

Evidence for Good Policy and Practice

Stockholm Summit

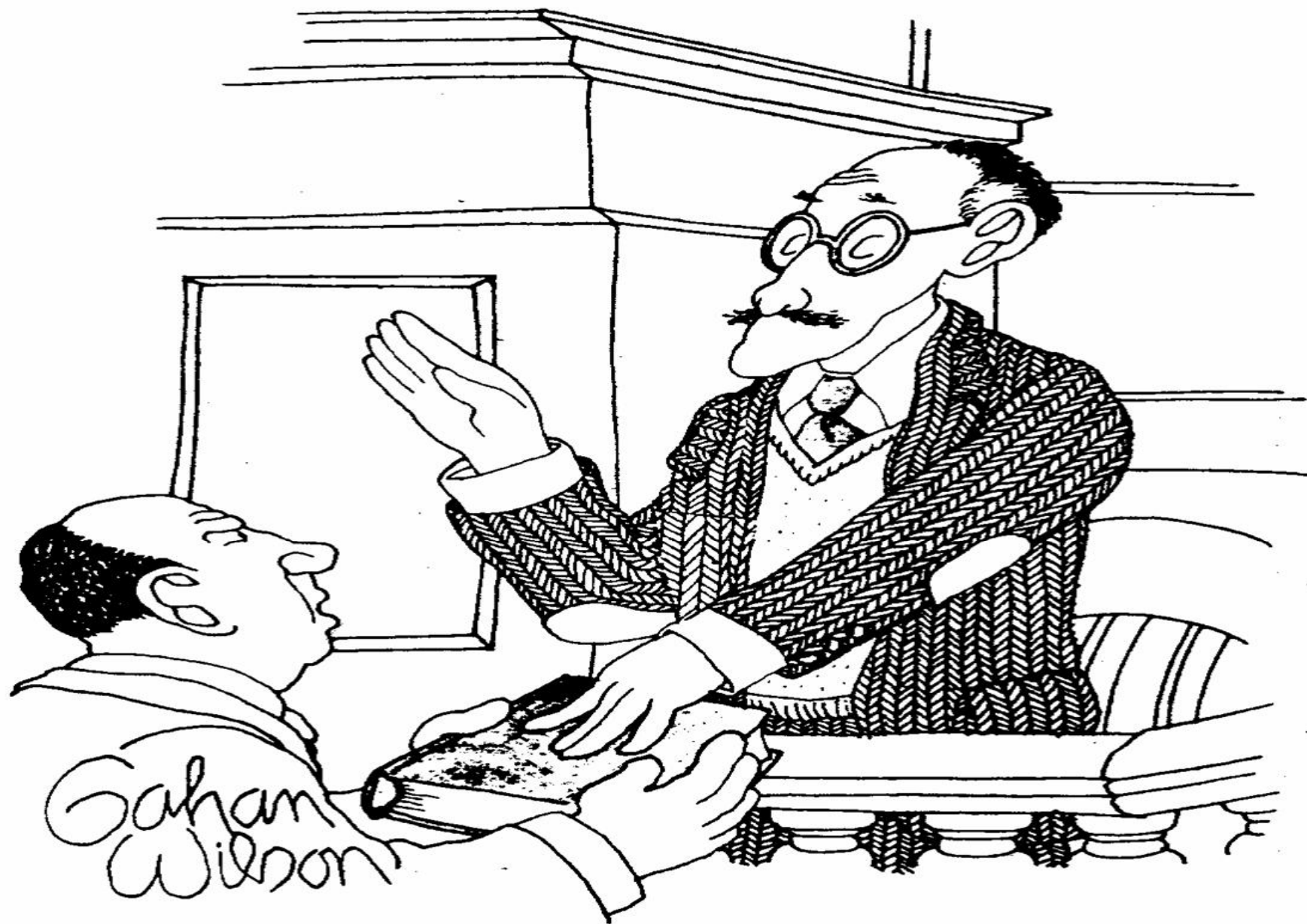
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Ben Levin

OISE/University of Toronto

Current Research

- Research Supporting Practice in Education (RSPE)
- www.oise.utoronto.ca/rspe
- Empirical studies
 - Schools, universities, third parties
- Analysis of literature
- Creation of networks and resources



“Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and not in some sneaky relativistic way?”

