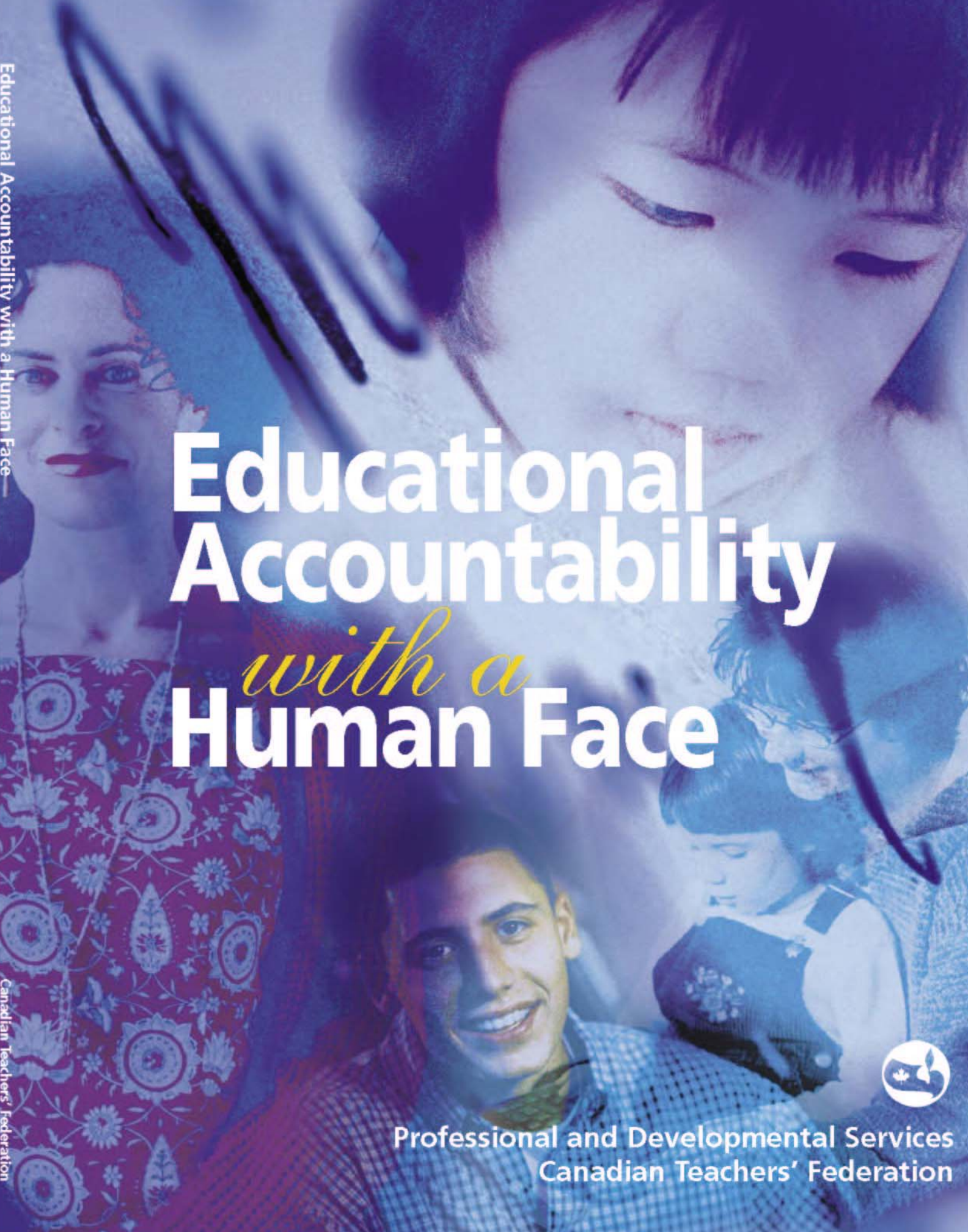

Educational Accountability *with a* Human Face

Professional and Development Services
Canadian Teachers' Federation

Educational Accountability with a Human Face—
Canadian Teachers' Federation

Educational Accountability with a Human Face

Professional and Developmental Services

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Introduction

…the form of schooling espoused under the banner of standards demonstrates the same deterministic thinking that governs the production of fast food …. Commitment to standards-led school reform means creating a system of schools geared solely to the product – test results – and not to the process of creating educative experiences. (Holt, 2002, p. 268)

Talk of accountability (or the lack thereof) dominates current Canadian education debates. We're not alone in this regard. Mawhinney (1998) observes that "the educational reform agenda in many industrialized nations today is driven by a perceived crisis in accountability" (p. 98). Unfortunately, as Earl (2001) also reminds us, "accountability is rarely clearly defined. It is an emotionally charged concept that everyone agrees is good, with little agreement about how it works or what it looks like." (p. 27)

Teachers support accountability when it is fair and equitable for all students, and when it supports teaching and learning.

This publication is an attempt to shed some light on the concept from a teacher organization perspective.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has identified accountability in education as a priority issue. As part of a continuing effort to address issues related to standardized testing, school rankings, teacher testing, and narrow performance indicators, this report on educational accountability has several objectives:

- To emphasize that public accountability is a fundamental principle underlying public education.
- To demonstrate that the teaching profession is clearly ***not*** opposed to accountability but rather, to 'accountability' as it is narrowly construed in terms of test scores, 'league tables' ranking schools and accountability systems based on rewards and sanctions. Teachers' organizations believe it is time to recast the concept of accountability. According to Kohn (2000),

  > endorsing the idea of accountability is quite different from holding students and teachers accountable specifically for raising test scores. We need to help people see that the first doesn't entail the second – and, indeed, that genuine accountability and authentic standards are *undermined* by a myopic emphasis on testing. (p. 46)

  Teachers support accountability when it is fair and equitable for all students, and when it supports teaching and learning.

- To examine educational accountability and its relationship to equity and other issues in order to contextualize and enrich our understanding of accountability as teacher organizations.

- To contribute to a constructive counter-discourse on the subject of educational accountability by outlining elements of a comprehensive accountability framework. This framework highlights shared responsibility and professional accountability as an alternative to market-based and bureaucratic accountability models.

The accountability movement in context

Globalization and market-based education reform

Among the major changes we are witnessing in educational policy are the so-called 'accountability revolution', school choice and competition among schools, trends that are closely linked. Such changes in education need to be understood in the context of corporate-driven globalization, which Michel Agnaïeff[1] has described as the "second capitalistic revolution". Globalization according to Agnaïeff has accelerated the "penetration of market values into areas where they do not belong".[2] This has resulted in the treatment of education as a commodity and the portrayal of public education as a failure in order to advance an agenda of deregulation and privatization. Paradoxically, while education is universally hailed as the key to success in the knowledge-based economy, *public* education does not appear to be held in the same high regard and indeed, is being neglected at best and undermined at worst.

*"McWorld does not prosper when people think **for** themselves and **about** others - both key outcomes of what I would consider an education worthy of the name."*

Borrowing the term "McWorld" from political theorist Benjamin Barber to describe a world being radically transformed by corporate globalization, Robertson (Dec. 2002) asserts that, "McWorld does not prosper when people think *for* themselves and *about* others – both key outcomes of what I would consider an education worthy of the name." Sustaining and strengthening public education against the forces of globalization is perhaps the greatest challenge currently facing the education community.

Demands for increased accountability, especially shrill in the U.S. and the U.K. and resulting in particularly draconian measures, have been used by decision-makers to justify the development of narrow measurable outcomes of student achievement. This has been accompanied by large-scale standardized testing to verify those outcomes and the subsequent ranking and publishing of average test scores for schools and districts. This market-based approach to accountability, emphasizing competition, is designed to create (a few) winners and (many more) losers, resulting in increased inequities.

In her 2001 Massey Lectures, entitled *The Cult of Efficiency*, Janice Gross Stein examines "how the discussion of efficiency in the delivery of public goods, such as education and health care, has risen to prominence in post-industrial society." She rightly argues that

> efficiency is not an end, but a means to achieve valued ends …. When it is used as an end in itself, as a value in its own right, and as the overriding goal of public life, it becomes a cult …. when the public discussion of efficiency focuses only on costs, the cult becomes even stronger. (p. 6)

That efficiency has become such a dominant factor in how public goods and services are delivered comes as no surprise. Efficiency, competition and privatization are defining features of a free market system, the mould of which is being applied to many public institutions including the education system. As teachers' organizations have consistently stressed, the market model of education, premised as it is on these principles and the bottom-line imperative of generating profits, is inappropriate for the education of children. Eisner (2003) says that,

> School reform is being driven by a competitive model in which student scores constitute the data to be rank-ordered. That competition should be seen as motivating is, of course, entirely consistent with the values of a capitalist economy. The tacit belief is that, if competition is good for business, it's good for schools because schools, when you get down to it, are businesses, and the business of schools is producing measurable student performance. (p. 654)

As teachers' organizations have consistently stressed, the market model of education is inappropriate for the education of children.

If the business of schools is producing measurable student and other outcomes, then the methods of choice are 'performance indicators' and 'audit testing', methods that derive from corporate accounting and auditing practices. In his analysis of what he describes as the "ideology and technology of control systems being imposed on public services in general and education in particular", Kuehn (2004) contrasts the performance indicator system, which is "defined externally to the participants in the education system", with a locally-determined "democratic dialogue approach where a school community defines goals" (pp. 57-59). The former is a top-down "technocratic process whose shape is driven by the need to produce numbers" – in the case of education, standardized tests are increasingly used to churn out those numbers.

An outspoken critic of high-stakes testing and its negative impact on education, Alfie Kohn (2002) states bluntly that:

> Anyone whose goal was to serve up our schools to the marketplace could hardly find a shrewder strategy than to insist on holding schools "accountable" by administering wave after wave of standardized tests. (p. 116)

Some have referred to this as the "label, blame, shame and abandon" approach to accountability. Commenting on the Fraser Institute ranking[3] of nearly 3,000 Ontario elementary schools on the basis of Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) test results, released to considerable media fanfare in June 2003, Kohn remarked that:

> If my goal were to privatize Canadian education, my first move would be to promote standardized tests that I knew would make many public schools look bad, then release rankings to drive home the point, and finally profess to be shocked at how poor many schools were, thereby paving the way for vouchers or other private alternatives (Adam, 2003).

Private schools invariably rank at the top in these pseudo-scientific exercises. In addition to their conceptual and empirical shortcomings[4], accountability policies and practices such as ranking schools on the basis of test scores ignore family socio-economic status and other factors outside the control of schools.

Under NCLB, schools which fail to reach their "adequate yearly progress" goals are subject to various sanctions, including outside intervention by consultants, staff replacement, and state takeover, as well as the imposition of school choice or charter school plans, or the complete transferral of school management to private contractors.

The "No Child Left Behind" Act: Accountability, American-style

Test-based accountability is well suited to an education system being shaped by market principles and increasingly motivated by concerns about global economic competitiveness. Standardized testing encourages competition because it efficiently sorts winners from losers. In his analysis of the Bush administration's sweeping education reform bill, the "No Child Left Behind" Act (NCLB)[5], Karp (2002) discusses the intersection of high-stakes accountability with privatization and school competition (NCLB contains a number of pro-privatization proposals). He states that the NCLB legislation institutes

> at the national level policies that have already wreaked havoc at the state level: punitive high stakes testing, the use of bureaucratic monitoring as the engine of school reform, and "accountability" schemes that set up schools to fail and then use that failure to justify disinvestment and privatization. (p. 3)

Schools which fail to reach their "adequate yearly progress" goals are subject to various sanctions, including outside intervention by consultants, staff replacement, and state takeover, as well as the imposition of school choice or charter school plans, or the complete transferral of school management to private contractors (Karp, 2002). Describing the flawed NCLB as "public education's trojan horse", Rose says that "NCLB is widely regarded in the education community as a scheme to replace the public schools with a system fueled by vouchers and focusing on private entrepreneurs." (p. 2)

Writing in the *New York Times*, Winerip (2003) remarked on the thankless work faced by federal U.S. Department of Education officials in defending and promoting NCLB, a law receiving widespread criticism across the country:

> How do you defend a law that is likely to result in 85 percent of public schools in America being labeled failing – based on a single test score? …. And how do you defend a law demanding that schools have 100 percent of their children reaching proficiency on state tests in the next decade, and then provides a fraction of the resources state educators say is necessary to help the poor, the foreign born, the handicapped meet those standards?

Not an easy sell. In addition, with large numbers of schools predicted to end up on lists of "low-performing" or "failing schools", the result will be a shortage of "good schools" for students to transfer to, school choice being an important aspect of NCLB. There are already indications that this is occurring.

Accountability has become a highly profitable aspect of the burgeoning education industry. It is no coincidence that the biggest players in the testing business are also among the largest publishers of textbooks and test preparation materials.

Despite its profound implications for K-12 education, the majority of Americans know very little about NCLB, according to a recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll which focused on the legislation. And the more they find out, the less likely they are to support it. Rose and Gallup (2003) conclude that "responses to questions related to strategies associated with NCLB suggest that greater familiarity with the law is unlikely to lead to greater public support." Some specific examples are illustrative (see Rose & Gallup, pp. 42-43):

- 66% of poll respondents believe a single test cannot provide a fair picture of whether a school is in need of improvement. (NCLB bases this judgment on a state test administered annually in grades 3 through 8.)
- Only 15% of respondents believe testing on English and math alone can produce a fair picture of whether or not a school is in need of improvement, while 83% believe it cannot. (Under NCLB, whether a school is in need of improvement is determined solely by the percentage of students whose test scores meet the goal in English and math.)
- 80% of respondents are concerned either a great deal or a fair amount that relying only on testing in English and math to judge a school will mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects. (NCLB relies only on English and math scores to judge a school.)
- 66% believe the emphasis of NCLB on standardized testing will encourage teachers to teach to the tests, and 60% believe this would be a bad thing. (NCLB mandates testing in grades 3 through 8 and in at least one high school grade.)

