

A wake-up call

How alarming it is for Ontarians to see their children's math skills fall, year after year.

In the past five years, the percentage of Grade 6 students who meet provincial standards has declined to 54 per cent from 61.

The same trend is evident for Grade 3 students, where just 67 per cent make the grade, down from 71 per cent five years ago.

How can this possibly happen, one might reasonably ask, when the provincial government, unwavering in its commitment to education, has spent more and more on the school system? The answer, of course, is that you can't always solve a problem by throwing money at it.

Ontario Education Minister Liz Sandals should be paying attention. In response to the poor math test results, Sandals has announced \$4 million more would be spent on teacher training. But she might as well have used the cash to light her summer campfires. If money alone could buy higher math scores, Ontario students would all be perfect.

On this topic, this government is like a bad driver who continually gets into car accidents because it doesn't check her blind spot when changing lanes.

No matter how many new cars it buys, there will always be accidents until it changes that basic safety violation. And similarly, before it can get meaningful results for children, this government needs to let go of its wrong-headed ideology and ask for advice from real experts.

The education bureaucracy has long held disdain for teaching methods that emphasize "math facts," such as multiplication tables and simple arithmetic such as $7 + 8 = 15$.

These bureaucrats consider these kinds of tasks to be outmoded, boring and likely to disengage children. Instead, Ontario schools mostly use "discovery math," which allows students to explore concepts according to their own personal learning style.

It is time for Sandals and her team to pay attention.

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

Fall Fair Season has arrived! Do you plan to attend a fair?

- No (63%,)
- Yes (37%)

The Independent & Free Press

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Letters to the editor

Need someone to talk to? CMHA-Halton can help

Tragic, shocking, sad.

These words and many more have been used to describe Robin Williams' recent suicide. In the days since his death, many of us have been trying to understand his experience and figure out why such a remarkable life ended too soon.

We have been reflecting on his suicide, depression, and addiction, the same struggles that we and our own friends, family, neighbours, and co-workers may face every day and that we, as a community, need to talk about.

The stigma that still surrounds mental health and addictions is hurtful. There is still a common misconception that people who live with these health concerns are weak and unable to recover.

Mental health and addiction concerns are real illnesses, not signs of weakness, and with the right help and support, people who experience them can live rich and healthy lives. We know that at

least 20 per cent of us will personally experience a mental illness and many of us will also have an addiction.

Open and honest talk about these topics is key to all of reaching out to get the help we need and making positive changes.

If you or someone you know is feeling worried, down, or stressed or having trouble coping, the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch can help.

We provide support to help you improve your wellness and feel better. No matter where you live in Halton, call us at 1-877-693-4270.

Find out more about what we do and ask about our free walk-in counselling on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Oakville.

If you are thinking about suicide, call our 24/7 COAST Crisis Line at 1-877-825-9011 to talk.

We also provide training for you to learn more about mental health and addictions and how

you can help others.

Call us at 1-877-693-4270 and ask about the Mental Health First Aid course and other workshops.

Let's all continue to talk openly about mental health and addictions, share our own experiences, and reach out to get and offer support to build strong and healthy families, workplaces, and communities.

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Letters policy

Letters must include the author's name, address and daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length. Publication is not guaranteed.

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