Central Questions

- What evidence should influence policy and practice in education?
- What role should school systems play in promoting evidence-based practice in education?

**In theory, there is no difference
between theory and practice.**

In practice, there is.



Where We Are in Education

- Strong focus on practitioner knowledge as craft
- Growing knowledge base, though still limited
- Growing interest in empirical evidence
- Weak systems for connecting these



**Professions are distinguished
by the acceptance by members
of a common body of
knowledge and practice**

Does this describe
teaching?

Questions:

- Currently, how much of education policy and school practice is well grounded in evidence?
 - Amounts
 - Examples and counter-examples
- What proportion of policy and practice could be well grounded in evidence (i.e. there is good evidence to guide it)?

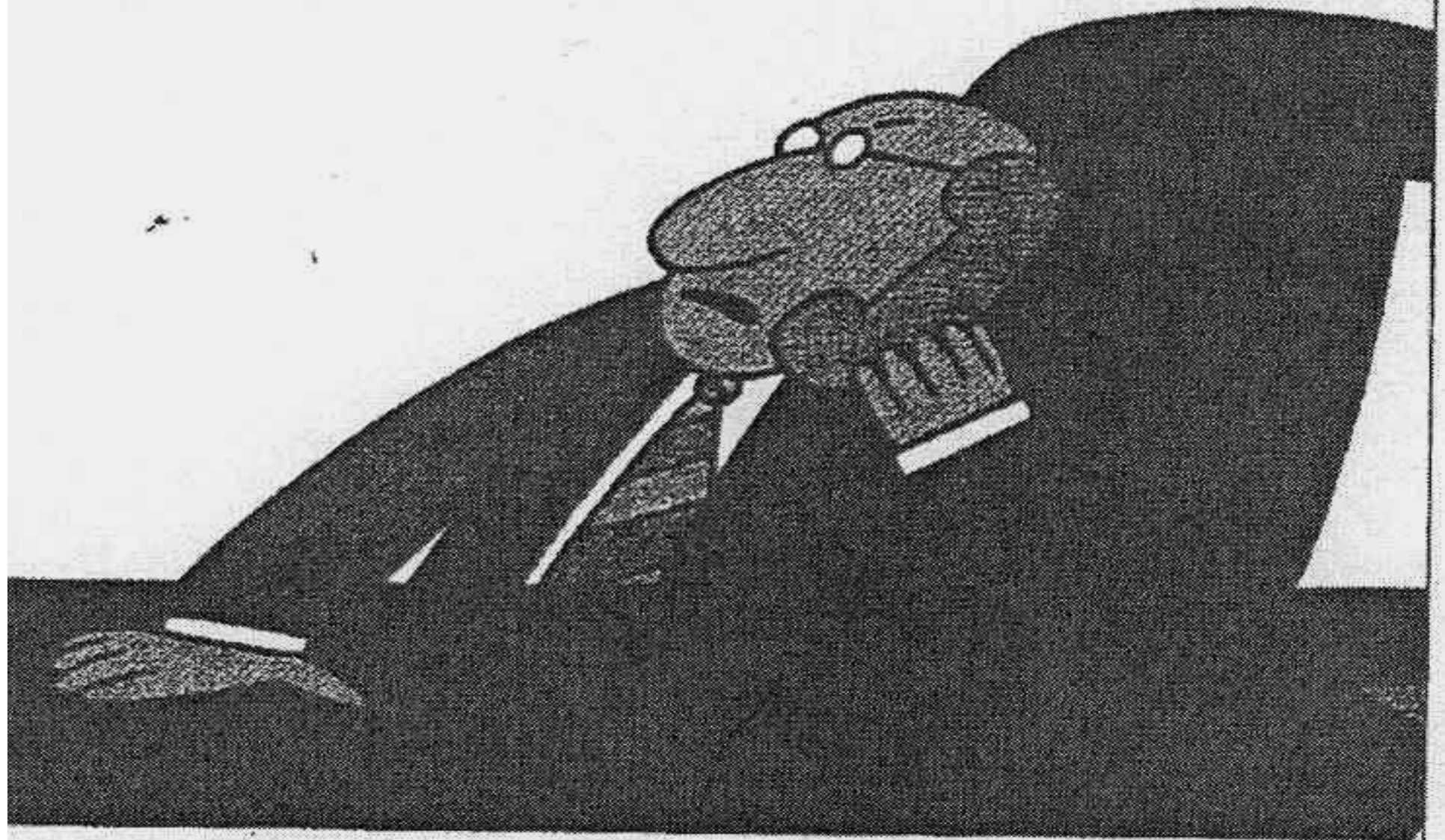
What Are the Barriers?

