

# F o r u m



E D U C A T I O N

## Preventing Violence Against Girls

Challenges and  
opportunities for  
educators





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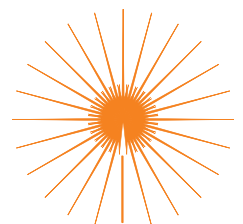
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# Protecting our members

Shining a light on women's issues

OSSTF/FEESO's new video *The School Zone*, a humorous take-off on the 1960's television drama *The Twilight Zone*, is available for viewing on the provincial website [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca). The video explores what life as a school employee might be like if there hadn't been any unions.

In the video, the educational worker complains about the union dues deducted from his pay and wakes up the next morning to find things have changed very much for the worst. He arrives at school to find, for example, that his work hours are dictated by the whim of the principal, the librarian is working with her infant strapped to her in a baby carrier since she received only two weeks of pregnancy leave, pension benefits are negligible, classes are overcrowded, and a custodian is spraying pesticides in the school corridor without protective clothing or a mask. When he asks, "Where's the union?" he is told, "No one wanted to pay for it."

As every educational bargaining unit moves into high gear, it is worth remembering that every protection educational workers enjoy is the result of past successful collective bargaining efforts. President Ken Coran makes it very clear in this month's Last Word column that OSSTF/FEESO is very well prepared for the current round of negotiations.

A real life example of the exploitation of teachers working without the protection of a union and a contract can be found in Rod Heikkila's article "Alma College: A chapter in OSSTF/FEESO history goes up in flames." Working conditions for the Alma College teachers were markedly poor in comparison to their counterparts in the public school system. His article reminds us that we must never take

collective agreements for granted and that we must support our bargaining teams in their work to improve them.

In addition to the all-important work of protecting our own members, OSSTF/FEESO is also active in social justice pursuits to protect others in society and in the world. The last issue of *Education Forum* highlighted the work being done by organizations such as

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Free The Children with the assistance of teachers, educational workers and students across the province in support of children across the world. This issue highlights some of the work being done in support of women's issues.

OSSTF/FEESO member Ray Hughes and Dr. Peter Jaffe (a past winner of the OSSTF/FEESO Lamp of Learning Award) write about the very important work being done by the Centre for

Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children. Read about the Centre's initiatives in "Preventing violence against girls: Challenges and opportunities for educators."

"The Miss G\_ Project: A lesson in determination" tracks the (ultimately) successful efforts of a team of young women led by Sarah Ghabrial to have a course in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) officially added to the Ontario secondary school curriculum. "This past summer a curriculum writing team began drafting a new WGS course. This course will be piloted in the winter of 2009, and will be available at the grade 11 and 12 levels, and with Open and College/University credit options, by September of 2009," writes Ghabrial.

Margaret McPhail, in "Child care: Still a women's issue," gives us insight into the history of this issue and proposes practical reasons why early learning and care should be a government priority.

From farther afield, Judith Robinson's article "Triage: Seeing the world through a lens of compassion" reviews the documentary film *Triage*, a "powerful and sensitive portrayal of the work of Dr. James Orbinski and Médecins sans frontières/Doctors Without Borders" in Rwanda.

As part of our on-going examination of practices related to student success, Jon Cowans reviews several books that deal with how children learn to read. With the focus on literacy in our schools, this article provides some valuable insights into practices that may variously help or hinder the process of teaching children to read and how they acquire that skill, and not surprisingly, Cowans presents some provocative ideas to consider.

The editorial team and I hope that you find this issue's selections both interesting and thought-provoking. 🐦





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# Protéger nos membres

Plein phare sur les enjeux féminins

LA nouvelle vidéo d'OSSTF/FEESO « *The School Zone* », une imitation humoristique de l'émission dramatique des années 60 « *The Twilight Zone* » peut être visualisée sur le site Web provincial à l'adresse [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca). La vidéo examine ce que pourrait être la vie d'un employé dans une école s'il n'y avait pas de syndicats.

