

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 4

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 5



## Facing Facebook

Like it or not, students are more connected to wireless information and networks than ever before. As parents and educators, we cannot ignore this reality in the hope that it will go away or that students will somehow magically learn what type of online behaviour is appropriate. Instead, we must arm ourselves with as much information as possible so as to guide young people through the maze of information and networks out there.

One such network is the ever-popular Facebook, which was founded in 2004 by then Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. Today Facebook has grown to an estimated user population of 8 to 10 million and a net worth of over 10 billion dollars.

But what is Facebook? The description provided on Facebook's website ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) is "Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet." Simply put, Facebook is a social network that allows users to connect with their friends and their friends' friends. And so on.

When people sign up for a free Facebook account, they fill out a profile that outlines their interests, activities, friends, and high school and/or university education, as well as other information like their e-mail address, home address and phone number. From there, the possibilities are endless. Facebook's platforms are ever changing and updating; users never get bored. This is the appeal for

young people, and a possible source of trouble.

Educating kids on the potential dangers of posting private or personal information on a social networking site such as Facebook should be at the forefront in the minds of parents and educators alike. Once information is "out there" in the cyberworld, it is impossible to know for sure who can get their hands on it. Young people need to be aware that posting inappropriate or embarrassing photos or videos could come back to haunt them for many years to come. As well, giving out private or confidential information on Facebook or other social networking sites could open the door to cyberpredators.

So, what do parents need to know? First, it is recommended that parents get involved. Open a Facebook account of your own; learn how to use the technology safely and appropriately along with your child. Second, monitor your child's computer use. Keep the computer in an open, visible area of the house. Third, ask questions, talk and keep the lines of communication open with your child. Know what they are doing on the website. There is a fine balance between respecting children's privacy and safeguarding them from potential dangers. Finally, it is important to recognize that Facebook is a powerful networking tool that, when used safely, can open many doors for young and old alike.

### Facing Facebook

*Continued on page 2*

**Never doubt  
that a small  
group of  
concerned  
citizens  
can change  
the world.  
Indeed, it  
is the only  
thing that  
ever has.**

*Margaret Mead*



## Facing Facebook

*Continued from page 1*

If you would like to know more about Facebook and other social networking websites, the following links may provide useful information.

OnGuard Online  
<http://onguardonline.gov/socialnetworking.html>

Although this is a US-based site sponsored by the US government, the information on social networking is valuable.

Social Networking in Plain English  
[www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking](http://www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking)

This simple and short video by Common Craft Productions explains the process and appeal of social networking sites.

Media Awareness Network and Canadian Teachers' Federation, National Media Education Week  
[www.ctf-fce.ca/e/news/news.asp?id=1194276360](http://www.ctf-fce.ca/e/news/news.asp?id=1194276360)

The goal of the week is to encourage and promote media awareness in Canadian homes. The theme "e-Parenting" specifically targets active parent involvement in their kids' cyberworlds.



# Parent Newsletter Project

The Alberta Teachers' Association initiative to develop and publish research-based, parent-friendly newsletter articles is under way. Cathy Kitagawa, a graduate student from the University of Lethbridge, and Jim Parsons, an education professor at the University of Alberta, will act as the lead writers on this series and will work in collaboration with the Association's research unit. Articles will be posted on the Association's website ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)) in Resources for School-Based Administrators. They can be downloaded for publication in school newsletters or on school websites. The articles will include annotated references to quick links that will provide further reading for teachers and interested parents.

The initial series of articles will focus on the theme of students and emerging technologies. The first article, about Facebook, has been included in this newsletter to give you an idea of what will be covered in the series. Five focus topics have been identified, with related questions that will engage parents:

1. Facebook: What Parents Need to Know
  - Description and growth of Facebook and online social networks
  - What is the attraction?
  - Security issues
2. Cellphones: A Christmas Gift or a Real Turkey?
  - Benefits
  - Costs
  - Impacts on socializing
  - Age appropriateness
  - Health concerns
3. Should I Buy My Child a Laptop?
  - Impacts on learning
  - Socialization issues
  - Physical well-being
4. Time Online at Home: How Much Is Enough?
  - Emerging trends
  - Differences between males and females?
  - Age-appropriate guidelines
  - Impact on well-being
5. MSN and Text Messaging: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
  - Emerging trends
  - Cyberbullying ([www.bewebaware.ca/english/CyberBullying.aspx](http://www.bewebaware.ca/english/CyberBullying.aspx))
  - Netiquette

With the publication of the first round of articles anticipated in the next two months, staff will elicit further topics from staff and the Council on School Administration in the weeks ahead.

**THE INSTRUCTIONALLY  
INTELLIGENT LEADER...  
NO OPTIONS**



## **BANFF LEADERSHIP SEMINAR**

**April 10- 12, 2008  
at the Banff Park Lodge, Banff Alberta**

**WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKER – Barrie Bennett**

Dr. Barrie Bennett is an associate professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). He is an expert in the fields of teacher learning, instructional intelligence, and pedagogy. He works with school boards around the world, focusing on ways teachers can integrate instructional strategies, tactics, and skills to create more meaningful learning experiences and environments for all students.

Dr. Bennett has taught at the university, high school, middle school, and elementary levels. He combines his classroom experience with a vast amount of research on educational topics. Dr. Bennett is the co-author of *Cooperative Learning: Where Heart Meets Mind*, *Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach*, and *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*.

*For further information, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) or contact Member Services at the Alberta Teachers' Association, 447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta).*

3

**LEADERSHIP  
UPDATE**

*An ATA/CSA publication for school administrators*



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