- Availability of evidence
 - Knowledge
 - Format/accessibility
- Take-up capacity
 - Skills
 - Systems
 - Attitudes

Practitioner Knowledge

- Every school/teacher can (should?) have his/her own way
- Context is so powerful that knowledge must be local
- Much research seen as too theoretical
- Are these reasonable views?





"I deal in truth, Montclair, I leave facts to subordinates."

ABRELL'S AND
THOMPSON'S

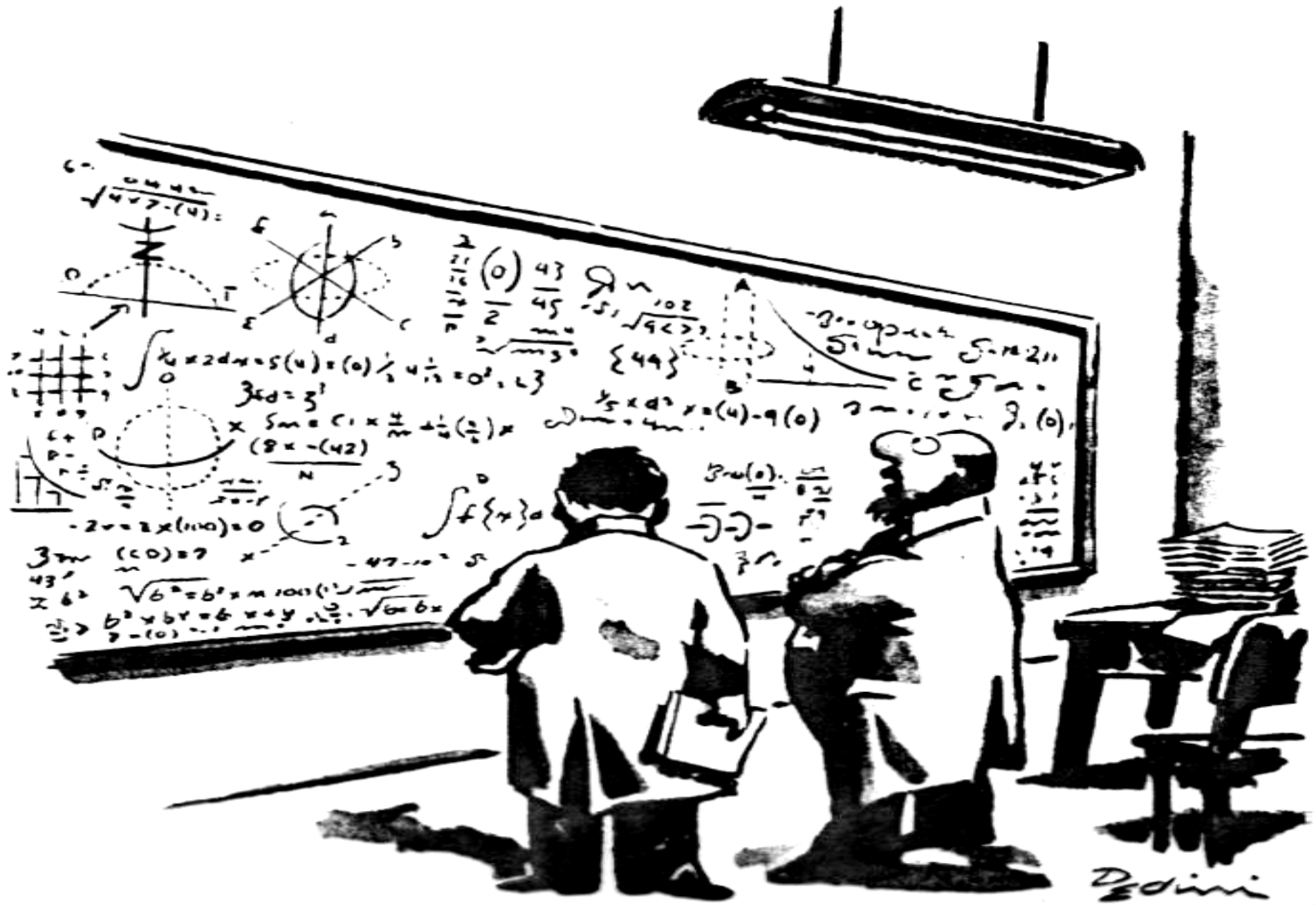
Actual Facts!