Dans la vidéo, un travailleur en éducation qui se plaint des cotisations syndicales déduites de son chèque de paie se réveille le lendemain matin pour se rendre compte que les choses ont beaucoup changé et pour le pire. À son arrivée à l'école, il réalise par exemple que ses heures de travail lui sont imposées par les caprices du directeur, que la bibliothécaienne travaille avec son enfant attaché à elle dans un porte-bébé, car elle n'a que deux semaines de congé de maternité, que les prestations de retraite sont insignifiantes, que les classes sont bondées et qu'un concierge pulvérise des pesticides dans les corridors de l'école sans équipement ou masque de protection. Lorsqu'il demande « Où est le syndicat? », on lui répond « Personne ne voulait payer de cotisations. »

Comme pratiquement toutes les unités de négociation en éducation de la province se lancent à toute vitesse dans la négociation, cela vaut la peine de se rappeler que chaque protection dont jouit le personnel en éducation est le résultat de négociations collectives antérieures fructueuses. Il est aussi manifeste, comme nous le dit le président Ken Coran dans la rubrique « Mot de la fin », qu'OSSTF/FEESO est bien préparé pour la présente ronde de négociation.

L'article de Rod Heikkilä « Collège Alma : Un chapitre de l'histoire

d'OSSTF/FEESO s'envole en fumée » donne un exemple réel de la manière dont le personnel enseignant sans protection syndicale ni convention est exploitée. Les conditions de travail du personnel enseignant du Collège Alma étaient vraiment médiocres comparativement à leurs homologues du système d'éducation publique. Son article nous rappelle que les conventions collectives ne doivent pas être considérées comme acquises et que nous devons soutenir nos équipes de négociation qui s'acharment à les améliorer.

En plus de tout le travail important dans la protection de ses propres membres, OSSTF/FEESO est aussi actif dans les activités de justice sociale afin de protéger les autres membres de la société et du monde. Notre dernier numéro soulignait le travail accompli par des organismes tels qu'Enfants Entraide avec l'aide du personnel enseignant, des travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation et des élèves de la province pour soutenir les enfants d'un bout à l'autre du monde.

Ce numéro fait ressortir ce qui se fait pour soutenir les enjeux féminins.

Ray Hughes, membre d'OSSTF/FEESO, et Dr. Peter Jaffe (un ancien récipiendaire de la Lampe du Savoir d'OSSTF/FEESO) ont rédigé un article sur le travail très important accompli par le *Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children*. Lisez leurs initiatives dans l'article intitulé « *Preventing violence against girls: Challenges and opportunities for educators*. »


« *The Miss G Project: A lesson in determination* » suit les efforts finalement fructueux d'une équipe de jeunes femmes menée par Sarah Ghabrial pour faire ajouter officiellement un cours d'études

de la condition féminine (*Women's and Gender Studies*) au programme d'études secondaires de l'Ontario. « Au cours de l'été dernier, une équipe de rédaction de programmes d'étude a commencé une ébauche du nouveau cours d'études sur la condition féminine. Il sera mis à l'essai à l'hiver 2009; dès septembre 2009, il sera offert aux élèves de 11<sup>e</sup> et de 12<sup>e</sup> années et avec des options de crédit ouvert et collège/université », précise Sarah.

L'article de Margaret McPhail « *Child care: Still a women's issue* » nous donne un aperçu de l'histoire de ce dossier et propose des raisons pratiques pour lesquelles l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants devraient être la priorité du gouvernement.

Plus loin, l'article de Judith Robinson « *Triage: Seeing the world through a lens of compassion* » examine le documentaire « *Triage* », un « portrait impressionnant et puissant du travail du docteur James Orbinski et de Médecins sans frontières (*Doctors Without Borders*) » au Rwanda.

Dans le cadre de notre examen courant des pratiques connexes à la réussite des élèves, Jon Cowans passe en revue plusieurs livres qui traitent de la façon dont les enfants apprennent à lire. Se concentrant sur la littératie dans nos écoles, cet article fournit des idées très utiles sur les pratiques qui peuvent aider ou entraver de diverses manières le processus d'enseignement de la lecture aux enfants et la façon dont ils acquièrent cette aptitude et, comme on peut s'y attendre, Jon présente des idées à envisager qui ne laissent pas indifférent.

Encore une fois, l'équipe éditoriale et moi-même espérons que vous trouverez les articles de ce numéro aussi passionnant qu'inspirant. 