Accountability has become a highly profitable aspect of the burgeoning education industry. It is no coincidence that the biggest players in the testing business are also among the largest publishers of textbooks and test preparation materials.

Testing companies and other education businesses are beginning to reap huge profits as a result of NCLB. Kronholz (2003) notes that, "already, states are reporting that thousands of schools aren't meeting minimum learning goals and now face an array of sanctions. Companies that sell to the schools – from test publishers to tutoring services to teacher-training outfits – say business is booming as troubled districts turn to them for help." In anticipation of the passing of NCLB, test publisher ETS (Educational Testing Service) made a shrewd business decision to add a new elementary/secondary education division to its enterprise to tap into a major emerging market for testing, with expected revenues of $75 million in the coming year alone.

Diverse approaches to accountability

Leithwood, Jantzi and Mascall (2002)[6] describe several different approaches to accountability currently in vogue, noting that each is "premised on quite different assumptions about what is wrong with schools and how to fix them", and that "most large-scale reform strategies include elements of all these approaches to accountability" (p. 9). In addition to market-based approaches which "assume that schools are monopolistic bureaucracies likely to improve when forced to compete for their clients" through, for example, privatization, vouchers including tuition tax credit / tax deduction schemes, school choice (e.g., charter schools and open boundaries) and league tables, they identify the following:

- decentralization approaches – these "assume that schools are too distant from those they serve and will improve when their clients are given a greater voice in decision making" (e.g., school councils, site-based management, school and district profiles).
- professionalization approaches – these "assume that typical professional practices in schools do not reflect the best available knowledge and will improve when held to higher standards"; this would include the standards movement as applied to the practices and performance of educators, and the use of prescriptive standards and testing in teacher selection, preparation and appraisal.
- management / bureaucratic approaches – these "assume that schools are not sufficiently rational and will improve when they become clearer about their goals and more systematic about the strategies used to pursue them"; this includes input controls such as teacher tests, licensure, selection processes; process controls such as curriculum guides, planning and monitoring processes; and output controls such as student content and performance standards, standardized testing.

'Eclectic' or mixed approaches combine decreased central control (through a mix of school-based management, school improvement planning, quasi-markets in education) with increased central control over education (through rigid curriculum frameworks, province-wide/statewide testing with targets, inspection). However, when major decisions regarding funding, curriculum and assessment have already been made at the

top level, schools and parent councils are left between a rock and a hard place – with little power but much responsibility.

Policies flowing from these different approaches – such as high-stakes standardized testing and the ranking of schools based on test results – haven't worked because, according to Leithwood (2001),

- Some are unethical in the sense that people cannot be held accountable for things over which they have no or only partial control. (The BCTF (2002) for example notes that "teachers cannot be held accountable for the diversity of the students who walk through the doors of their classrooms, district decisions about programs, the quality of the provincially prescribed curriculum, the adequacy of provincial funding, or the number of students in portables.")
- Some don't accomplish the purposes intended by policy-makers – for example, among the unintended consequences of school choice policies are increased inequities in education.

The BCTF frames accountability broadly in terms of the education system's responsibility to the community and the public good and vice versa, affirming that, "In the view of teachers, the primary purpose of accountability in education is to respond to the implicit social contract between society and the public school system."

- Some distract students from doing their best learning – for example, extrinsic rewards being emphasized over intrinsic motivation.
- Some distract teachers from doing their best teaching.
- Many policies are poorly implemented by policy-makers.

The fact that some of these policies actually undermine teaching and learning should be greater cause for concern.

Kohn (1999) wryly observes that the term 'accountability' as found in the rhetoric of those advocating for tougher standards and more testing "usually turns out to be a code for tighter control over what happens in classrooms by people who are not in classrooms – and it has approximately the same effect on learning that a noose has on breathing." Gallagher (2004) uses the image of a remote control device to put across the same idea. Drawing on Darling-Hammond's insights, he believes that accountability systems based on "*designing controls* rather than *developing capacity*" are doomed to fail, noting that,

> …instead of promoting and investing in the expertise of teachers and trusting them to do their job, most state systems focus their resources on building remote-control systems, in which "experts" – administrators, policy makers, politicians, curriculum designers, textbook companies, or testing firms – set and measure the educational agenda from afar. (Gallagher, pp. 353-354)

Cult of testing vs. culture of genuine accountability

Simply stated, accountability in education is about satisfying the public's – including parents' – need to know what schools are doing to improve learning (including but not limited to student achievement) and foster student growth and development, and how well they are doing it. Sirotnik (2002) describes the challenge of rethinking accountability – or "educational responsibility" as he describes it – as "finding creative and useful ways to demonstrate publicly who students are, what they know, what they care about and are able to do, and what they can become." (p. 664) In general, answering for one's actions can range from simple description and explanation to the more demanding requirement of justifying those actions (Leithwood, 2001).

Moving from the cult of testing to a culture of accountability which values and supports teaching and learning is among the challenges before us.

In its policy on accountability, the B.C. Teachers' Federation (2002) states that:

> Accountability is a means by which individuals and organizations take responsibility for their actions so that those who depend on them can be assured there are some safeguards in place to encourage good practices and prevent bad practices or abuses, some course of redress for problems that arise, and some assurance of equitable and fair treatment.

The BCTF frames accountability broadly in terms of the education system's responsibility to the community and the public good and vice versa, affirming that, "In the view of teachers, the primary purpose of accountability in education is to respond to the implicit social contract between society and the public school system." This democratic aspect of accountability is discussed by Simey (as cited in Mahony and Hextall, 2000) who maintains that:

> ... accountability is not a mechanism or a routine but a principle. More than that, it is a principle which serves a specific purpose. In a democracy, that purpose is to provide the basis for the relationship between the society and its members, between those who govern and those who consent to be governed. The word consent provides the significant clue. (Simey 1985 p. 17)"

Accountability systems based on test scores and school rankings that result in rewards and sanctions for students, teachers and schools essentially treat accountability as punishment. The teaching profession is strongly opposed to this coercive approach because it undermines equity and the quality of education – in other words, it simply doesn't work. At the same time, teachers are cognizant of the fact that public accountability is a fundamental principle underlying public education and firmly believe there is a better way to achieving it.

At the International Confederation of Principals symposium on standardized testing held last year in Ottawa, Wayne Hampton, principal of an Alberta elementary school, spoke about the negative impact of testing on student learning. Hampton who has taken the unusual and risky move (at least in Canada) of encouraging parents at his school to boycott the provincial exams in Grades 3, 6 and 9, stated the issue succinctly:

> "I understand the political reality. You have to be able to answer to the public, I just think there's a better way to do it than what they're doing …. We need to move from a culture of testing to a culture of teaching and learning." (Cohen, 2003)

Moving from the cult of testing in which we are currently mired to a culture of accountability which values and supports teaching and learning is among the challenges before us. With this in mind, we pose the following question: What would a thoughtful, alternative, comprehensive framework for achieving genuine accountability in public education look like? We believe it would need to incorporate a number of elements, the specifics of which are outlined in this report.[7]

Standardized testing ≠ accountability (or, what accountability is *not*)

…counting what can be measured and measuring what does not count …. threatens to lead to the "trivial pursuit" approach to education goals.
(Rutledge, 2004, p. 6)

A recognition that standardized testing and school rankings are the wrong path to accountability, indeed that they represent a serious distortion of the concept, is a critical step. The problems with testing – in terms of its flawed nature, the questionable ways that results are used to make important decisions, and the adverse impact testing has on educational equity – are well documented.

Standardized testing and school rankings are the wrong path to accountability, indeed they represent a serious distortion of the concept.

Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) opposition to high-stakes standardized testing stems from a number of issues and concerns (see Froese-Germain, 1999). Standardized tests are inadequate for assessing student learning and development for many reasons – to cite just a few:

- Tests may be standardized, but students (and teachers and teaching) are not.
- Many types of knowledge and ability as well as important personal attributes are not captured by a standardized test.[8]
- Standardized tests typically measure lower-order recall of facts and skills, and penalize higher-order thinking.[9]
- Test preparation and administration take up valuable classroom time and resources that could be used for teaching.
- Standardized testing is incompatible with current knowledge and ideas about the nature of children's learning and development.[10]

The limitations of the multiple choice format[11], mismatches in content between what is tested and what is taught, and the issue of "score-spread" are phenomena well known in educational testing circles but likely little known to the average parent or student (or even teacher). To quote Popham (2002) on the consequences of test score-spread:

> To illustrate how instructional insensitivity gets incorporated in a traditionally constructed standardized achievement test, consider the nature of the test items that contribute best to the production of score-spread. Items that are answered correctly by only about half the examinees do a great job in spreading out examinees' total-test scores. On the other hand, items answered correctly by a large proportion of examinees – for instance, 80 percent or higher – do not help produce score-spread.

> Accordingly, the developers of Alpha-like standardized achievement tests avoid putting these sorts of high-success items on a test when it's first built and almost certainly will remove such items when the test is revised. Items that are answered correctly by most students do not contribute their share to the production of score-spread.
>
> But here's the catch: Test items on which students perform well will often cover the topics that teachers have emphasized instructionally. The more significant the topic, the more likely teachers will stress it. Yet, the better that students perform on items related to any teacher-stressed topics, the less likely it is that those items will be found on the test. *There is, therefore, a powerful tendency to remove from traditional standardized achievement tests those items covering the most important things that students learn in school.* [emphasis added] (pp. 19-20)

Not only is this antithetical to good teaching and effective learning, it works against the interests of poor and minority kids. The sources of score-spread are often found in the types of information and knowledge routinely acquired by students as a function of their socio-economic status.

The Alliance for Childhood states that high-stakes testing "may undermine the development of positive social relationships and attitudes towards school and learning."

The health and psychological impacts of high-stakes testing are beginning to receive some long overdue attention – if the reports of test-induced stress and anxiety on children are any indication. Canadian mental health professionals have expressed concerns about the growing incidence of large-scale testing and its health implications (Simner, 2000), and parents in the UK are reporting signs of stress in seven- and eleven-year-old students resulting from large-scale testing in English schools (Ward, 2003). In 2001, a group of prominent U.S. psychologists, psychiatrists and educators, through the Alliance for Childhood, issued a statement of concern accompanied by a call to action on high-stakes testing, citing evidence of harm to children's health. It states that

> …children's levels of stress and test-related anxiety are showing up as headaches, stomach aches, sleep problems, attendance problems, acting out, and depression. The political push for even more standardized testing … has ignored the adverse health consequences of such policies.

The anecdotes about kids in tears and even throwing up on their test papers – and the contingencies some schools are taking for this latter eventuality – are heartbreaking.

The Alliance for Childhood statement further notes that high-stakes testing "may undermine the development of positive social relationships and attitudes towards school and learning." It is hard to imagine a more disastrous outcome of the accountability movement than turning eager young minds off learning.

In addition, there are serious equity and other issues surrounding high-stakes testing (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2000; Froese-Germain, 2001):

High-stakes testing creates a situation in which students struggling with material or who have special needs can be seen as a liability because their low scores influence averages.

- High-stakes testing encourages "teaching to the test" rather than teaching for genuine learning, with the result that curriculum is becoming increasingly test-driven.[12]
- Pressure to improve scores on high-stakes tests results in test performance being shaped by factors other than content knowledge.
- High-stakes testing is used as the basis for making decisions about student tracking, grade promotion and grade retention.
- High-stakes testing creates a situation in which students struggling with material or who have special needs can be seen as a liability because their low scores influence averages (this is elaborated on below).
- High-stakes testing squeezes out "non-tested" subjects thereby narrowing the curriculum. It also overemphasizes certain aspects of the tested subjects (math, language, science).
- High-stakes testing is used to make funding and other major decisions about entire schools and school districts.
- High-stakes testing tends to transfer control over the curriculum to the body which controls the exam.[13]

Ultimately, high-stakes testing perpetuates the idea that a good education equals high test scores.

- High-stakes testing is used to make decisions about high school graduation and in some cases, about student eligibility to receive post-secondary financial aid. The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, arguably the most high-stakes test in Canada, is a case in point. At an estimated cost of $40 million, the OSSLT is a blunt instrument being used to determine who will be eligible to graduate from high school. Robertson (Oct. 2002) observes that literacy is "too fluid and complex to be divided by a single cut line" in this way.[14] It is estimated that over 73,000 students have failed the OSSLT since 2001. English as a Second Language (ESL) students are reported to be failing the test at a higher rate than other students (People for Education, 2002). A group of Ontario parents and students is threatening the government with legal action over the test, arguing that it should be scrapped because of the high-stakes attached to it and because it discriminates against disabled students, visible minority students and students in the applied stream (Alphonso, Dec. 12, 2003).
- High-stakes tests are frequently biased against certain groups of students. Many standardized tests have been shown to contain subtle (and not so subtle) racial,

linguistic, class and gender biases. The notion that tests are unbiased is false because, as Ollman (2003) notes, "…given the character of the testing process, the attitudes of those who make up any test and the variety of people – coming from so many different backgrounds – who take it, it is impossible to produce a test that does not have serious biases" (pp. 100-101).

- Ultimately, high-stakes testing perpetuates the idea that a good education equals high test scores.

Bartlett (2001) describes how standardized testing has a disproportionately negative impact on poor and minority kids:

> When schools perform poorly on tests, pressure to stick to rote learning increases. Because poor and/or predominantly minority schools tend to have the lowest scores, those students tend to get rote instruction for a greater percentage of their time in schools …. Thus, poor and/or minority students are relegated to a vicious cycle of poor instruction and punitive testing.