IF PEOPLE WERE
ELIMINATED FROM
THE EARTH,
72¢ OUT OF
EVERY DOLLAR
COULD BE SAVED.

What Do We Know?

- Research can and does have impact
 - But only loosely related to strength of the evidence
- Impact is usually indirect, gradual
- Mediated through larger social and political processes
 - Key role of ‘knowledge brokers’
- Depends on effort, both by researchers and others
 - Relationships more important than products



"This is fine as far as it goes. From here on, it's who you know."

D'Edini

Research and Politics

- Research can and does matter
- Influences public thinking
- Can be an important element in the public debate
- Researchers and practitioners have a role in supporting more use

Importance of Social Relations

- Practice in every field is social
- Evidence from medicine on take-up of clinical guidelines
- Gawande- “Better” – handwashing example
- Have to deal with practices, not just ideas

According to repeated nationwide surveys,

More Doctors Smoke **CAMELS** than any other cigarette!

Doctors in every
branch of medicine
were asked, "What
cigarette do you smoke?"
The brand named most
was Camel!

You'll enjoy Camels for the same reasons
so many doctors enjoy them. Camels have
cool, cool mildness, pack after pack, and a
flavor unmatched by any other cigarette.
Make this sensible test: Smoke only
Camels for 30 days and see how well Camels
please your taste, how well they suit
your throat as your steady smoke. You'll
see how enjoyable a cigarette can be!



THE DOCTORS' CHOICE IS AMERICA'S CHOICE!



MARJORIE CANDE says: "I like Camels. They burn, they are smooth and taste wonderful."



BILL BROWN says: "I get more pleasure from Camels than from any other brand."



BILL BELLAMY says: "Camels are my taste and throat. I've smoked 'em for years!"



For 30 days, test Camels in your "T-Zone" (T for Throat, T for Taste).

System Take-up Capacity

- Generally, education sector organizations have little or no organized capacity to find, share and use relevant research
 - Not part of professional preparation
 - Lack skills to understand research
 - Not an assigned role
 - Few organized processes

Professional Preparation

- Understanding research process
 - Graduate programs also lacking
- Being able to judge quality
- Knowing main sources for good evidence
- Having synthesis skills