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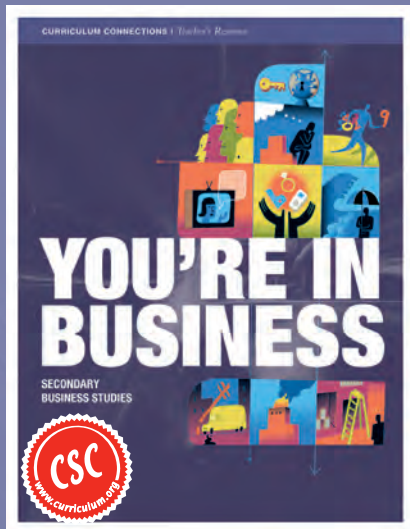


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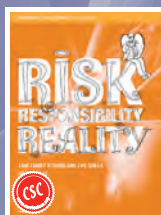
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# Child care

Still a women's issue



What if there were an agreement that the federal government would split the costs of day care 50/50 with participating provinces...that well-staffed centres would have mandated levels of trained personnel to work with the children and additional staff to maintain facilities...that day care would be subsidized by affordable fees...that provincial standards and regulations were in place that would mean Ontario's centres could be considered among the best?

If you think this description of early childhood education in Ontario is only a tantalizing dream, one left in the dust by the Harper government's abrupt cancellation of federal/provincial child care funding agreements, think again. In fact, it also describes key features of the nationally funded day nursery care provided through the Dominion Provincial Wartime Agreement from 1942 to 1946.

To be fair, this day care wasn't uni-

versal but rather was aimed at mothers employed in essential wartime industries. Nor would the program for children, or training of staff, meet the expectations we have for early learning and care today. And, yes, only a few provinces participated and centres were mostly in cities. But between 1942 and 1946, the federal government did decide to invest in accessible and affordable child care as a priority, and this decision resulted in the rapid creation of day care programs that would not have existed otherwise. And it did this specifically so more women could enter the workforce and keep essential war industries going.

It may have been short-lived, but this World War II precedent nonetheless shines a light on two important lessons that are worth recalling as the McGuinty government prepares to act on its 2007 election promise to extend kindergarten to full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

• **Lesson One:** When a government decides something is worth committing to, it can make things happen.

• **Lesson Two:** There is a powerful relationship between accessible child care and women's economic equality. Or, as now Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella said to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967, "Child care is the ramp that provides equal access to the workplace for mothers."

The landscape of Canadian women working outside the home has changed dramatically in the 60-plus years since the end of World War II. As men came home following the war, women were expected to leave the workforce and return to what was considered their primary role, that of wife and mother. Yet, the research tells us that by the mid-1970s, more than half of all women ages 15 to 64 were back in the paid labour force, or actively seeking work. By 2006, this rate had reached 73.5 per cent and, more specifically, for women in the 25 to 54 age bracket, it was even higher at 86.2 per cent.

Statistics regarding mothers reveal a similar pattern of change. By 2005, an estimated 75 per cent of women with children between three and five years of age, and two thirds of those with children under three, worked outside the home. For mothers whose youngest child was slightly older, in the six to 15 age range, the rate shoots up to 83 per cent.

What has not changed, however, is that women still carry the primary responsibility for child and family care—even when they are also working outside the home and, for this, they pay a hefty price. Many already know that, on average, women working full-time, over a full year are still paid only 70.5 per cent of what men receive. What is less well known is that giving birth can reduce a woman's future earnings by five to 13 per cent when compared to a comparable woman without children, and that that gap increases with each additional child. Both these differences in income can be directly linked to the fact that, after having children, women

are significantly more likely to take breaks from the paid workforce, limit the hours spent at work, or end up working only part-time or at casual jobs.

But what is the alternative? Despite the steady increase in the numbers of women working outside the home, for both personal and economic reasons, child care in Canada remains a fragmented patchwork of services. According to a 2004 report on early childhood education issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Canada's "system is seriously underfunded and failing to meet the needs of children and families." Data compiled by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CCRU) tells us that across Canada in 2006, there were only enough regulated child care spaces to cover 17.2 per cent of children up to the age of 12, even though over 60 per cent of children have mothers working outside the home. The other parents must turn to unregulated care or rely on whatever arrangements they can cobble

together through extended family and friends, trading shifts with their partner, or limiting their work to part-time or casual jobs. This situation is clearly not good for women, and it's not good for their children either.