Evidence is emerging that pressure from high-stakes testing policies is exacerbating drop-out rates among marginalized youth.

In addition to reducing the quality of education for these students, evidence is emerging that pressure from high-stakes testing policies is exacerbating drop-out rates among marginalized youth (Sirotnik, 2002; Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

Speaking with reference to children with disabilities and other special needs, Robertson (Dec. 2002) is candid in her assessment of how equity is sacrificed in a competitive system of test-driven accountability and more importantly, that it cannot be otherwise in such a system – it is the nature of the beast:

> When average test scores determine a school's value, when they are ranked from "best" to "worst," every child who scores below average becomes a competitive liability to the school he or she attends. In effect, schools that serve kids who need public education the most are punished for carrying out their mission, no matter how well they do it, or with how much integrity.

She describes this as a new form of prejudice, "the prejudice against those who might be viewed as a drag on educational productivity."

Kohn (2000) raises issues of educators becoming defensive and competitive in a high-stakes environment; of pressure to raise test scores leading to episodes of cheating; of testing contributing to teacher overspecialization in those subject areas targeted by high-stakes tests (such as math and science); and of testing narrowing the conversation about education with respect to the overall goals of schooling and what schools should be

doing (pp. 26-29). He also warns that the obsession with testing is driving good teachers and principals out of the teaching profession, especially critical at a time of projected teacher shortages.

Testing narrows the conversation about education with respect to the overall goals of schooling and what schools should be doing.

Despite all that is known about the harmful effects of standardized testing, interest in it remains high. Robert Linn, Co-Director of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing in California, says that testing has, and continues to be, "a popular instrument of accountability and reform" among policy-makers for several reasons (as cited in American Federation of Teachers, 2003):

- Tests are relatively inexpensive and quick to implement compared to other changes such as reducing class size and improving teacher preparation and recruitment.
- Test results are visible and draw media attention because, as Linn notes, "poor results in the first year of a new testing program are usually followed by increasing scores in subsequent years, giving the appearance that schools are improving."
- Testing can be used to indirectly leverage other changes in education that would be otherwise difficult to legislate; flawed test results can lead to poor policy decisions.

According to Rhoades and Madaus (2003), authors of a recent report on the nature and extent of human error in standardized testing, a large part of the appeal of testing – and the attempt to quantify performance generally – also stems from the fact that the numbers generated by the measurement tool tend to give the "appearance of fairness, impartiality, authority and precision." (p. 5) They believe that this facade blinds us to the "fallibility of testing":

> Like any measurement tool that produces a number – whether a simple blood pressure reading or complex laboratory test – tests contain error. The widespread belief in their precision does not admit this inherent fallibility. (p. 5)

Errors can result in serious consequences for children including, as noted earlier, grade retention or being unable to graduate from high school. Among the conditions that may spawn testing error are "instituting testing programs without adequate time to evaluate the operation, rushing the piloting process for test questions, and high-volume testing that is conducted within a short period of time." (p. 29) The authors argue that these concerns need to be seen in the context of a largely unregulated testing industry (and the resultant lack of oversight) as well as the dramatic expansion of high-stakes testing in the U.S. under the rigid provisions of NCLB.

In sum, the trend toward high-stakes, measurement-driven, outcomes-based accountability which links standardized test results with rewards and sanctions to students, teachers, schools and entire districts reduces accountability to a bottom-line numbers game with serious consequences for failure.

Making classroom assessment a priority

Eschewing standardized testing as the linchpin of accountability, an alternative approach would emphasize the importance of quality classroom-based assessment, incorporating authentic forms of student assessment. This is assessment that is closely integrated with curriculum and instruction – as Supovitz and Brennan (1997) describe it, assessment "conceived not just as the end product, but also as an episode of learning" (p. 474).

The theme of integration is echoed in the work of the UK-based Assessment Reform Group (ARG)[15] which stresses the importance of distinguishing between assessment *of* learning, and assessment *for* learning. The former pertains to the more conventional practices of grading student work and recording and reporting achievement. Assessment *for* learning is described as the "process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there."

An alternative approach to accountability would emphasize the importance of quality classroom-based assessment, incorporating authentic forms of student assessment.

The latter approach is well grounded in the research. A synthesis of evidence from over 250 studies linking assessment and learning found conclusively that "initiatives designed to enhance effectiveness of the way assessment is used in the classroom to promote learning can raise pupil achievement", with low achievers benefiting most (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, p. 4; see also Black & Wiliam, 1998). The key factors for improving learning through assessment include:

- the provision of effective feedback to pupils;
- the active involvement of pupils in their own learning;
- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;
- a recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both crucial influences on learning; and
- the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

There is however also evidence that the use of classroom assessment to enhance student learning is a weak area of UK teachers' actual practice, requiring more attention in programs of initial teacher training and continuing professional development. It would be worthwhile to examine the extent to which Canadian teachers practice assessment for learning as well as the necessary training and support they receive to do this.

ARG has identified a series of ten research-based principles of assessment for learning to guide teachers in their classroom practice (see Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Assessment for learning:

1. is part of effective teacher planning
2. focuses on how students learn
3. is central to classroom practice
4. is a key professional skill
5. has an emotional impact
6. affects learner motivation
7. promotes commitment to learning goals and assessment criteria
8. helps learners know how to improve
9. encourages self-assessment
10. recognizes all achievements

Classroom assessments are designed and administered by teachers, evaluated using their best professional judgment, and used for the purpose of supporting student learning.

Respecting and relying on teachers' professional judgment regarding what students know and what they can do is integral to this process. Classroom assessment also entails finding innovative ways of communicating this information to students, teachers, parents and administrators among others. It also means listening to teachers – the experts in pedagogy – when they report the impacts of high-stakes testing on their students' love of learning, as well as on their own professionalism and enjoyment of teaching.

The testing agenda is exacting a high price on teachers' personal and professional judgment. The seeming loss of public trust in the decision-making ability of those who work in classrooms and schools – those closest to the students – can only be described as a paradox. Meier (2002) writes that the

> testing enterprise has led teachers and parents to distrust their own ability to see and observe their own children …. When parents and teachers no longer believe they can directly judge a child's reading ability, when they see the indirect evidence of tests as more credible, then I fear for the relationships between children and the adults they must depend on to grow up well. I worry, too, when children themselves can't tell us whether they are good readers until they see their scores. I know then that one of the goals of a good education – 'know thyself' – has been lost. (p. 198)

The nature of teaching and learning is fundamentally about human relationships and as such, is built on communication and trust. Meier and other educators believe that respect for the numerous human judgments made daily and hourly in individual

classrooms is the essence of accountability. This trust cannot become a casualty of the standardization agenda in education, of the cult of testing.

Many educators believe the need to revalue classroom-based assessment is long overdue, particularly in the current reform climate. Briefly, these are assessments:

- designed and administered by teachers, and evaluated using their best professional judgment.
- used for the purpose of supporting student learning (e.g., provide informed feedback to students about their work).
- which demonstrate what students know and can do.

"Research suggests that the classroom assessments teachers use day in and day out provide one of the most powerful tools available for improving student achievement."

Writing in *Education Week*, Olson (2002) says that:

> Regardless of the form they take – weekly quizzes, end-of-semester tests, teacher questioning, comments and grades on homework, oral presentations, projects, or portfolios – classroom assessments are the most common, and some would say most ignored, kind of educational measurement. While most public attention these days is riveted on the results of large-scale testing programs, research suggests that the classroom assessments teachers use day in and day out provide one of the most powerful tools available for improving student achievement.

"Individual assessment in the context of teaching usually relies upon a wide variety of data points. A teacher assessing the performance of a student sees the student in many situations in the classroom and often outside of the classroom .... The picture the teacher receives is replete and it is built up over weeks and months."

To do this well is as much an art as a science. Speaking to delegates at the 1998 B.C. Teachers' Federation Annual General Meeting, Elliot Eisner reflected on the subtle, ongoing and organic nature of classroom assessment – and the central role occupied by the teacher in this process:

> Individual assessment in the context of teaching usually relies upon a wide variety of data points. A teacher assessing the performance of a student sees the student in many situations in the classroom and often outside of the classroom. The teacher sees not only the work the student produces in a field of study, but also sees the way a student responds, the character of the student's engagement, the kind of questions the student asks, the student's willingness to take risks, to speculate, to be tenacious. The picture the teacher receives is replete and it is built up over weeks and months.

Unlike large-scale assessment, feedback from classroom assessment is timely and relevant, enabling teachers to use the information to tailor instruction to students' needs and learning styles. Formal and informal mechanisms can be used to report information to students and parents e.g., report cards, parent-teacher interviews, student-led conferences, learning portfolios, school and classroom visits, surveys of parent and student satisfaction and engagement levels (the latter might include assessing how engaged parents are in their children's education in terms of monitoring and helping with school work, talking to teachers, participating in school events, etc.). Eisner's description of classroom assessment is consistent with the idea that, as Bracey (2000) suggests, "good teaching is situational. Classes differ from year to year. Teachers differ from year to year and condition to condition." (p. 189)

Assessing and evaluating the learning of students from diverse racial, ethnic and social class backgrounds is complex because it needs to consider differences with respect to language, culture and learning style.

The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) describes authentic or performance assessment as a "general term for an assessment activity in which students construct responses, create products, or perform demonstrations to provide evidence of their knowledge and skills" (Neill et al., 1997). It covers a wide range of initiatives including, but certainly not limited to, the following: oral presentations, debates, exhibitions, collections of students' written work, videotapes of performances and other learning experiences, constructions and models and their solutions to problems, experiments and the results of scientific and other inquiries, teacher observations and inventories of individual students' work and behaviour, and cooperative group work (Darling-Hammond, 1994, pp. 5-6). Alternative assessment incorporates student self-assessment (via portfolios and other mechanisms) as well as peer assessment.[16]

Assessing and evaluating the learning of students from diverse racial, ethnic and social class backgrounds is complex because it needs to consider differences with respect to language, culture and learning style. Authentic assessment is viewed as having the potential to address the negative equity implications of standardized testing. This is because it allows teachers to

> incorporate a variety of methods to diagnose students whose learning styles may not fit the standardized testing paradigm …. [and] the flexibility of allowing students to be tested in multiple types of settings is also consistent with the literature on cultural diversity, which suggests cultural preferences for different ways of participating in classroom activities (Supovitz and Brennan, 1997, p. 477).

Enthusiasm for authentic assessment does need to be tempered somewhat, according to Hargreaves et al. (2002), who caution against seeing it as the " 'holy grail' of educational change" (p. 90). In addition to the fact that it is by nature time- and labour-intensive (for students as well as for teachers), there are reliability and validity issues as

well as an assumption that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out alternative assessment. Looking at classroom assessment from a post-modern perspective, Hargreaves et al. make the point that "in today's complex and uncertain world, human beings are not completely knowable" (p. 88), posing unique challenges for student assessment and evaluation.

Having the testing 'tail' wag the curriculum and instructional 'dog' will only set back efforts to institute more progressive forms of pedagogy geared toward teaching for understanding.

It stands to reason that assessment must be compatible and evolve with our very best knowledge about the nature of children's learning and development, and with progressive pedagogy. American educational researcher Lorrie Shepard (2000) argues however that traditional testing practices, rooted as they are in dated behaviourist learning theories and scientific measurement, are out of synch with an emerging paradigm in which instruction is informed by cognitive and social constructivist learning theories and new thinking about assessment. This mismatch results in the separation of assessment from instruction. To attempt to bridge this gap, Shepard recommends that research on classroom assessment should focus on three areas: reliability and validity issues; the effects of social-constructivist uses of assessment on learning and motivation; and the professional development of teachers.

The teaching profession faces some formidable challenges in moving from the theory to the practice of constructivism, a pedagogical approach which embodies a student-centred, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning in which children essentially construct new knowledge on the basis of what they already know.

For starters, Casas (2003) points out the obvious incongruity in teacher education programs of the "student's understanding of the constructivist approach to teaching and learning [being] assessed by standardized testing, an assessment tool rooted in behaviorism." Also, according to Windschitl (2002),

> the most profound challenges for teachers are not associated merely with acquiring new skills but with making personal sense of constructivism as a basis for instruction, reorienting the cultures of classrooms to be consonant with the constructivist philosophy, and dealing with the pervasive educational conservatism that works against efforts to teach for understanding (p. 131).

According to the CTF 2002 National Issues in Education Poll, Canadians place a high value on classroom assessment.

Having the testing 'tail' wag the curriculum and instructional 'dog' will only set back efforts to institute more progressive forms of pedagogy geared toward teaching for understanding.

There may be reason for cautious optimism on the testing front. There are indications of growing public support for teacher-led assessment. According to the CTF 2002 National Issues in Education Poll, which surveyed nearly 2,300 people across the country, Canadians place a high value on classroom assessment. By a significant margin of two to one, Canadians said that teacher evaluations of student work – not standardized large-scale tests – are the best way to measure student achievement and school performance.

A subsequent public opinion poll on accountability conducted in April 2003 had a similar finding. Respondents favoured teacher evaluation over standardized testing by a margin of more than two to one, with parents reporting the strongest support (CTF, 2003; Schmidt, 2003). The poll also found that test scores are a relatively minor factor in how the public evaluates schools in their community. Canadians would give much greater consideration to such factors as interactions between teachers and parents, the nature of the curriculum, the size of classes in the school, and student fluency in the language of instruction. In response to the question, "Why measure students' progress?", Canadians are unequivocal – by a factor of eight to one (with even stronger support among public school parents), they said that the most important reason to assess student progress is to evaluate how well students are learning, not to rank or compare students and schools.

