

# Bernard Praw pursues lifelong passion for pedagogy

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**B**y the time Bernard Praw graduated from Baron Byng High School in the early '60s, he had already made two crucial decisions – to marry Annie, his childhood sweetheart, and to become a teacher.

June 2017 marked the couple's 49th anniversary and the 47th year of immersion in Praw's chosen profession. Moreover, family and education continue to empower his daily life. Annie and Bernard take pride in their three sons and six grandchildren.

Reflecting on his youth, Praw is grateful for how his ambitions have evolved. Praw was born in 1946 at a displaced persons camp in Austria. The family lived in Sweden for a while and subsequently immigrated to Canada.

"I only spoke Yiddish and at the beginning I went to the Peretz School," he recalls. "I don't remember how I learned English but by the time I was enrolled in Grade 3 at Bancroft School, I was fluent."

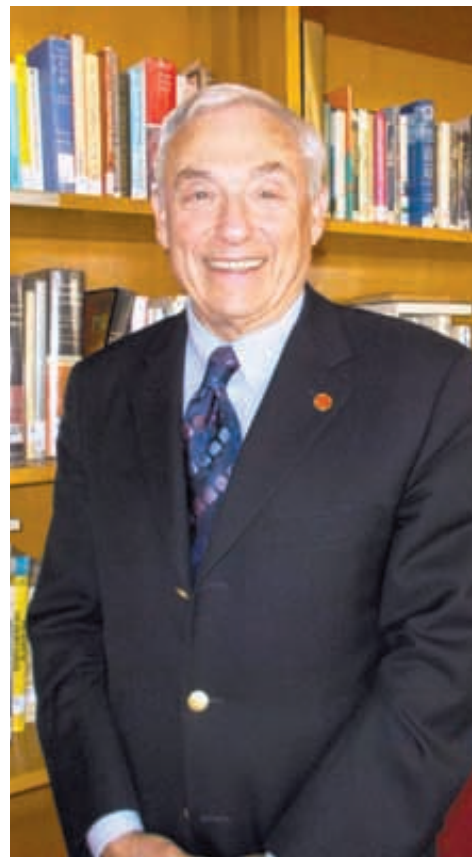
Praw credits the late David Zweig, his mathematics teacher at Baron Byng High for sparking his interest in math.

"To this day, I still have his trigonometry notes," he said. "In Grade 10, I volunteered to help students at Sinclair Laird elementary school and that's when I knew teaching was for me."

Praw was accepted at McGill University but his father became ill and funds were limited. Determined to savour his dream, Praw held a day job and attended evening classes at Sir George William's College. After receiving a bachelor's degree, he went on to earn a diploma in teaching at McGill's Macdonald College campus.

From 1970 to 2005, the Saint-Laurent resident's second home was Chambly County High on the South Shore. Besides teaching math at this public high school, he directed student musicals and coached several sports teams. Praw was appointed principal in 2000.

As a parent of sons at Laurenhill Academy, Praw assumed a civic role chairing the PSBGM's central parents committee and serving as the high school parent commissioner from 1990 to 1998. Subsequently, he ran and won three consecutive school board elections, and served as a school board commissioner in Saint-Laurent until 2014.



**Education is a lifelong endeavour for Bernard Praw.** ELAINE COHEN PHOTO

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*Never in all the years has Annie heard me complain about having to go to work*

"Never once in all the years has Annie ever heard me complain about having to go to work," Praw said.

His endeavours in so many facets of the field have endowed him with a broad perspective. As an educator, Praw has observed diverse trends and embraced productive programs. He recalls one instance, when he was consulted for advice on how to align high school math and science courses with those in CEGEP.

Regardless of program or trend, Praw contends that the school, students and family must work in tandem to achieve success. In the digital age, the approach is different, he observes, but students must know how to read. "Literacy is important and competency is vital." ■

After EMSB School Board Commissioner Syd Wise's death in 2015, Praw was elected to replace him in Cote St. Luc/Hampstead.

For the past three years, Praw has also shared his pedagogical skills supervising student teachers from McGill University. While observing and evaluating practice teaching sessions, Praw has relished the opportunity to advise and encourage budding educators.



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