Here's where the McGuinty government's plan to bring in full-day learning (FDL) for four- and five-year-olds could start to turn things around, if planned properly. This program must certainly be founded on the developmental needs of children, but what if it was also built with the needs of their mothers in mind? At a minimum, this would mean addressing the critical need for extended and seamless care beyond the traditional hours of the school day. It would also mean that FDL programs must be publicly funded and delivered, as well as readily accessible in communities right across Ontario. And there must be a good working/learning environment where a range of qualified and properly paid professionals, can deliver high quality programming and support.

But Premier McGuinty must also remember that FDL can only be a starting point and not the finish line: children still need care before they are four and after they are five. A government commitment to transform the current hodgepodge of services into a comprehensive public system covering children up to the age of 12 will be required.

All this may seem like a dream, in technicolour no less, but a broad search results in examples of places where serious government commitments to child care have made a profound difference. While New Zealand and a number of Nordic countries are frequently cited as models, there is an example much closer—right next door. In 1997, the Quebec government began a massive investment in comprehensive early childhood care and education, including full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds, school age child care and centre-based services. By 2006, Quebec already had 45 per cent of the total supply of regulated child care in Canada, yet still accounted for 61 per cent of the total increase in child care supply across Canada for that year. The overall availability of spaces for children up to the age of 12 in that province was 34.8 per cent, well above the previously cited Canadian rate of 17.2 per cent for the same year. At a current cost of just \$7 per day, it is no surprise that demand is high.

A comprehensive and public system of early learning and care should be an Ontario government priority for many reasons. It enhances child development and helps level the playing field for all children, regardless of background; it has a proven role in effective poverty reduction strategies; it boosts economic growth.

We should never forget that the common factor that links all these benefits is that child care is also the foundation for women's economic and personal equality.

Then and now—still a women's issue. 

**Margaret McPhail** is an Executive Assistant at OSSTF/FEESO's provincial office and women's issues is just one of her many responsibilities.

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# Triage

Seeing the world through a lens of compassion



Dr. James Orbinski visits former Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) headquarters in Baidoa, Somalia. Orbinski is profiled in a new NFB documentary, *Triage*

Making a documentary about genocide is no easy task. Too often, films of this nature leave viewers feeling helpless and overwhelmed. Presenting the subject matter in a tasteful and respectful manner and providing the audience with a sense of hope would seem an impossible task, but not so for director Patrick Reed and producer Peter Raymont. Their documentary, *Triage*, co-produced with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), is a powerful and sensitive portrayal of the work of Dr. James Orbinski and Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

Though Orbinski would insist that he's not a hero, it is safe to say that he is

truly one of the greatest heroes in modern Canadian history. Canadian Lt. Gen. Roméo Dallaire is another. The Toronto doctor had the courage to remain in Rwanda throughout the genocide. He continued to operate on those with severe wounds inflicted by machetes, even when strong-armed soldiers turned tail and ran. He is an ordinary man who has done extraordinary things, and he deserves to be remembered and emulated.

*Triage* was one of ten international documentaries chosen for the Docs for Schools Program as part of the Hot Docs Festival, in Toronto, in June 2008. The Hot Docs Festival is one of the largest documentary film festivals in North America.

The Docs for Schools Program is now in its fourth year. It offers free access for students to current international documentaries, facilitates screenings in theatres and schools, produces extensive teacher resources linked to Ontario curriculum courses and offers filmmaker discussions and facilitators to host school screenings. In the past year, over 22,000 students watched documentaries as part of the program.

"*Triage* was ideal for our program," said Hot Docs Education Program Manager, Barb Sniderman. "It connects so well with so many courses that are part of the Ontario curriculum." Sniderman is currently a full-time English teacher at Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute in Toronto. For the past three years she has programmed the festival while continuing to teach.

"It's not only powerful, but inspirational for young people to see that ethics do matter.... We experienced two firsts in screening *Triage*—a cinema full of teenagers so engaged in the film they were silent throughout, and a spontaneous standing ovation that began as the credits rolled and continued long after the lights went up."

The teens were so inspired by the film, she said, "that they stayed for more than an hour afterwards to take part in a discussion with the filmmakers. We have received only positive feedback about our screenings from teachers and students alike."