The more that parents know about and have had experience with alternatives to standardized testing, the more likely they are to support them (Kohn, 2000). Hence, increasing parental and public awareness about the nature of assessment alternatives must become part of any strategy to promote genuine accountability in education.

Hargreaves et al. (2002) tell us that a decade of experimenting with standardized testing in England and Australia is "leading to an easing of mandated curriculum and assessment expectations and to a re-embracing of more flexible, learning-based, student-centered alternatives." (p. 73) A growing backlash against standardized testing in the form of protests, boycotts and legal action is occurring in parts of the U.S.[17] as well as in Canada. Teachers in England are considering a boycott of national curriculum tests in 2004 which would, according to Hatcher (2003), "be the most decisive test yet of the government's ability to impose its business agendas" in education. Parents in more than 20 U.S. states are reported to be opting out of tests by keeping their kids at home on test days (Fisher, 2003). Sirotnik (2002) predicts that "when substantial numbers of middle- and upper-class students start failing high-standards exit exams, the protests are likely to pick up considerable steam." (p. 672)

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Public education, equity and democracy

Accountability must be situated within the multiple goals of public education. The *Charter for Public Education*[18] for example emphasizes the importance of the public education system offering learners "a broad-based education which includes aesthetic, artistic, cultural, emotional, social, intellectual, academic, physical and vocational development in order that they can find and follow their hopes, dreams and passions." It also talks about fostering "critical thinking so that learners are equipped to be reflective and analytical global citizens." Eisner (2003) takes a more philosophical tack, noting that

> we need to remind ourselves that the function of schools is broader and deeper [than high test scores] and that what really counts is what people do with their lives when they can choose to do what they want to do. In fact, I would argue that the major aim of schooling is to enable students to become the architects of their own education so that they can invent themselves during the course of their lives. (p. 652)

Accountability must be situated within the multiple goals of public education .... and must be driven by a strong vision of the role of public education in forging a democratic society.

In its discussion paper on accountability, the Canadian School Boards Association states that one of the key elements of an accountability framework is the need for consensus on the goals and objectives of our education system because, "too often, when accountability measures are put in place without a clear consensus on goals, the measured outcomes have little bearing on what is important or relevant." (p. 3) While no general consensus appears to exist on the goals of education, the direction of schools is increasingly being shaped by an economic and labour market agenda.

Further, an accountability framework must be driven by a strong vision of the role of public education in forging a democratic society, a vision equally informed by the principles of equity, accessibility, universality and quality. How well are schools preparing students to become citizens in a world in which the role of citizen is often eclipsed by, or blurred with, the roles of worker and consumer? In his critique of the pervasive influence of the private sector on public education, involvement that takes myriad forms, Kohn (2002) says that:

> …we might even go so far as to identify as one of the most crucial tasks in a democratic society the act of limiting the power that corporations have in determining what happens in schools. (p. 119)

Corporate interests and market forces are indeed shaping education systems in some very fundamental ways. With reference to the impact of neo-liberal globalization on the British school system, Hatcher (2003) identifies the emergence of three interconnected yet distinct agendas, agendas which resonate well beyond England's borders and which are facilitated by systems of test-based accountability:

- a business agenda for *what* the school system should do: above all, to produce human capital for competitiveness in the global economy;
- an agenda for *how* it should do it most efficiently: by adopting a business model of management and operation;
- an agenda for what business itself should do *within* the school system: opening up state education systems to private education-for-profit companies.

Pressures for increased trade liberalization in education services through pro-privatization trade pacts like the GATS and the FTAA, coupled with the rapidly expanding technology-driven multi-billion dollar global education industry, will almost certainly advance these agendas, posing a threat to public education.

Equity must be at the core of the public education project because it is disadvantaged kids who are most in need of good schools.

On the relationship between accountability and equity, the various education partners must be held accountable for providing a high quality education for all children and, in particular, for how well the public education system serves the most vulnerable students. Equity must be at the core of the public education project because it is disadvantaged kids who are most in need of good schools. A strong advocate for public education, Robertson (Dec. 2002) argues that

> not every child needs public education to the same degree. If you're a capable, able-bodied student, fortunate enough to have been born to loving parents with the wherewithal to make up for any gaps in your education; if your parents know how to advocate for you; if they can pay for the sports and music programs your school has had to cut; if you're fortunate enough to be this child, you can survive a struggling school system, a poorly-prepared teacher or a shortage of textbooks. If you have none of these advantages, a weakness in public education is not an inconvenience, it is a tragedy from which you may never recover.

The late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, another eloquent voice for public education, had this to say about the harsh reality of high-stakes testing in a speech he gave in New York City a few years ago:

> It is simply negligent to force children to pass a test and expect that the poorest children, who face every disadvantage, will be able to do as well as those who have every advantage. When we do this, we hold children responsible for our own inaction and unwillingness to live up to our own promises and our own obligations. *We confuse their failure with our own*. [emphasis added] (Wellstone, 2002/2003, p. 6)

This has satirical overtones – setting up the most vulnerable kids for failure, and then blaming them for it. Ohanian (2002) talks about a specific situation in Birmingham, Alabama in which over 500 African-American high school students with low skills were expelled from school just before a major high-stakes state test. District test scores predictably went up because as she notes, "the easiest way to raise the scores is to make sure the bottom students don't take the test", and the superintendent, coincidentally, received a bonus. Of this and numerous other stories of testing's pervasive and corrosive impacts, she says:

> Sometimes real life happenings cloud one's ability to recognize satire. Maybe in the twenty-first century, satire about the schools is no longer even possible. (p. 315)

"It is simply negligent to force children to pass a test and expect that the poorest children, who face every disadvantage, will be able to do as well as those who have every advantage. When we do this, we hold children responsible for our own inaction and unwillingness to live up to our own promises and our own obligations. ***We confuse their failure with our own****."*

What works – in classrooms, schools and beyond

In attempting to answer the question, "accountability for what?", an alternative framework needs to be informed by the evidence on what we know fosters student success and good schools. All too often, political ideology trumps the research evidence.

Indeed, there is a growing body of high quality educational research on what works – in the classroom, in the school, and outside the school (Leithwood, Dec. 2002). The things that matter in the classroom include small class size[19], particularly in the primary grades, and the quality of instruction and teachers, as well as high quality early childhood education and supports and services for special needs students. A collaborative professional culture, school-embedded professional development, a safe and secure climate for all students, effective school leadership, and small school size are among the things that matter most within the school environment.

An alternative accountability framework needs to be informed by the evidence on what we know fosters student success and good schools.

"Canadian policy-makers are ignoring the findings of literally decades of research that shows why school libraries and qualified teacher-librarians are essential components in the academic programming of any school."

School libraries, decimated by years of underfunding[20], also play a significant role in student learning. Haycock (2003), in a research report commissioned by the Canadian Coalition for School Libraries[21], makes a strong case for re-investing in the besieged library, noting that

> recent state-wide studies of the relationship between school libraries, teacher-librarians and student achievement … have all come to the same finding: in schools with well-stocked, well-equipped school libraries, managed by qualified and motivated professional teacher-librarians working with support staff, one can expect capable and avid readers; learners who are information literate; teachers who are partnering with the teacher-librarian to create high-quality learning experiences. (p. 10)

Given the wealth of evidence pointing to improved student achievement and literacy, Haycock finds it "disturbing … that Canadian policy-makers are ignoring the findings of literally decades of research that shows why school libraries and qualified teacher-librarians are essential components in the academic programming of any school."

Students themselves have much to say about what it is they need – and want – to learn, what enables them to learn and what gets in the way of their learning, when they are asked. The Alberta Teachers' Association (2003) did just that in a recent study of about 250 high school students in grades 9 and 12. This exercise of "listening to the learners" yielded some important insights, captured in the students' survey and interview responses, which clustered around several themes: time pressures, relationships with teachers and peers, physical and social space, and experiences of pedagogy (defined in the study as referring to the "qualities of the relationship between teaching and learning as experienced by students and to the practices that, in the view of students, support successful learning." (p. 27)) Students also commented on their "sense of being an embodied learner" – that is, the physicality of school and learning, and the desire to experience pleasure in learning, to experience learning as "hands-on", and to experience a sense of agency as a learner.

Eisner believes creating good schools requires the difficult task of questioning long-standing, taken-for-granted assumptions about the aims and structure of schooling as well as curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation practices.

Beyond the school, the availability of diverse opportunities for professional development, collaborative school district cultures and school district size can make a difference. Leithwood also stresses the importance of a strong "family educational culture" to student success. This can range from parents reading to their kids and providing a quiet place in the home to read and do homework, to dinner conversations around parental expectations and aspirations for school and beyond.

Significantly, the education research community has known for some time that a family's socio-economic status accounts for over 50% of the variation in student achievement across schools, while about 12%-20% of the variation in student achievement is attributable to school-based factors (Leithwood, Dec. 2002).

The education research community has known for some time that a family's socio-economic status accounts for over 50% of the variation in student achievement across schools.

In addition to seeking out and using the best available research, Eisner (2003) believes creating good schools requires the difficult task of questioning long-standing, taken-for-granted assumptions about the aims and structure of schooling as well as curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation practices. He identifies a dozen of these assumptions, including the age-graded school system; the idea that getting all students to the same place at about the same time is the goal of schools; students switching teachers from school year to school year; the narrow emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy at the expense of other "nonlinguistic expressions" of intelligence and how this can result in educational inequities; the disciplinary (versus multidisciplinary) orientation to curriculum; and the belief that school competition can improve educational quality and that examining test scores is the best way to identify good schools.

Accountable governance

An alternative framework would recognize that education governance is another critical piece of the accountability puzzle. CTF's Teacher Belief Statement states that "school systems must be governed at different levels by people who are elected by and responsible to the public". While this is fundamental to the idea of public education, democratic forms of educational accountability have been steadily eroded over the past decade through, for example, reductions in the number and powers of school boards and, more recently, the appointment of "supervisors" to replace entire elected boards of school trustees in large urban centres in Ontario – Ottawa, Hamilton and Toronto. (Elected trustees have since been restored to these boards.)

CTF's Teacher Belief Statement states that "school systems must be governed at different levels by people who are elected by and responsible to the public".

According to a CTF consultation paper that formed the basis for its 1999 Vision Statement for Public Education, a number of assumptions flow from the above belief statement:

- Volunteers or people elected by only a subset of the general population are unacceptable substitutes for democratically elected and publicly accountable decision-makers.
- The teaching profession must actively guard the public interest in education, and support the principle of public governance of education. It must also support policy-making structures that are open and accountable, and oppose those that are not.
- The principle of accountable governance of public schools must extend from the local to the national level.

With respect to local governance of education, the paper contrasts democratically elected school boards with volunteer-based parent councils, emphasizing that:

> Public education is not public because it is funded by the public, but because it both serves and creates the public. In theory, everyone, not just this year's group of parents, has the right to an equal say in the decisions that shape schools. This principle is demonstrated by the right of every adult to vote; democratic representation justifies general taxation in support of schools. Elected decision-makers, at least in theory, are bounded by a formal accountability that cannot be applied to volunteers who have neither the mandate nor the means of accounting to a public that did not elect them …. Unlike school boards, which are responsible for balancing the interests of many schools and many different needs, school councils need concern themselves only with 'their' students. (CTF, 1999, pp. 29-30)

On the need for accountability at the national level, the paper contrasts the current situation of "the unaccountable power of the CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada] and the sometimes clandestine, uncoordinated initiatives of federal departments", with a renewed call for a National Office of Education on which CTF has had policy for a number of years. Respecting provincial jurisdiction over education, such a federal body could have diverse roles: consultation; coordination; guiding and disseminating research; funding innovation; facilitating exchange; and fostering national debate.

According to the consultation paper, the challenge for the teaching profession is to construct and propose

> a model for governing schools that maximizes both public involvement and democratic accountability. *Teachers' organizations must recognize that governance, professional autonomy, and accountability are linked, and must explicitly recognize these links in the reforms they propose* [emphasis added]. Meaningful roles for volunteers that respect both their competencies and teachers' professional boundaries must be identified.

Shared responsibility

For the last decade, or longer, accountability has held center stage for those who have shaped educational policies at both the state and federal levels. Although the focus for accountability has been largely on educators and students, the concept applies to all of us. True accountability means broadly shared responsibility, not only among educators and students, but also administrators, policy-makers, parents, and educational researchers. That is, accountability means we all share responsibility for improving education. Further, if we are to meet goals to support our society's future success, this means improving opportunities at all levels of the system – pre-school, K-12, higher education, life-long learning – and effectively reaching all segments of the population. (Linn, 2003, p. 10)

Accountability systems must engage ***all*** *stakeholders …. While teachers and students are the most crucial actors in school reform, education is finally best viewed as a whole-community responsibility. (Gallagher, 2004, p. 358)*

It seems obvious, at least to educators, that the responsibility for student learning and overall educational quality is one that must be shared among many partners. Teachers are one of several albeit more directly involved players. Linn (2003) recounts that,

> When a group of educators in Washington state was asked what words or concepts they thought should be associated with accountability, the most frequent word was "responsibility" and the second most frequent was "shared" (p. 3).

Other education partners include students, parents, early childhood educators, support staff, administrators, school councils, school boards, teachers' organizations, faculties of education, communities and various levels of government.

As these different partners have different responsibilities, it is important to be clear about, as Earl (1995) explains, who is accountable, to whom is the account owed, for what, in what manner, and under what circumstances. Teachers, teachers' organizations and school administrators need to remind parents and the public that, unless *all* of the partners are held accountable for their diverse roles and responsibilities, we can only speak of educational accountability in a vacuum.