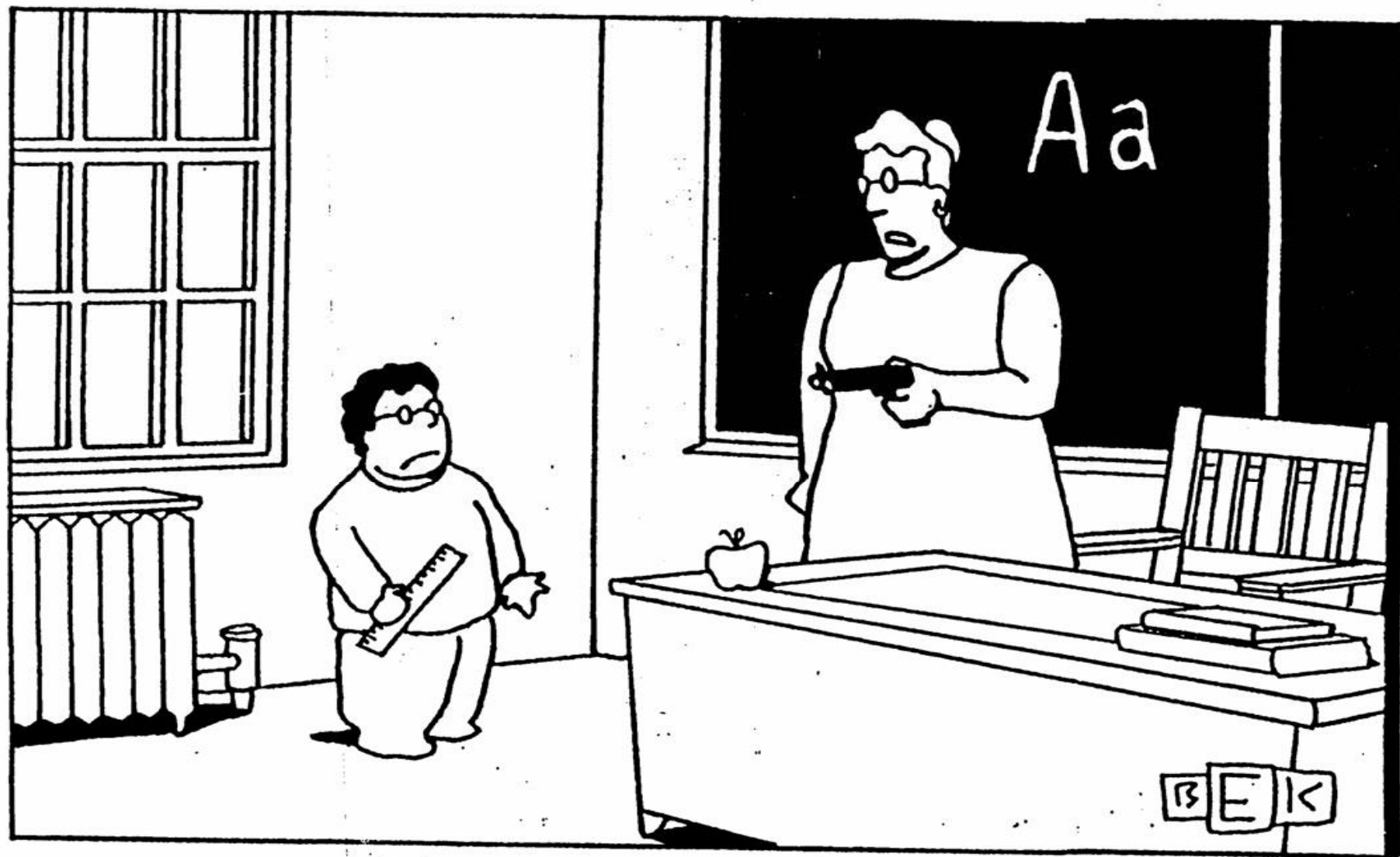
Assigned Role

- Whose job is it in schools or school systems to locate and share research?
- Whose job is it to support the use of research-informed practice?



Organized Processes

- Is research:
 - On agendas of meetings?
 - Regularly distributed to staff?
 - Shared with stakeholders?
- Are staff expected to:
 - Attend research-related events?
 - Read research reports?
- Conduct their own research?