Reed's film profiles Orbinski's return visit to the King Faisal Hospital in Kigali where thousands of wounded and bleeding packed the hallways, stairwells, courtyards and even closets during the 1994 genocide where over 800,000 Tutsis died.

Interviews with Orbinski alternate with voice-overs of his thoughts as we see him exploring the place where he

operated night and day, while the international community refused to respond to the cries for help from the commander of the UN peacekeeping force, Canadian Lt. Gen. Roméo Dallaire.

"We are responsible for our lives and for our world. And if we don't engage that responsibility no one else will. And we will live and die with the legacy of our failures," Orbinski says in *Triage*. "The world is not ideal. If you want to try to genuinely change it, you have to do what's necessary.... You create death by not acting."

The doctor expresses what he called an "uncontainable rage" and a "profound sorrow" that people were "dying of indifference," because so few came to help.

Orbinski said that modern politicians and power brokers are refusing to adequately acknowledge and address what's really going on in the world. "It's not a politics of vision. It's not a politics of political justice. It's not a politics of fairness and it's not a politics that respects and pursues an active respect for human dignity. It's a politics of opportunity."

Orbinski has been making public appearances to alert audiences to the gravity of the world situation. The doctor is well aware of international issues. After getting his medical training from McMaster and practising for two years as a family physician in Orangeville, he did a Masters degree in International Relations at the University of Toronto. He has been a member of medical teams in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Peru, Somalia and Bosnia.

He told a group of students, professors, scientists and artists at the University of Toronto's Convergence of Art and Science: Global Health Perspectives conference at Hart House in June 2008 that the "genocide transformed me and my choices through my exploration of the questions that emerged during that situation."

The gentle, soft-spoken man, who attends Quaker meetings in Toronto,

**"Respect the dignity  
of others—including  
our enemies.  
This is the lens.  
This is the way to see  
the world."**

said that he chooses to "explore the questions" rather than to see things in an "us" and "them" framework. "We did it. That's our culture. We are capable of that. The genocide was a collective act. What made it possible was the absence of seeing the other—of knowing—of feeling—of being with the other. Seeing the other—being with the other—is an important process in the journey of becoming a more compassionate human being."

Orbinski said that we have to learn to "locate our reality within the realms of

compassion." While we may not all be able to go out into war torn zones and stitch up wounds, Orbinski suggests that we can develop and use our own gifts in a way that may benefit the greater good. Humanitarianism, he says in the film, is about "responding to another human being who is suffering in a very particular way.... That's the starting point of who we are as human beings."

Theologian Matthew Fox, in his book *A Spirituality Named Compassion*, talks about how the root words of compassion—cum patior—mean, "to suffer with...to undergo with...to share solidarity with." Fox states that compassion grows out of "the courage to face fear."

"Suffering is a part of life. If you know that and you're not afraid of it, it makes you a better doctor," Orbinski stated. The surgeon has demonstrated over and over in his various jobs on medical teams in war torn countries that he is not afraid, that he is able to act in spite of his fear. The doctor appears to be a person who has truly wrestled with his demons, conquered his own nature, and channeled his gifts in unselfish service to others. He is, in effect, a great teacher.

Orbinski said at the conference that he believes it's the responsibility of all human beings to "respect the dignity of others—including our enemies. This is the lens. This is the way to see the world."

These are not easy words for someone who has lived through the worst genocide in recent history. The doctor said that he allowed Reed to make *Triage* because he "wanted to draw attention to forgotten wars and forgotten people," and to "show people a different way of seeing."

Raymont and Reed are screening *Triage* throughout the country, leading meaningful and fruitful discussions with audiences. They hope to do more screenings in high schools throughout the 2008/09 school year.

To arrange a school visit, or to obtain a DVD of *Triage*, visit their website at [www.whitepinepictures.com](http://www.whitepinepictures.com).

**Judith Robinson**, a retired teacher, is a frequent contributor to *Education Forum*.



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# Putting students first

A success story



Gale Dores discusses a science project with Alex, one of her students at T.R. Leger School

Most educators can look back on at least one remarkable teacher whose attention inspired them toward their career path; but it is the remarkable students educators encounter who help them stay on the sometimes frustrating path of helping students set and achieve their goals. This successful student story celebrates educators, the challenges we face, and the good that we do every day when we follow OSSTF/FEESO's credo of "putting students first."