Another way to look at the notion of shared responsibility is to think of accountability as consisting of different modes or forms – financial, political, democratic, legal, ethical, professional, academic/learning; and taking place at multiple levels – individual,

institutional, local, provincial, regional, national and global. Accordingly, accountability for different modes at different levels will, with considerable overlap, reside with different bodies.

*"Accountability systems must engage **all** stakeholders .... While teachers and students are the most crucial actors in school reform, education is finally best viewed as a whole-community responsibility."*

Darling-Hammond (1999) notes that in a comprehensive system of educational accountability, the various players, from the federal and provincial governments down to the individual school and teacher as well as students, parents and the broader community, have important roles and responsibilities to fulfill and for which they must be held to account. For example, the province or state "should be responsible for resourcing schools so that they can provide adequate education, for ensuring that there is equity in the distribution of those resources, [and] for assuring that there is a means by which qualified, well-prepared staff will be in all schools in those settings." Local school districts are responsible "for practices that are supportive of good teaching and learning in schools, [and] for processes that support [these practices]."

Ideally, as Linn stresses above, accountability should also mean shared responsibility for improving education at all levels – from pre-school through to post-secondary, adult education and beyond – extending the network of players and stakeholders, and recognizing that education is a continuum. This speaks to the idea referred to earlier of accountability as a form of social contract between schools and other institutions of learning, and their communities.

*Accountability incorporates the idea of ensuring all students are provided with adequate **opportunities to learn**.*

Further, an alternative approach would recognize our collective accountability (including that of governments) for providing the various 'inputs' – qualified committed people, material resources, infrastructure, dollars – necessary for the delivery of quality public education. This is in sharp contrast to high-stakes testing and standards-based reform which demand accountability only for measurable outputs. It also incorporates the idea of ensuring all students are provided with adequate *opportunities to learn*, recognizing the complex reality of teaching and learning in a diverse society as well as the fact that social and economic factors have a direct bearing on one's capacity to take advantage of educational opportunities. As Kuehn (2002) notes, "hungry children don't learn as well as those with a full stomach; students without family and community supports don't get the full advantage of education." (p. 4)

The concept of opportunity-to-learn is an important feature of BCTF's accountability model. According to the BCTF (2002), this approach to accountability

> fits the public education system, … recognizes the complexities of teaching and learning, and … holds all levels accountable for the aspects of education for which they have authority and responsibility …. Output data alone [such as test scores] are too narrow to allow teachers and the community to analyze problems and improve our public education system. It is important to base the accountability system on an array of data that looks at the opportunities students have to learn as well as how well they have learned. In both cases, there is a need for multiple authentic indicators that allow us to explore the complexities of teaching and learning and improve education.

Indicators must consider contextual factors, such as ethnic/racial diversity of the school and community, employment levels, labour market conditions, poverty rates, housing supply and conditions, and family socio-economic status.

In its work with the provincial government and other education partners to design a system of educational indicators for Manitoba, the Manitoba Teachers' Society also emphasizes the importance of multiple indicators for holding the education system accountable. Potential indicators, which incorporate opportunity-to-learn factors, fall into three basic categories[22]:

- Indicators that assess educational outcomes – for example, academic achievement, student completion rates, attitudes toward citizenship issues, media literacy, student engagement, and the proportion of the population with post-secondary education, to name a few.
- Indicators that assess educational processes or "inputs" such as:
  - per-pupil funding
  - class size
  - quality and quantity of learning resources such as textbooks and library books
  - status of the school library and teacher-librarians
  - access to quality early childhood education and care programs
  - special education teachers and services
  - ESL teachers and programs
  - access to professional support services personnel such as social workers and psychologists
  - teacher quality
  - parental and community involvement
  - availability of specialist teachers (e.g., music and physical education), as well as educational assistants
  - nature and frequency of extra-curricular activities

- intensity of school fundraising efforts
- status of school buildings and other infrastructure

- Indicators that consider contextual factors, such as ethnic/racial diversity of the school and community, employment levels, labour market conditions, poverty rates (including child poverty[23]), housing supply and conditions, and family socio-economic status.

Any number of other attributes could be identified within each of these categories, many of which would be school and community specific and as such, would need to be identified by those working at the local level.

There are other notable initiatives taking place with the use of alternative indicators.

People for Education, a non-profit education advocacy group, conducts annual surveys that provide an inventory of the "quantifiable resources" available within Ontario's elementary and secondary schools. Among the indicators it uses (some of which are listed above) are class size, administrative staff (principals, vice-principals, office staff), specialist teachers, library resources, special education teachers and services, professional support services, educational assistants, ESL teachers and programs, user

Missing Pieces: An Alternative Guide to Canadian Post-Secondary Education *uses four basic indicators - accessibility, equity, quality, and public accountability - to assess the state of post-secondary education in each province.*

fees and fundraising, school buildings and custodians, busing, and community use of schools. Tracking changes in the indicators over time has allowed People for Education to gauge the impact of funding and other policy changes on the public education system as well as to identify and monitor trends. Hargreaves (2003) has high praise for the People for Education parent network, saying their efforts "galvanize[d] public opinion and support, helping to stall the march of market fundamentalism and standardization in Ontario's educational reform by publicly documenting its effects on teachers, schools, and students." (p. 206)

A report produced by Campaign 2000 identifies several indicators within four categories to assess Canada's progress on early childhood education and care[24]. The indicators are broken down by province/territory:

- Public expenditure – Indicator: Public expenditure on regulated child care
- Availability – Indicators: Growth in the number of regulated spaces; participation as a proportion of all children
- Affordability – Indicators: Eligibility criteria and shortfall between subsidy and parent fee; cost of child care as a proportion of a family's budget
- Quality – Indicators: Hourly wages of early childhood education staff in comparison to minimum wage; staff training and education; child/staff ratios; inclusiveness

Missing Pieces: An Alternative Guide to Canadian Post-Secondary Education (Doherty-Delorme & Shaker, 2003), published annually by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives since 1999, emerged partly in response to the influential Maclean's ranking of universities. *Missing Pieces* uses four basic indicators – accessibility, equity, quality, and public accountability – to assess and "rate" the state of post-secondary education in each province. Each of these indicators is further comprised of several sub-indicators, which are refined from year to year.

For example, accessibility is measured on the basis of factors such as student participation rates, tuition fee levels, and student debt loads. A commitment to equity takes into consideration the percentages of female university faculty and international students, unemployment levels for graduates, and university fees as a percentage of after-tax income. Quality is measured in terms of expenditures on education (per full-time student and as a share of provincial GDP), student-faculty ratios, and faculty salaries. Accountability, described as the "degree to which governments ensure that post-secondary education remains accountable to the public, as opposed to private sources", is assessed by looking at the proportion of education budgets coming from student fees and other private sources, and government grants. This is an interesting and useful exercise that could be modified for K-12 education.

Whatever their ideological roots, educational policies should not contradict the best available evidence about what works.

While the accountability spotlight seems to have been aimed squarely at teachers and students, politicians and other decision-makers have escaped behind the shallow rhetoric of test-based accountability. Leithwood (Dec. 2002) proposes holding governments truly accountable for the development of educational policy through a set of "standards" or guidelines focused on both policy content and process:

Policy content standards

- At a minimum, educational policy should do no harm to students or reduce their learning opportunities (described as a kind of "Hippocratic Oath" for policy-makers).
- Whatever their ideological roots, policies should not contradict the best available evidence about what works.
- Policies should reflect the economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations of the vast majority of citizens – in other words, when it comes to crafting policy, "equity is *not* a choice".

Policy process standards

- All groups of citizens should be treated humanely and with respect during the policy development and implementation process.
- Citizens should not knowingly be misinformed about the nature or likely consequences of new policies.
- The process should not be excessively turbulent over protracted periods of time.

Focusing on professional accountability

As noted earlier, market and bureaucratic forms of accountability predominate in education. The professional accountability model holds considerable potential for improving student learning by enhancing the quality of teachers and teaching and generally advancing professionalism.

Teachers should be specifically accountable for "the educational program they design, for the instructional strategies and learning resources they choose, and for the assessment strategies they use. ***Accountability, in this sense, turns on the professional decisions of teachers and the degree to which these decisions meet the individual needs of students.***"

Professional autonomy

In the same way that one of the keys to successful learning is creating the conditions for students to take ownership for their learning, successful teaching involves providing the profession with opportunities to take ownership for their teaching.

The BCTF (2002) believes that teachers should be specifically accountable for

> the educational program they design, for the instructional strategies and learning resources they choose, and for the assessment strategies they use. *Accountability, in this sense, turns on the professional decisions of teachers and the degree to which these decisions meet the individual needs of students*. [emphasis added]

The accent here is on professional autonomy, an important means by which teachers and other professionals demonstrate their accountability. Chapman (2003) states that,

> teachers have traditionally exercised professional autonomy, and there has been a long-standing societal understanding and expectation that teachers would exercise some degree of professional autonomy …. Sometimes, perhaps because of this long history, we take our professional autonomy for granted. This is unfortunate because *professional autonomy is fundamental to both the quality of our working lives as teachers and our ability to be effective teachers*. [emphasis added] (p. 4)

As stated, at the heart of professional autonomy is a teacher's right to make decisions that enable them to meet diverse and changing student needs and abilities. Among the most rewarding aspects of teaching according to Chapman (2003) are the things teachers make myriad daily professional choices about – for example, "choices that help a student learn, choices that make a difficult concept attainable, choices that make course work interesting and engaging for students." (p. 4) She also says that most educational innovations such as cooperative learning and portfolio assessment are the result of teachers' professional autonomy. Standardized reform is inconsistent with and threatens this autonomy.

A national poll on schools and accountability conducted for CTF found that teacher quality was cited by Canadians as the most important determinant of a child's success in school.

Because they know their students and are well placed to make educational decisions in the best interests of those students, teachers must have the freedom to exercise their professional judgment in the classroom and in schools generally.

Teacher quality and professional development

The concept of professional accountability recognizes the important link between teacher quality and student achievement, a link firmly grounded in research. It follows that teachers require ongoing access to the knowledge and support necessary to make sound educational decisions in their classrooms every day in order to improve student learning (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1998). As Darling-Hammond (1988) explains it,

> …the major reason for seeking to create a profession of teaching is that it will increase the probability that *all students will be well educated because they are well taught – that professionalism seeks to heighten accountability by investing in knowledge and its responsible use*." [emphasis added] (p. 8)

The public seems to concur. A national poll on schools and accountability conducted for CTF found that teacher quality was cited by Canadians as the most important determinant of a child's success in school (CTF, 2003).

Professional development is key to enhancing teacher quality.

Professional development is key to enhancing teacher quality. The term 'professional development' goes well beyond the more formal learning activities associated with teacher participation at conferences and workshops. According to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2001), professional development is

> …any planned activity that provides teachers with an opportunity for growth in knowledge, skills and attitudes leading to improved teaching practice and enhanced student learning. This broad definition encompasses a range of activities: an individual teacher's reading, exploring a website, or doing research or inquiry in the classroom; individuals or groups of teachers attending a conference or course focused on new teaching skills; groups of teachers collaboratively identifying a problem, and designing and implementing a solution; groups of teachers involved in action research or other forms of deliberate inquiry; groups of teachers working on a specialist council; groups of teachers participating in a curriculum implementation process; school staffs setting goals or identifying needs, and designing and implementing a program to meet the goals. As illustrated by the examples, a professional development program may vary in nature from individual reflective practices to collective collaborative projects by groups of teachers.

The ATA has developed a "Framework for Professional Development in Alberta", based on principles related to context, content and process (see *Improving Public Education: Supporting Teaching and Learning*, 2002, p. 37).

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario believes that "the scope of professional development activities must be broad, to capture the diversity of individual [student] needs", and that teachers must "have the flexibility to choose the professional development that best meets their individual needs and supports their work with students."

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO, 2002) believes that "the scope of professional development activities must be broad, to capture the diversity of individual [student] needs", and that teachers must "have the flexibility to choose the professional development that best meets their individual needs and supports their work with students." (p. 1)

The growing emphasis on teacher professional development stems in part from what Bascia (1999) describes as "a genuine desire to help teachers learn to work more effectively with an increasingly linguistically, culturally, racially, and economically diverse student population", as well as "the belief that teachers should play a greater and more informed role in shaping educational practice." (p. 2) She also discusses the need for a diversity of approaches to professional development, ranging from formal to informal and non-formal opportunities for learning.

Research into teacher participation in school-related learning activities indicates a high level of commitment to ongoing professional growth. As part of a major national study by the Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL[25]), examining informal learning practices among Canadians, a survey of nearly 2,000 teachers was conducted in conjunction with CTF and its member organizations. The survey looked at formal and informal learning voluntarily engaged in by teachers. It

Teachers undertake more formal and informal learning than other sectors with similar educational backgrounds, or the general public.

found that teachers engage in an average of 11.7 hours per week of formal learning through courses, workshops, conferences, etc. The study also reported that teachers average 10.3 hours per week of informal learning through avenues such as school colleagues, community volunteer work, and electronic networking. Areas of informal learning included curriculum policy/curriculum development, subject-related learning, classroom management skills, communications skills, and new knowledge and developments related to teaching (Clark, 1999). By comparison, teachers undertake more formal and informal learning than other sectors with similar educational backgrounds, or the general public. NALL is undertaking a follow-up survey.

The professional learning community model attempts to foster within schools a collaborative learning culture.

There is much in the professional development literature about the concept of professional learning communities (PLCs) as a means of addressing some of the shortcomings of conventional professional development – e.g., isolated workshops, little follow-up or support for change, not entirely relevant to practice. The professional learning community model attempts to foster within schools a collaborative learning culture, effectively (and appropriately) transforming the school into a learning organization. The ATA (2002) reports that,

> According to the research, effective schools – schools that consistently have high student achievement – are professional learning communities. A professional learning community is a school in which staff members provide meaningful and sustained assistance to one another to improve teaching and student learning. Embedded within learning communities are teams that meet regularly and provide technical and social support. These four-to-eight-member teams may consist of individuals from the same grade level or department or individuals from across the school or district (p. 34).