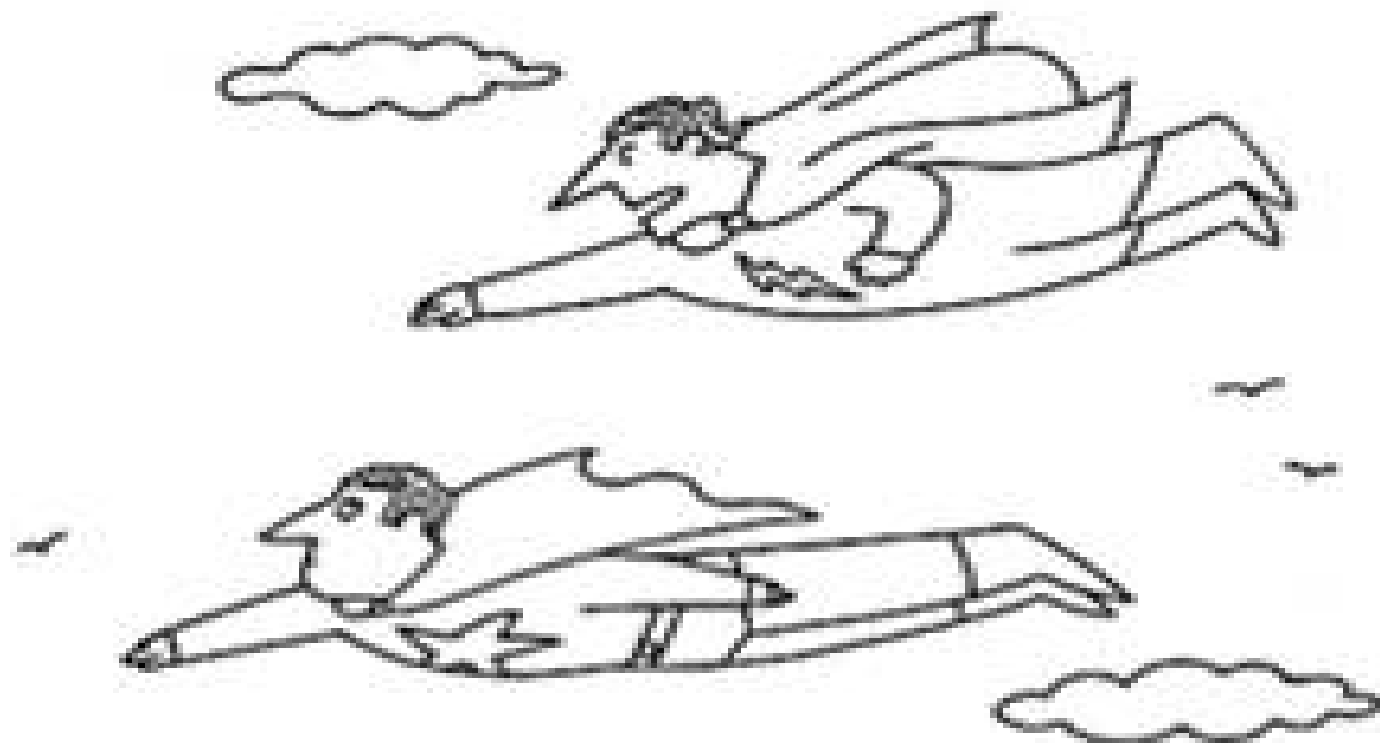
"I'm sorry, but you know too much."

Research Partnerships

- Can be very valuable
- Many different kinds
 - Do not have to be around conducting research
 - May be better to focus on application
- Better use of grad studies to build these

Researchers and Their Institutions

- Poor basic access to research
- Poor translation for use
- Little or no use of graduate students
- Lack of outreach generally
- Weak relationships with third parties
- Too much focus on products, not enough on relationships



Cherwell

“Flying around all day just won’t cut it—sooner or later, you’re going to have to fight some evil.”

Next Steps

- Build better capacity in the system to find, share and apply research
- Build more partnerships with researchers
- Re-think approach to grad studies
 - Cohorts or teams
 - Pre-determined topics and processes
- Small things can make a difference



*"In the few minutes remaining,
Dr. Nemo, could you briefly give us
some idea what you've been
talking about for the last hour?"*

Comments Welcome

For More Information

www.oise.utoronto.ca/rspe