Alex was 16 years old when he registered in my math and science classroom at T.R. Leger Adult and Alternative School in Cornwall in January 2007.

Alex was shy, very quiet and very overwhelmed on his first day. I inquired as to why he was starting at a grade 9 level when he should be taking grade 11 courses and I discovered that Alex had failed both grades 7 and 8 in Quebec, and that he had left his last school because of "inappropriate behaviour." This surprised me as he gave me no problems and although his skill levels were far below grade level, his ability to understand concepts was remarkable.

Alex was one of those students whom teachers live for—you could actually see the light go on in his eyes when he understood an explanation. Although Alex was very shy, he consistently came

to me for help and he worked like a demon once he grasped an idea. When his work was returned with check marks, positive comments and bright, shiny stickers, he positively glowed.

Never, in my 12 years of teaching, had I come across a student quite so eager to learn. Alex was like a sponge—he could not learn fast enough once he started to understand the principles. Alex quickly earned his first two credits in my class and moved on to other subjects and applied level courses. By June 2007, Alex had earned eight credits.

In just over a year at T.R. Leger, he had earned 15 credits, and was working to finish three more by the end of June 2008. Alex's last two credits in my math and science class were both grade 11 college level; his overall marks ranged from mid-60s to low 80s. Quite an accomplishment for a student who had no high school credits 15 months earlier!

I asked Alex about his background, his current success, his hopes for the future and he was happy to talk. In grade 3 he was labelled with multiple learning difficulties and testing indicated he was unable to read. His senior elementary records consistently mentioned his lack of motivation, his lack of understanding of basic mathematical concepts and his disruptive nature in most classrooms.

So how does a student with so many bad experiences, with behaviour problems serious enough to be recommended for expulsion, make such a turn around? Many individuals and institutions must be commended for helping Alex move forward. Initially, and consistently, his mother and his grandparents deserve credit for removing him from his previous school and the friends who were pulling him down. Alex's mother arranged for him to leave the Quebec school system altogether and to live with his grandparents in Cornwall where he was told he must attend school. The guidance department at the first school Alex attended in Cornwall recognized that he needed program-

ming that they could not offer, so they suggested that he move to T.R. Leger. His family facilitated the move, and soon after, his mother and two brothers moved to Cornwall to support him.

Alex admits that his elementary school friends were a bad influence on him and that being separated geographically from them gave him a new opportunity for academic success. But, Alex also recognized that his level of maturity changed when he moved away from his mom and into a school where no one knew about his past behavioural problems, and where none of the staff had any preconceived notions about his abilities.

Alex also credits the independent learning delivery model used at T.R. Leger as being incredibly motivating. He liked the fact that he wasn't expected to keep up with, or to compete with, other students, that he could work quietly with teachers without drawing attention to himself, and that he could work at his own pace. The recommendation that Alex begin working on

Essential level credits was also a bonus. The required reading level was not onerous and these first courses gave Alex a much needed opportunity for success. Alex had an underlying grasp of many of the concepts presented in the


**Alex is now more  
determined than ever  
to graduate from  
high school (and only a  
year behind his old  
school mates!)**

first credits he earned, so he was able to work quickly without being frustrated or feeling academically inferior (as he had in all previous traditional classroom situations). He was thrilled when he was able to earn credits as quickly as he wanted, with praise rather than criticism from his teachers, so he kept his nose in

his books, never missed a day of school, kept to himself, and realized, for the first time, that it might be possible to earn his secondary school diploma.

All of the educational staff at T.R. Leger commented on Alex's remarkable progress, though most of us were a little worried about his shyness and introverted nature. I made a habit of calling Alex's mother to share his academic successes whenever another credit was earned, and with the help of other staff members, we encouraged Alex to get involved in Student Council activities. Alex began the next school year as a very different student than the one who had started at our school the previous winter. He was more outgoing, associating with some new friends, and even starting to skip the odd class. But Alex had matured even more than he realized—so he abruptly stopped this backslide to past behaviours. He didn't want to let his family or his teachers down, and he did not want to lose the momentum he had achieved in the previous school year. Student Council responsibilities, new friends and staff who celebrated his successes, plus a two-credit co-op placement as a teacher's helper, all helped to keep Alex on track and moving forward academically.

Alex is now more determined than ever to graduate from high school (and only a year behind his old school mates!) and to pursue postsecondary studies at community college.