The ATA report documents some of the research evidence to support the educational benefits of organizing schools as PLCs. Reflecting on the ATA's own work with Alberta schools involved in the implementation of PLC initiatives, Skytt (2003) asserts that the "development of professional learning communities can improve conditions for teachers to do their best work with students, if the necessary resources are provided." (p. 8)

In order to build strong professional learning communities, it will be necessary to "shift from system policies that seek to provide standardized practice to those that aim to strengthen teachers' judgement and opportunity to learn."

Drawing from his new book, *Teaching In the Knowledge Society*, Hargreaves (2003) discusses PLCs in the context of two major principles of accountability: accountability by *culture* and accountability by *contract*.[26] He argues that we have moved from a society where quality was once assured, albeit imperfectly, through cultures of relationship in which communities were committed to, and responsible for common goals and each other (accountability by culture); to a world where quality is meant to be assured through external and formal contracts to fulfill job descriptions and outside expectations and to meet prescribed performance standards (accountability by contract). Education reform is increasingly dominated by the latter.

Hargreaves (2003) contrasts several types of contract and culture regimes in education, with varying degrees of emphasis on either contract or culture, placing particular emphasis on PLCs.[27] A strong professional learning community is one which "brings together the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers in a school or across schools to promote shared learning and improvement." (p. 170) It is characterized by teamwork, inquiry and continuous learning through such mechanisms as teacher networks and action research groups.

Highly critical of the impact of standards-driven reform on the potential of the professional learning community model, Hargreaves believes PLCs are at odds both with "demands for quick results in raising achievement levels", and with the "soulless standardization of testing regimes or highly prescriptive curriculum frameworks." (p. 175) He adds that PLCs

> do not flourish in standardized systems that severely restrict teachers' discretion for decision-making and self-initiated change ….
> standardized educational reform damages rather than develops strong professional learning communities." (p. 170)

As such, in order to build strong PLCs, it will be necessary to " 'shift from system policies that seek to provide standardized practice to those that aim to strengthen teachers' judgement and opportunity to learn.' " (McLaughlin & Talbert as cited in Hargreaves, 2003, p. 171) Policy-makers should take heed.

Professional learning yields important benefits for student achievement. Contrary to the perception that teacher PD days and release time are 'perks' that erode instructional time, the research on ongoing in-service professional development suggests that it is positively associated with gains in student learning. Hargreaves (2003) remarks on the growing recognition that "high-quality professional development for teachers is indispensable in bringing about deep and lasting changes in students' achievement." (p. 161)

According to Darling-Hammond (Feb. 1998), the characteristics of effective professional development strategies which improve teaching include the following (excerpted from Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 11; see also Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995):

- they are experiential, engaging teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation and reflection that illuminate the processes of learning and development.
- they are grounded in participants' questions, inquiry, and experimentation as well as profession-wide research.
- they are collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
- they are connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students as well as to examinations of subject matter and teaching methods.
- they are sustained and intensive, supported by modeling, coaching, and collective problem-solving around specific problems of practice.
- they are connected to other aspects of school change.

Ultimately, student learning and growth is highly dependent on teacher learning and growth.

The research on ongoing in-service professional development suggests that it is positively associated with gains in student learning.

As part of an alternative response to the Ontario government's mandatory recertification program, ETFO (2002) has produced a working guide on teachers' professional portfolios. The portfolio is described as a form of voluntary teacher-directed professional development intended to demonstrate professional accountability. Among the reasons for keeping a portfolio is to provide tangible evidence of professional learning and growth over time in support of quality education for students. The working guide suggests a broad "menu" or range of professional learning experiences that can be incorporated in a portfolio:

- *academic programs* – e.g., courses offered through universities, colleges, teacher organizations or other institutions

- *research activities* – e.g., conducting an individual inquiry related to teaching practice; working collaboratively on a research team; investigating, accessing and applying educational research
- *professional networks* – e.g., contributing to subject associations or the work of teachers' organizations; participating on school councils, school-based committees or school board committees
- *professional activities* – e.g., developing and maintaining a professional portfolio; reading educational books and journals; attending workshops and conferences; participating in curriculum and assessment projects
- *mentoring and networking* – e.g., mentoring a colleague or a student teacher; planning cooperatively with colleagues; forming and attending a study group
- *professional contributions* – e.g., publishing an article, resource or study; developing a professional workshop or conference
- *learning through practice* – e.g., developing and/or implementing a curriculum unit or resource; implementing a new instructional or assessment strategy; conducting an action research project; sharing the results of research with school colleagues and others
- *learning through community involvement* – e.g., participating actively in or organizing a community initiative; serving as a community organization board member

As the rate of teacher retirements increases, providing meaningful opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and to pass on the valuable accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the profession to new recruits takes on added urgency.

As the rate of teacher retirements increases, providing meaningful opportunities such as these for teachers to learn from each other and to pass on the valuable accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the profession to new recruits takes on added urgency. To take one example, it is estimated that by the year 2005, about 50,000 of Ontario's 124,000 public school teachers will have five years experience or less (Harris, 2001).

Clearly, the best route to enhancing teacher quality is through investing in more comprehensive and diverse approaches to professional development and growth. In practical terms, this means:

- improving the quality of pre-service education programs;
- giving increased attention to teacher recruitment and retention (this will necessitate finding ways to address workload and stress issues);
- providing strong support to beginning teachers to facilitate their entry into teaching and to retain them in the profession, including induction and mentoring programs; accountability for teacher success must include mentoring new teachers to stem the tide of those who "drop-out" in their initial years in the classroom;
- investing in ongoing in-service professional development to assist teachers throughout their careers;

- instituting models of teacher evaluation which incorporate a variety of approaches including performance evaluation by trained principals and authentic forms of assessment such as structured classroom observation and professional portfolios (Miles, 2000)[28];
- ensuring teachers have adequate time to take advantage of professional development opportunities, as well as to prepare lessons and consult and plan with their colleagues.

On being accountable to oneself

In addition to being directly accountable to students and their parents, teachers also have a responsibility *to themselves* for enhancing their professional knowledge and growth. This is critical as teaching becomes increasingly complex, as educators gain more knowledge about how children learn and develop, and as the student population becomes more diverse. Being accountable to oneself can strengthen professional resiliency and self-esteem and enable teachers to articulate their professional identity, both individually and collectively.

This of course raises the question of who is accountable to the teacher for ensuring they have the training, opportunities for professional learning, etc. The STF Policy on Teacher Success (contained in the report, *Enhancing Teacher Success*) states that: "Accountability for teacher success is a responsibility that is shared among key participants in the education system." (p. 17). The policy articulates the responsibilities of the individual teacher, the teaching profession, and the education community as a whole.

Accordingly, professional development must be a jointly shared responsibility among individual teachers, school administrators and other staff, teachers' organizations, school boards, ministries/departments of education, and faculties of education. This is made explicit in a document by the Catholic educational community in Ontario (including OECTA) outlining a professional learning framework for teachers. The framework clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the various partners for quality teacher professional learning and development – in this case the major partners are teachers, government, school boards, teachers' organizations and the Ontario College of Teachers (*A Professional Learning Framework: An Integrated Vision*, 1999).

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation report, *Enhancing Teacher Success*, articulates policies on teacher success and teacher supervision and evaluation. It also contains guiding principles and the supports necessary for successful teaching practice, including what teachers require as they carry out their professional roles and responsibilities. Specifically, Saskatchewan teachers expect to have:

- employment conditions that are consistent with the teaching profession's understanding of an equitable, ethical, respectful, healthy, and safe work environment.
- teaching assignments and other related duties or responsibilities that are commensurate with their professional knowledge, skills and experience, taking into consideration the context in which they work.

- the designated time, teaching resources, and supports, as identified by the teaching profession, that enable them to create and maintain a learning environment that meets students' diverse educational needs. Specifically, this includes sufficient funding for educational programs, services, and resources; adequate and well scheduled preparation and release time; parental and community support; and other personnel (e.g., professionals from other fields as well as teacher associates) and material supports that the teaching profession has identified as essential. It also means ensuring that the culture, policies and practices of school divisions and schools support continuing professional growth through:

  - a recognition that teachers have diverse professional growth needs and interests, depending upon such factors as the individual's teaching position and teaching assignment, the specific learning needs of the teacher's students, the individual's personal and professional background, and so on;
  - access to appropriate and timely professional growth opportunities;
  - funding for registration, materials, transportation, and related costs;
  - designated time during the school day;
  - processes to share knowledge and skills with colleagues, where appropriate.

- direct involvement, in collaboration with other education stakeholders, in the processes of curriculum development, implementation, evaluation, and renewal.
- direct involvement, in collaboration with education stakeholders, in the decision making processes that are used to define and revise the goals and direction of publicly funded education.

(Excerpted from *Enhancing Teacher Success*, pp. 12-14.)

Most teachers polled in a teacher workplace survey by the Canadian Teachers' Federation indicated that the major factor influencing their decision to enter the profession was their love of children and teaching.

On the joy of teaching

The importance of intrinsic motivators for teachers cannot be underestimated, and they attract many to the profession in the first place. The research on teachers' strong intrinsic commitment to the work of student learning is abundant. Most teachers polled in a teacher workplace survey by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (2001) indicated that the major factor influencing their decision to enter the profession was their love of children and teaching. A 1999 survey of primary school teachers in England and Wales conducted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) also found that "working with children and being able to make a difference to their lives" was the aspect of their work teachers most enjoyed. Other occupations should be so fortunate, according to Leithwood, Fullan and Watson (2003), who state that

> …virtually all relevant evidence has portrayed a level of "intrinsic" commitment by teachers to the learning of their clients by teachers that other organizations can only dream of with their employees. Reformers

> are wasting their resources, this evidence suggests, by excessively and exclusively focussing on high stakes motivational strategies …. Resources would better be spent on improving those conditions of work that are known to matter for teaching and learning. (pp. 14-15)

Among the factors contributing to high teacher workload and stress is the number and frequency of "externally-imposed 'reforms', especially those [associated] with increased accountability measures such as large-scale testing."

More serious consideration needs to be given to the fact that teachers' working conditions are closely linked to job satisfaction and motivation, as well as students' learning conditions, professional autonomy, and recruitment and retention[29]. The erosion of working conditions, including excessive workload and related stress, adversely affects all of these things, and may be having a disproportionate impact on women. The BCTF reports that

> There may be more serious consequences for women teachers in terms of work-induced stress than have been widely discussed, and there exists some evidence of systemic discrimination against women in terms of adjudicating disability claims. For a profession that is about two-thirds female, these data are disturbing, and might lead to a sharper focus on gender by teacher unions, employers, and governments in addressing workload issues. (Naylor, Schaefer & Malcolmson, 2003, p. iv)

Among the many factors contributing to high workload and stress is the number and frequency of "externally-imposed 'reforms', especially those [associated] with increased accountability measures such as large-scale testing." (Naylor, 2001) This will be addressed in more depth in the next section.

CTF Vision for Public Education

Adopted in 1999, CTF's Vision for Public Education statement emphasizes the critical role of the teaching profession in fostering a strong public education system, highlighting the importance of professional knowledge, judgment and autonomy:

- A knowledgeable, committed and responsible teaching profession is essential to the provision of quality education.
- The quality of teachers rests on their professional knowledge and judgment, their engagement in their professional work, and their sense of responsibility to their learners, their profession, their communities and themselves.
- Teachers must work in partnership with parents and the community but they also must have the freedom to apply their professional judgment.

- Teaching involves a large range of decisions – about the needs of learners, the appropriate pedagogical approach, content selection and organization, use of learning resources, evaluation of success, and guidance for further learning.
- The basis and justification of a profession is the knowledge and judgment of its members.
- Decisions about teaching and learning rest on the foundation of teachers' academic education, their professional knowledge and skills, their analysis of research findings and their experience.
- The profession must ensure that teachers have the autonomy to rely on their reflective judgment so that they can act as professionals and serve their learners in a responsible and responsive manner.

The quality of teachers rests on their professional knowledge and judgment, their engagement in their professional work, and their sense of responsibility to their learners, their profession, their communities and themselves .... The profession must ensure that teachers have the autonomy to rely on their reflective judgment so that they can act as professionals and serve their learners in a responsible and responsive manner. (CTF Vision for Public Education Statement, 1999)

Barriers to teacher professionalism

…probably the greatest threat to teaching today is the seeming indifference shown to the experience of teachers by those most responsible for framing [contemporary] educational policies (Smith, 2000, p. 16).

A confluence of factors poses a threat to teacher professionalism. These include the potential for new technologies to de-skill teachers through reducing the workforce and/or radically altering the role of teachers; substantially increased workloads and the accompanying stress; more prescriptive curricula; decreased time and funding for professional development; the decreasing role of teachers in the design, implementation and evaluation of educational reform initiatives; and as noted elsewhere in this report, the neglect of teachers' professional judgment from student assessment and evaluation as external standardized testing programs become the norm (Rodrigue, 1999).

"Across the education landscape, the movement toward standards is a movement away from teacher responsibility and agency. As curricula, teaching strategies, outcomes, and evaluation techniques are standardized, teachers' opportunities to make decisions based on their professional judgment are systematically reduced."

