day, we live in a democracy. Thank goodness.

Dr. Margaret-Mary (Boni) Thompson

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From CBC Saturday Night Blues

### A Call to the Learning Road

Ken Hoffman – 2013 Henry Jackman Award Winner.

Wisdom comes in all guises; in youthful exuberance as much as cloaked in venerated gown and mortarboard. More so, it can be common and ready wisdom – a casual conversation, an overheard aphorism – that indicates a journey we ought to take. I suspect we have all been recipients of wisdom that, heeded or not, we later recognized as a critical juncture in our travels, a fork in our road of learning. Therefore, lifelong learning is first a call to our road but it is foremost an embarking upon our journey.

My first memorable glimpse into informal lifelong learning came during my days as an apprentice Blues saxophonist, during a long drive from Edmonton to Saskatoon in a van filled with veteran Blues musicians. Rogues to the outsider, the unschooled music makers of the world, chroniclers and exemplars, carry with them the breadth and depth of human experience. Our traveling Blues elder assured me that the one book I should take on my impending contract as a cruise ship musician ought to be Joseph Campbell's *Myths to Live By*.

Joseph Campbell may have provided the script for further learning, but the Blues elder, the roots music *bodhisattva*, illuminated the fork in the road.

An identifiable advantage to formal lifelong learning is visible, celebrated mileposts: you don your robe and mortarboard, sitting before the public until your turn comes to cross the threshold into knowing. It may even be unclear what enduring understanding you have acquired but you most certainly have acquired enough of something such that society applauds you.

After twenty years as an educator in Community Colleges and International Schools I too will soon be celebrated for having reached a formal milestone: two semesters in Initial Teacher Education.

In her novel, *Prozac Nation* Elizabeth Wurtzel quotes *The Sun Also Rises* to illuminate how she became depressed. A character in Hemingway's novel is asked how he became bankrupt, to which he eventually replies, "Gradually and then suddenly." This is how we come to know that we have much more to learn.

An enduring understanding from Initial Teacher Education came during the final days of my first teaching practicum. Confident in my subject area, I focused my attention on an anti-oppression lesson planning assignment. I had learned that student diversity was woefully underrepresented in classroom resources and I set out to illuminate this for those very same students. The lesson would be the culminating moment of my journey to becoming an ally. It came suddenly as prophesied. The students' reflections on the lesson revealed that they were well aware of their underrepresentation. I had underestimated their depth of prior knowledge.

Initial Teacher Education will shape the next twenty years of my career but seventeen year-olds illuminated the fork in the road.

I once measured the wisdom of others in terms of initials appended to a name or pages attributed to it. Since, I have realized that we are much more than a collection of artifacts or titles. Life's enduring meaning comes from the pursuit of understanding rather than from its possession or dissemination.

For a full Listing of our Chapter's Executive Team, visit our website. [www.pdk-ut.ca](http://www.pdk-ut.ca)

PROGRAMME AND DUE DATES FOR AWARDS FOR 2013 -14 VISIT [WWW.PDK-UT.CA](http://WWW.PDK-UT.CA) FOR MORE DETAILS. NOTE: OUR RESEARCH SERIES FOR 201-14 WILL FOCUS ON "LEARNING FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY". EACH SESSION CAN STAND ALONE; ATTENDEES OF ALL THREE RECEIVE A CERTIFICATE. QUESTIONS: JOHN MYERS [johnmyers.myers@utoronto.ca](mailto:johnmyers.myers@utoronto.ca) 416-978-0197 OR TIM RUDAN [TIMRUDAN@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:TIMRUDAN@HOTMAIL.COM) 416 -736-2100

ChalkWalk	Saturday October 5	ChalkWalk at Wilket Creek (Leslie & Eglinton)	9:00 AM-12:00 PM
Research Series #1 (1 of 3)	Tuesday Oct. 15	<b>Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b> Presenter: Karen Grose Location- OISE (252 Bloor (St. George Subway Station)Room TBA	7:00 pm – 9:15 pm
Research Series #2 (2 of 3)	Tuesday Dec. 10	<b>Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b> Location- York U Room TBA	7:00 pm – 9:15 pm
Niagara Falls Get Together	Wed .Nov.13	Niagara Falls PDK Coordinator - Elizabeth Manker 905-358-3825, <a href="mailto:SIDECAR09@aol.com">SIDECAR09@aol.com</a>  HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS ON QUEEN ST (PDK joining Canadian Federation of University women-NF)  5:00 PM Private shopping at Butterfly Gallery Boutique  6:15 PM: Dinner at Paris Crepes ;  7:30: Lyndesfarne Theatre Play "Shirley Valentine." For registration, email Elizabeth Manker <a href="mailto:sidecar09@aol.com">sidecar09@aol.com</a>	5:00 PM -9:30
Niagara Falls Get Together	Thurs., Nov. 28	"ANGELS...EVERYWHERE!": PDK annual event partnering with the Canadian Federation of University: PDK awards certificates to schools participating with music, art, & prose. At Christ Church, River Rd. at Zimmerman Ave., Niagara Falls. This is an international educational event and includes Niagara Falls, N.Y. Schools.	7:00 PM -9:00



**President**  
Tim Rudan



**Programme Chair**  
John Myers



**Newsletter Editor**  
Shak Ahad



**Membership Chair**  
Nancy Nightingale



**Foundation Rep**  
Zenobia Omerali



**Why join PDK?**  
**It may take you to exotic places!**

**Nehal Patel (ChalkWalk Co-Chair)**



PDK has been a wonderful stepping stone for me, with an endless wealth of learning opportunities. I have met the most incredible and inspirational individuals, who continue to contribute so much to education. This is what drives me to pursue my dreams of being an educator. I spent most of this year volunteering and working part time at educational institutions. Gaining exceptional knowledge in teaching from a diversity of experiences has made me a stronger educator.

Through this experience, I have had the privilege of meeting Nancy Nightingale who introduced me to Edu Travel, which is an educational travel program focussing on experiential learning. I was selected to supervise and lead the grade 11 and 12 Biology course in Fiji. This gave me the experience of a lifetime.

For the course of a month our high school students escaped from city living to the very definition of paradise and beauty. It was a learning and living platform. This was a cultural and learning experience not only for the students but also for me as a young teacher. It touched my soul. This trip has helped me explicitly apply my knowledge as a science teacher in how to use a more practical and hands on manner.

I thank PDK, this wonderful network of individuals, for supporting me throughout this year and I hope to gain much more inspiration along the way.

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