Certainly, educators play an essential role in the success of students like Alex. We also recognize that it takes more than just good teaching to create student success. It takes a full team working together—involved and caring parents/guardians, students who are learning to assume responsibility for their own achievement under the direction of caring, professional educators—to ensure that students achieve academic and personal success in our schools. 

**Gale Dores** teaches math and science at T.R. Leger Adult and Alternative School in Cornwall and is a member of the Communications/Political Action Committee with OSSTF/FEESO.

“ ”

**I think all of us**

as volunteers came in acknowledging that, yes, we may have skills, but we're also going to learn a lot.

— Michele Hillier, Sri Lanka





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### EQAO and the Mismeasure of Schools

After reading Jim Neill's article (*Education Forum*, Spring 2008), I would like to add my voice of dissent—we will never fully recover from the Mike Harris years and their malevolent agenda, with EQAO testing being one of the cases in point.

I teach math, which includes statistics, covering sampling, displaying, analyzing, and, most fundamental, collection. As Neill correctly points out, the process of data collection is rife with problems. Results are used to judge individual boards, schools and even students.

I am not opposed to the Ministry's need to know how the curriculum is faring, but I support Neill's view that this data should only be looked at province-wide, and collected so that individual boards, schools and students cannot be identified—thereby eliminating the need to “teach to the test.”

Gord Humphrey  
Durham DSB

### Student Absenteeism

Jon Cowans is right on the mark (*Education Forum*, Spring 2008). Those who attend regularly suffer due to those who do not. Our Ministry of Education seems reluctant to award marks for positive behaviours such as regular attendance and its cousin, punctuality.

Two important traits identified in character education are respect and responsibility. To build character in our students, we might want to reward successive approximations of these traits. Rewarding students in their own currency (i.e. marks) will focus their attention on these outcomes. Accommodations for truancies provide an academic advantage to the truant student who receives extra time to prepare.

And so, the policy decision to attach neither reward nor punishment to attendance and punctuality was doomed to fail, because it rewards (through make-up tests and other accommodations) the very behaviours that we seek to eliminate.

Al Best  
York Region DSB



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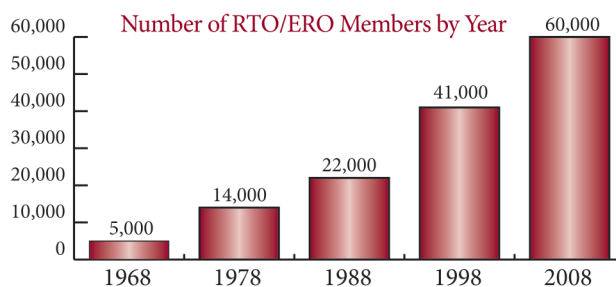


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Educators, students and parents universally acknowledge the importance of safe schools. If students do not feel safe, there is not much chance of them learning and reaching their full potential. At the extreme, students may face significant threats to their life and to their long-term physical and psychological well being. Many students are affected on a daily basis by bullying and harassment, often inflicted because of their gender,

violence against girls does not minimize other forms of violence nor deny the reality that boys are victimized by boys. In fact, creating a school climate where violence against girls is no longer tolerated and respectful relationships are fostered will offer protection for everyone.

National studies suggest that girls are subjected to a range of violent behaviours and attitudes. Girls are more likely to be victims of sexual and physical assault by family members than are boys. Some groups of girls are most at risk. According to the University of Western Ontario report, *In the Best Interest of Girls, Phase 2*, by H. Berman and Y. Jiwani, 75 per cent of Aboriginal women under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse, and half of those are under 14 years of age. One quarter of girls in dating relationships report physical and sexual abuse and young women are in the highest risk group for intimate homicides.

According to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services' Domestic Violence Death Review Committee's 2007 Annual Report, in Ontario there have been approximately 30 domestic homicides a year from 2002 to 2006, and over 90 per cent involve men killing their intimate female partners. We need to understand the nature of gender-based violence and the extent of sexism that allows perpetrators to target girls/women. Some of the issues that must be confronted are so deeply ingrained in our society that the tendency is to ignore or minimize them.