High-stakes accountability systems and other education 'reforms' (including teacher testing), while politically visible and easier to implement than the multi-faceted approach required for genuine accountability, seriously threaten teacher professionalism and autonomy. This is because they reduce opportunities for teachers to use their professional judgment and experience to make pedagogical decisions based on children's individual needs and abilities. Darling-Hammond's critique of bureaucratic accountability and the constraints it can place on professionalism, in *The Right to Learn* (1997), is illustrative in this regard:

> It has taken us nearly a century to discover that, as a form of organization, bureaucracy lacks the tools to manage complex work, handle the unpredictable, or meet distinctive client needs. By its very nature, bureaucratic management is incapable of providing appropriate education for students who do not fit the mold upon which prescriptions for practice are based. As inputs, processes, and measures of outcomes are increasingly standardized, the cracks through which students can fall grow larger rather than smaller because the likelihood that each accumulated prescription is suitable for a given child grows smaller with each successive limitation upon teachers' ability to adapt instruction to students' needs. *Bureaucratic solutions to problems of*

> *practice will always fail because effective teaching is not routine, students are not passive, and questions of practice are not simple, predictable or standardized. Consequently, instructional decisions cannot be formulated on high, then packaged and handed down to teachers*. [emphasis added] (pp. 66-67)

On the subject of teacher deprofessionalization, Hatch (2002) also observes that:

> Across the education landscape, the movement toward standards is a movement away from teacher responsibility and agency. As curricula, teaching strategies, outcomes, and evaluation techniques are standardized, teachers' opportunities to make decisions based on their professional judgment are systematically reduced. The implementation of standards-based programs signals students, parents, and society at large that teachers are not to trusted or respected and that technical/ managerial control is what is needed to fix problems that teachers helped create. (p. 459)

"Is the standards movement creating divided education systems, where teachers in affluent public and private schools are able to use their creativity and autonomy, while teachers in poorer and minority communities - and their students - are held to prescribed and homogenous forms of instruction?"

Concerns are also being raised about the potential for standards-based reform to widen the educational divide through the deprofessionalization of teachers. Among the questions raised at a symposium at the 2003 AERA Annual Meeting[30] was whether "the standards movement [is] creating divided education systems, where teachers in affluent public and private schools are able to use their creativity and autonomy, while teachers in poorer and minority communities – and their students – are held to prescribed and homogenous forms of instruction". This is being borne out in some places. In what he terms "professional development apartheid", Hargreaves (2003) discusses differential approaches to school improvement and teacher professional growth in which poor districts with failing schools, in this case in the UK, are more likely to be subject to tightly "prescribed programs, endlessly intrusive monitoring and inspection, and sectarian performance training in mandated methods of teaching [performance-training sects]." (p. 190)

It may be useful at this point to elaborate on the earlier discussion of audit testing in schools. Elliott (2002) describes the pervasive impact of what he calls intensive 'value for money' (VfM) performance auditing on professional practices in general, with a specific focus on teaching and teachers. As he explains, VfM audit is wholly inappropriate in an educational setting because it completely negates the nature of teaching and learning as holistic, contextual processes:

> The prevailing technologies of audit rest upon the assumption of fixed and immutable performance indicators that do not vary across time and context. For example, they leave little room for a view of teaching effectiveness as a time-dependent and context-bound phenomenon. The impact of teaching on students, the chain of effects it creates in particular contexts, takes time to unfold, and our understanding of the connections between processes and outcomes therefore changes over time and is never perfect. Teaching, argues Strathern (2000), is audited as if 'immediate assimilability' is its goal. Yet we know that learning takes place over time and 'may manifest itself weeks, years, generations, after teaching, and may manifest itself in forms that do not look like the original at all' for 'the student's experiences will introduce his or her own "indirection" ' …. Accountability for the development of true quality in teaching is conditional upon teachers being trusted to engage in the process free from the unremitting gaze of audit. This is because it is a process, which is essentially invisible to audit. The more the technology of audit – the creation of information systems and audit trails for the purposes of inspection – encroach on and shape teaching and learning, the less space teachers have for quality development and becoming effective teachers. (pp. 502-503)

The "unremitting gaze of audit" ultimately has the opposite effect of what is intended – it "makes evidence about the real impact of teaching on learners invisible and in doing so masks quality." (Elliott, p. 502) This seems an apt description of the Fraser Institute's annual school rankings and other similar exercises.

U.S. schools appear to be firmly in the tightening vice grip of test-based accountability and the audit mentality.

U.S. schools appear to be firmly in the tightening vice grip of test-based accountability and the audit mentality. To date, 27 states rate schools based on test performance, 11 of which do so solely on the basis of test scores; 18 states require students to pass state tests to graduate from high school with six more states planning to implement this requirement; three states require children to pass state tests to be promoted in certain grades with four more states following suit by 2003 (Education Week, 2001). Texas appears to be at the forefront of this movement where students are tested in reading, language arts and math in grades 3 through 11, in science at grades 5, 10 and 11, and in social sciences at grades 8, 10 and 11 (Schmidt, 2002). Little wonder that the U.S. has the dubious distinction of being the world's most tested nation, a reputation solidified with the passage in January 2002 of the NCLB Act. Inspired by the so-called "Texas miracle", this federal education law requires as indicated earlier the tracking of progress for all students in every state from grades three to eight based on an annual test.

So, how do teachers feel about this frenzy for testing?

Some teachers appear to be voting with their feet. In Alberta, 31% of teachers are reported to have opted out of teaching grades three, six and nine in order to avoid the provincial achievement tests (Couture, 2002). Some American teachers are leaving the public school system entirely, opting instead to teach in private schools, because state testing mandates "make them feel compromised as professionals" (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

Members of the National Union of Teachers in England feel that national testing (in the form of the SATs) is "distorting the curriculum and educational experience available to children" and having an adverse impact on teacher workload (Bangs, 2003). Teachers also report that statutory testing in England takes up inordinate amounts of classroom and preparation time (Parker, 2003). Nearly half of teacher respondents to a survey about mathematics instruction in New Brunswick (conducted by the New Brunswick Teachers' Association in 2003) reported that external assessments were negatively shaping their instructional focus (Cook, 2003).

The overwhelming majority of Ontario teachers are opposed to standardized testing because it demoralizes students, does nothing to improve learning, and is a poor measure of school success or teacher performance.

A survey of experienced teachers in Ohio found strong opposition to high-stakes testing with a majority of respondents stating that minority students including children of colour are "experiencing less academic success because of standardized tests." (Rapp, 2002, p. 217)

Ontario teachers also have concerns about the proliferation of standardized testing. The province's testing program is designed and administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office at an annual cost of over $50 million. A poll of 1,027 teachers commissioned by the Ontario College of Teachers (2003) found that the overwhelming majority of Ontario teachers are opposed to standardized testing because it demoralizes students, does nothing to improve learning, and is a poor measure of school success or teacher performance.

Similarly, responses to a national survey of over 1,000 U.S. public school teachers reveal serious misgivings about large-scale state testing programs (Education Week, 2001). The report found that "state tests may be looming too large in classrooms and encouraging undesirable practices." According to the survey:

- Nearly seven in ten teachers said instruction stresses state tests "far" or "somewhat" too much.
- 66% said state tests were forcing them to concentrate too much on what is tested to the detriment of other important topics.
- Approximately 29% reported using either state practice tests or commercial test-preparation materials a "great deal" to ready students for state exams.

- Nearly half reported spending "a great deal" of time preparing their students in test-taking skills.

It comes as no surprise then that high-stakes testing is undermining moves toward alternative classroom assessment and de-skilling teachers in the process. Long-term research on secondary education in both Canada and New York state conducted by Hargreaves (2002) and his colleagues has some disturbing implications for classroom assessment, highlighting the policy contradictions noted earlier and the practical dilemmas facing teachers in their daily work with students. They report that high-stakes testing

> ...is leading teachers either to abandon teaching practices that inclusively address the varying needs of all their students in favour of rote test preparation, or to exhaust themselves preparing students for the tests at the same time as assisting students with assessments that enable them to demonstrate more sophisticated learning through performances and exhibitions (pp. 84-85).

Equally alarming is the finding that experienced teachers are leaving the profession due to pressures exerted by an accountability agenda that stresses high-stakes testing, test preparation, and narrow curriculum standards. This was the top reason cited in a recent survey of California teachers who had already left teaching (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). It was also ranked highly by those teachers still in the classroom but who might consider leaving the profession. One teacher remarked that: " 'I thought I'd be able to use the many lessons I'd developed, but because of increased 'accountability,' I've had to use state- and district-mandated materials.' " Another noted that, " 'All my creative talents seemed to go by the wayside due to the SAT-9 [Stanford Achievement Test, 9th edition] drill and kill they wanted me to do.' " (Tye & O'Brien, p. 27)

The tendency to address complex educational issues with standardized, technical policy responses such as teacher testing contributes to the deprofessionalization of teachers.

When issues related to teacher work intensification, ranked next on the list, are considered alongside the mounting accountability pressures, this makes for a potentially harmful combination with regard to professionalism. A recent workplace survey found that 60% of Canadian teachers find their jobs increasingly more stressful – workload was cited as one of the primary reasons for leaving the profession (CTF, 2001). Numerous other surveys and studies on teacher workload and worklife issues, both in Canada and internationally, have been conducted in the past few years.[31]

Teacher testing is often promoted in the name of improved accountability, as are other reforms such as merit pay (including linking teacher pay to student performance on tests). CTF has reported that teacher testing[32] could have the effect of eroding professionalization:

> Teacher testing, with its current focus on what [Michael] Apple describes as "a limited range of generic 'technical skills' or on an atomized list of relatively easy-to-measure 'competencies' – which may not be key factors in why a teacher is successful", could result in faculties of education 'teaching to the test', what one observer has described as the "dumbing-down of teacher education". (There is already evidence of this occurring in Massachusetts where teacher colleges are shifting their curricular emphasis to focus on the Massachusetts Educator Certification Test.) In the same way that standardized testing of students has been shown to narrow school curriculum, teacher standardized testing could end up driving and narrowing the curriculum content of teacher education programs. Testing could de facto drive the definition of good teaching. (Froese-Germain & Moll, 2001, p. 7)[33]

Educators are acutely aware that teaching is far too complex to be evaluated in this way.

In general, the tendency of decision-makers to address complex educational issues with standardized, technical policy responses such as teacher testing contributes to the deprofessionalization of teachers.

Teachers support greater accountability unless…

In what he describes as "accountability shovedown", educator J. Amos Hatch (2002) raises concerns about the imposition of rigid standards-based reform on very young children.[34] He lays out several conditions that would need to be satisfied to gain his support for academic standards in early childhood education. These conditions may be useful for coming to terms with educational accountability as it affects all children and youth, and for thinking both about what accountability *is* and *is not*. Specifically, Hatch would support standards for early childhood education…

- except when the implementation of those standards puts children as young as 3 and 4 at risk of feeling pressured in the classroom environment.
- unless they are used in ways that put pressure on teachers to abandon their mission of teaching young children in favour of teaching a core set of competencies.
- except in cases where moving to a standards-based curriculum reduces a rich set of experiences to a narrow sequence of lessons.
- unless children, teachers, and programs are systematically identified as deficient in an effort to make them accountable.
- as long as teachers are not stripped of their roles as professional decision-makers.
- unless it teaches young children to value the attainment of certain objectives over their ability to learn.

- except when the use of standards encourages us to ignore the individual strengths and needs of young children.
- except in those instances where family and cultural differences are out of place because programs emphasize sameness. (In a sad commentary on standards-based reform, Hatch remarks that, "In a model driven by an obsession with sameness, diversity becomes a problem, and children from diverse groups are likely to become casualties simply because of their differences", p. 461.)

"In a model driven by an obsession with sameness, diversity becomes a problem, and children from diverse groups are likely to become casualties simply because of their differences".

- unless it is difficult to make a compelling case that young children actually benefit from this movement.
- unless it means that the forces driving corporate America are being applied in early childhood classrooms.

(Excerpted from Hatch, 2002.)

Advancing educational accountability

The foregoing discussion attempts to demonstrate that moving toward true educational accountability is no minor undertaking. There are many threads in this complex 'tapestry' that need to be identified and carefully woven together. Individual elements will be less effective if implemented in isolation, hence the need for policy coherence and for initiatives to take place on several fronts.

Moving toward true educational accountability is no minor undertaking. There are many threads in this complex 'tapestry' that need to be identified and carefully woven together.

A comprehensive framework for the achievement of genuine accountability in education would be informed by the following concepts:

- Public accountability is a fundamental principle underlying public education.
- As students are at the centre of public education, it should be recognized that the primary purpose of an accountability system must be to support and improve teaching and learning for all students.
- Teachers welcome accountability when it is fair and equitable for all students (ETFO, *Adjusting the Optics*, 2001).
- The responsibility for student learning and overall educational quality must be shared among many partners. Teachers are one of several albeit more directly involved players. Accountability should also mean shared responsibility for improving education at all levels – from pre-school through to post-secondary, adult education and beyond.
- Teachers and the other education partners should be held accountable for that which is within their authority and control.
- An emphasis on standardized testing and school rankings is a misguided approach to achieving accountability. Standardized testing is no substitute for true accountability.
- High-stakes accountability systems and other standardized education 'reforms' including teacher testing, while politically visible, threaten teacher professionalism and autonomy. They reduce opportunities for teachers to use their professional judgment and experience to make sound pedagogical decisions based on children's individual needs and abilities.
- Accountability must be situated within the multiple goals of public education. In particular, it must be driven by a strong vision of the role of public education in forging citizens and democratic structures and societies, a vision for public education equally informed by the principles of equity, accessibility, universality and quality.

- Accountability for providing good schools must be informed by sound educational research.
- The need for multiple indicators to evaluate student and school success cannot be emphasized enough – a comprehensive accountability framework would recognize the need to be accountable for outcomes (including but not limited to the assessment of student learning, broadly defined), for processes, and for contextual factors.
- Education is an important public service yielding both individual and collective benefits. As such, society has an obligation to fulfill its collective responsibility for providing the necessary 'inputs' – including qualified committed people, material resources, infrastructure, dollars – for the delivery of quality public education. This incorporates the idea of ensuring all students are provided with adequate *opportunities to learn*, recognizing that social and economic factors have a direct bearing on one's capacity to take advantage of educational opportunities.
- Quality classroom-based assessment – using an array of methods over time, incorporating authentic forms of student assessment, and integrated with curriculum and instruction – must be a central feature of an alternative accountability framework. Classroom assessments are:
  - designed and administered by teachers, who are in the best position to assess, evaluate and report on student achievement;
  - evaluated using the professional judgment of teachers; and
  - used for the purpose of supporting and improving student learning.

The primary purpose of an accountability system must be to support and improve teaching and learning for all students.

- The teaching profession requires support in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct quality classroom assessment. Professional development and training (pre-service and in-service) on classroom assessment and evaluation must be a priority. Further, teachers need adequate time during the school day to assess, evaluate, and report on student learning, particularly for students with special needs.
- Accountable education governance is another critical piece of the accountability puzzle. Public schools and school systems must be governed by people who are elected by and responsible to the public.
- An accountability framework should recognize and strengthen the *professional accountability* of teachers. The concept of professional accountability incorporates a number of features including:
  - the positive connection between teacher quality and student achievement – hence, the need to provide teachers with ongoing access to the knowledge and support necessary to make sound educational decisions in their classrooms every day in order to improve student learning. Professional development, which encompasses a broad range of initiatives including professional learning communities, is key to enhancing teacher quality.

- the improvement of teachers' working conditions, which affect students' learning conditions, job satisfaction and motivation, professional autonomy, and recruitment and retention.
- professional autonomy, at the heart of which is teachers' right to make responsible decisions and choices that enable them to meet diverse and changing student needs.
- the critical recognition that accountability for teacher success is a responsibility that must be shared among key participants in the education system (STF, 2002).

Rodrigue (2002) challenges teacher unions to move beyond the discourse of critique into a discourse of possibility, to "accept the responsibility of facilitating an alternative vision of education and learning" (p. 36). Hargreaves (2003) also urges unions to play a leading role, as agents of change, in creating a renewed, visionary "social movement for a dynamic and inclusive system of public education in the knowledge society" (p. 206). The celebrated Canadian scientist and philosopher Ursula Franklin asks simply, "What do you do *after* you've taken a dim view?"

The Canadian Teachers' Federation welcomes input into this discussion about the nature of authentic accountability in public education and the role of teachers' organizations in working to define and advance it.

In the spirit of this challenge and in keeping with the idea of accountability as a shared responsibility, developing and promoting an alternative coordinated accountability framework must of itself be a shared task. There is a unique and critical teacher perspective on this issue that needs to be heard. The Canadian Teachers' Federation welcomes input into this discussion about the nature of authentic accountability in public education and the role of teachers' organizations in working to define and advance it.

In a plea to teachers to "take back accountability" as it were, Gallagher (2004) says that,

> It is time for those who really do and should control the system – teachers – to be telling the rest of us what's educationally best for their students. And it is time for teachers to turn the accountability tables on the reformers, keeping *them* accountable by asking the kinds of questions that really matter. (p. 359)

This would surely go a long way toward putting a human face on accountability – and advancing genuine educational accountability that puts teaching and learning first.

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Endnotes

[1] Michel Agnaïeff is the General Secretary of the Policy Action Group on Learning and Education of the Commission on Globalization (created by the State of the World Forum), and a former teacher and Executive Director of the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ). He presented a keynote address on the future of teacher unionism at the CTF Joint Staff Officers' Meeting in December 2002.

[2] In his excellent analysis of the "changing mandates of teaching and education" under contemporary globalization, Smith (2000) notes that "the period from the early 1970s to the mid 1990s marks the time when the basic configuration of today's globalization processes fell into place". Among the major factors leading up to this was the "rewriting of taxation rules in favour of economic interests over social and cultural ones [which] has marked the most fundamental and profound change in Western societies since the mid-1980s and has been largely responsible for the gradual erosion of all those public and social institutions that flourished during the Long Boom under the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1945." (p. 12)

O'Sullivan (1999) argues that two global paradigms have dominated Canadian education debates over the past three decades – global economic competitiveness which "maintains that knowledge has become the competitive advantage of industrial nations in the global economy and that utilitarian principles should guide our educational reforms"; and global interdependence which "holds that we should acknowledge our interdependent global needs and responsibilities and that this should guide our educational reforms." (p. 311) The paradigm of global economic competitiveness is a major force driving educational reform.

[3] As part of its controversial "Report Card" series, the Fraser Institute has been developing and publishing rankings of secondary schools in B.C. since 1998, and in Alberta since 1999. High school rankings for Quebec and Ontario were published in 2000 and 2001 respectively. More recently, the Fraser Institute has taken to rating and ranking elementary schools in Alberta (2002; 2004) and B.C. (June 2003), as well as ranking schools on the basis of Aboriginal students' exam marks. On the east coast, the right-wing Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) published its first annual ranking of Atlantic Canadian high schools in early 2003.

[4] See for example Philip Nagy's analysis of the Fraser Institute's ranking of Ontario high schools, or Robert Crocker's analysis of the AIMS Report Card on high schools in Atlantic Canada.

[5] The "No Child Left Behind" Act requires that all schools annually test all students in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math (testing in science will be added in the 2006-07 school year). In addition, as Bracey (2003) explains, "Schools must demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP). For a school to show AYP, all ethnic groups, all major socioeconomic groups, English-language learners, and special education students must make AYP separately. Ninety-five percent of each group must be tested, and, if any one group fails to make AYP, the school as a whole fails …. Schools must continue to

make AYP until, by 2014, 100% of a school's students must score 'proficient.' " (p. 149) Some have suggested the legislation might have been more aptly named "no child left untested".

[6] See also Leithwood, 2001.

[7] Given the vast scope of the subject of educational accountability, it should be noted that the elements discussed here are intended to be neither exhaustive nor definitive. This report attempts to provide the broad brush strokes of an alternative framework.

[8] For example, among the many attributes that cannot be assessed by a standardized test are critical thinking, creativity, motivation, civic-mindedness, self-awareness, self-discipline, enthusiasm, compassion and humour (Gerald Bracey as cited in Holt, 2002, p. 268).

[9] Kohn (2001) cites sobering research that found "a statistical association between high scores on standardized tests and relatively shallow thinking …. as a rule, better standardized exam results are more likely to go hand-in-hand with a shallow approach to learning than with deep understanding." (pp. 349-350) Standardized testing works against fostering critical thinking in students and de-skills teachers.

[10] For example, emerging research on the development of the adolescent brain suggests that, far from being fully developed as is generally accepted, teenage brains may still be "under construction" so to speak, experiencing spurts of very rapid growth accompanied by periods of "pruning or thinning" of brain cells. What cells get "pruned" appears to be dependent on one's activities – whether engaging in reading, music and sports, or watching TV and playing video games. This has pedagogical implications in terms of determining what stage of brain development students may be at and adjusting teaching accordingly (Valpy, 2003). Valpy (2003) says that, "needless to say, [this] is an approach that doesn't fit comfortably with rigidly standardized curricula and grading." (p. F8)

[11] Kristjanson and Dyer (2003) provide a good analysis of bias in multiple choice testing, particularly as it affects female students and English as a Second Language (ESL) learners.

[12] In a study of 16 states that have adopted high-stakes testing policies (in this case, tests required for high school graduation), Amrein and Berliner (2002) found increasing numbers of urban school teachers "teaching to the test", which they describe as "limiting instruction to only those things that are sure to be tested, requiring students to spend hours memorizing facts, and drilling students on test taking strategies".

[13] This is especially problematic when such a body is unelected or unaccountable to any electorate and has an influence on educational policy decisions e.g., the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In April 2003, the CMEC announced that a new national testing program – the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program – will replace the School Achievement Indicators Program and will be introduced in 2007. According to a CMEC press release, the PCAP "dove-tails with the important

international assessments we are doing through the OECD." This harmonization is also evident in a new study published by Statistics Canada intended to "develop technical procedures that may enable ministries of education to link provincial tests with national and international tests so that standards can be compared and results reported on a common scale." The study looks specifically at linking reading tests administered through the B.C. Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) with PISA (Cartwright et al., 2003).

[14] The BCTF is a partner in a SSHRC-funded multi-literacies research project coordinated in the University of British Columbia Faculty of Education. The project, which will involve teachers in action research and reflective practice, addresses literacy as a complex and multi-dimensional process, challenging the narrow approach to literacy reflected in standardized tests such as the FSA.

[15] The Assessment Reform Group's stated goal is to "ensure that public policy at all levels takes account of relevant research in assessment practice." URL: http://www.assessment-reform-group.org.uk/

[16] Bower and Rolheiser (2000) provide a good overview of portfolio assessment, which lays out key decision-making areas for teachers and students.

[17] Public concerns over the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) prompted the American Civil Liberties Foundation of Massachusetts to issue a public advisory on issues relating to the testing program, such as discrimination and the right to protest. The ACLFM stressed the importance of allowing "the debate over the questionable use of a questionable exam to be heard." [http://www.aclu-mass.org/youth/studentrights/mcasadvisory.html]

[18] The *Charter for Public Education* is the result of a five-month public consultation process in B.C. in which an independent panel of community members visited more than 40 communities, heard over 620 formal presentations and held discussions with over 1,000 participants on the most important values that B.C. citizens share about public education.

[19] In addition to allowing a teacher to direct more attention to individual student needs and differences, researchers have found that reducing class size "can result in greater in-depth coverage of subject matter by teachers, enhanced learning and stronger engagement by students, more personalized relationships between teachers and students, and safer schools with fewer discipline problems" (Schwartz, 2003). For more information on class size research, see the B.C. Teachers' Federation website: http://www.bctf.bc.ca/education/ClassSize/

[20] According to Roch Carrier, well-known author and the National Librarian of Canada, "the state of our school libraries can only be described as desperate in almost every province." (Haycock, 2003, p. 13) These few examples speak for themselves – only 10% of Ontario elementary schools have a full-time teacher-librarian, compared with 42% of schools twenty-five years ago; in Alberta, the number of teacher-librarians (half-time or more) has dropped from 550 in 1978 to 252 in 1998 to 106 in 2000. As of 2002, Nova Scotia had nine teacher-librarians, down from 103 in 1990.

[21] The Canadian Coalition for School Libraries website is located at: http://www.peopleforeducation.com/librarycoalition/

[22] See "Educational Indicators" on the Manitoba Teachers' Society website: http://www.mbteach.org/indicators.htm; See also People for Education's Tracking Reports: http://www.peopleforeducation.com/index.html

[23] For an update on the status of child poverty, see the "2003 Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada" by Campaign 2000: http://www.campaign2000.ca/

[24] This includes regulated child care services, family resource programs, pre-kindergarten and transition to school activities (Campaign 2000).

[25] Working papers and other resources from the Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning are available at: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/csew/nall/

[26] This will be the topic of his keynote presentation at the CTF National Accountability Conference being held in Ottawa in May 2004 (the conference theme is "Moving From a Cult of Testing to a Culture of Professional Accountability"). Among the other featured speakers are Alfie Kohn, Lorna Earl, Maurice Holt, Lise Charland, Anne Rodrigue and Ken Leithwood.

[27] The other regimes are described as: permissive individualism, corrosive individualism, collaborative cultures, contrived collegiality, and performance-training sects.

[28] Miles (2000) strongly emphasizes that the terms "teacher testing" and "teacher evaluation" are *not* synonymous.

[29] A substantial number of beginning teachers leave the profession in the first 3-5 years of teaching. This is further complicated by the fact that many new education graduates opt for other (often higher-paying private sector) jobs even before they get into the classroom.

[30] "Standardized Reforms; Unique Lives", An Interactive Symposium sponsored by the Special Interest Group on the Lives of Teachers, Wed. April 23, 2003 (2003 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago) – Panel participants: Andy Hargreaves, Ann Lieberman, June Gordon.

[31] A considerable amount of research on teacher workload issues has been carried out by teachers' organizations. See for example: http://www.bctf.ca/info/research/workload.html

[32] Ontario's teacher testing program has four major components: a Teacher Qualifying Test; a Professional Learning Program; a Teacher Performance Appraisal System; and an induction program. The cost to design and administer the Qualifying Test for faculty of education graduates is over $2.7 million.

[33] The reduction of teaching into atomized skill sets appears to be a feature of Ontario's new Teacher Performance Appraisal System. Introduced in September 2002, the TPAS is based on 16 standards of practice developed by the Ontario College of Teachers. For the purpose of implementing the government's performance appraisal system, these standards of practice subsequently became 16 "competency statements" which then devolved into no less than 133 required "look fors" or performance indicators. Principals will be responsible for evaluating teachers using this approach, predicted to add substantially to their already high workload (Amato, 2002). A comprehensive audit of Ontario education policy concluded that the "current approach to teacher testing is a waste of scarce educational resources" (University of Toronto press release, 2003). The newly elected Liberal government in the province announced in December 2003 that it would introduce legislation to repeal the controversial teacher recertification component of the program (Professional Learning Program) (Alphonso, Dec. 20, 2003).

[34] For example, standardized tests of math, literacy and vocabulary skills are being given to more than half a million 4-year-old children in early childhood Head Start programs across the U.S. (Head Start is designed to help poor children prepare for entry into kindergarten.) This is the largest pre-school testing program to date in the U.S. (Rimer, 2003). As one observer put it, these are indeed the "littlest test takers" (Brenna, 2003).