#### DEFINITION AND RESEARCH ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence refers to any form of abuse—including verbal, psychological, physical and economic—that is based on an individual's gender and is intended to control, humiliate or harm that individual. This form of violence is generally directed by boys and men against girls and women and is based on attitude or prejudice, conscious or unconscious, individual or institutional, that subordinates an individual or a group of people based on sex and gender identity. The foundation for this behaviour includes beliefs that privilege men and

# Preventing Violence Against Girls



## Challenges and opportunities for educators

By Dr. Peter Jaffe and  
Ray Hughes

race, sexual orientation and/or ability. Recent studies point out that educators also suffer long-term effects from the impact of abuse and violence on themselves and their colleagues. Solutions are not simple. There is considerable debate on the underlying causes and potential cures for the problem.

It is difficult even to start a discussion on the topic of violence against girls without a great deal of resistance and backlash.

Common responses include:

- Aren't girls just as violent as boys?
- Why are you picking on boys?
- Boys are victims too but don't seek help.
- I am tired of everyone trying to be politically correct!
- Why can't we just talk about violence in general?

Violence against girls and women is a significant social issue that needs to be understood and addressed by educators. Resistance needs to be addressed directly and begins by grasping the nature and extent of the problem. Discussing vio-



subordinate and denigrate women.

In 1995, OSSTF/FEESO, the Women's Directorate, the Violence Prevention Secretariat and the Ministry of Education, collaborated on a study entitled, *The Joke's Over—Student to Student Sexual Harassment in Secondary Schools*, which found that over 80 per cent of female students reported that they had been sexually harassed in a school setting. Researchers discovered that the majority of male students surveyed seemed to take the topic much less seriously than female students, particularly when speaking of being harassed by a female. The study was one of the first to suggest that sexual harassment was a major problem in Ontario schools and that it had to be understood as part of a continuum of school violence.

Helene Berman, Scotiabank Research Chair at the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children in London, and her colleagues in research centres across Canada found a high level of harassment reported in the daily lives of girls and inadequate responses from adults in authority to confront the issue. Adults often took a "they're just kids, they'll outgrow it" or "boys will be boys" stance in response to sexual harassment and other forms of violence in the everyday lives of girls. Researchers point out that the problems girls experience are often ignored. Girls may internalize the erroneous idea that their role as women is to support patriarchal power structures favouring the choices of boys and men.

The pervasiveness of violence against girls was underlined in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) review of schools on January 10, 2008 after the shooting death of Jordan Manners on May 23, 2007 at C.W. Jefferys Secondary School. Gender-based violence was reported at alarming rates. In one study, one in 14 girls reported that they had been sexually assaulted in the last two years (in answer to the question: "has someone forced you to have sex against your will?") and one in five reported knowing someone who had been sexual-

ly assaulted. Sadly, eight out of 10 students would not report their victimization to police or school officials.

In February 2008, our colleagues at the Centre for Prevention Science, a division of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), completed a major survey in 23 secondary schools on adolescent risk behaviours. The study, entitled *The Impact of Sexual Harassment Victimization by Peers on Subsequent Adolescent Victimization and Adjustment: A Longitudinal Study*, found that almost half of the students (43 per cent) reported experiencing sexual harassment in

## RESOURCES

Centre for Research on  
Violence Against Women & Children  
[www.crvawc.ca](http://www.crvawc.ca)  
The Fourth R,  
The Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships  
[www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)  
Equality Rules, Government of Ontario  
[www.equalityrules.ca](http://www.equalityrules.ca)  
Tools for Change, An Educator's Resource Site,  
Ontario Women's Directorate  
[www.toolsforchange.ca](http://www.toolsforchange.ca)  
White Ribbon Campaign, Men Working  
to End Men's Violence Against Women  
[www.whiteribbon.ca/educational\\_materials](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/educational_materials)

grade 9. Although the rates were similar for girls and boys, the types of harassment experiences differed. The girls were more likely than boys to be the recipient of sexual jokes, comments and unwanted touching, while boys were more likely to be subjected to homosexual slurs. Sexual harassment was associated with a range of negative outcomes for girls that included suicidal thoughts, self-harm, maladaptive dieting, early dating, substance use and poor grades. The impact of sexual harassment victimization persisted from grades 9 to 11 and was associated with higher risk for other forms of relationship violence at grade 11. Sexual harassment in grade 9 contributed to risk for both internalizing and externalizing problems two-and-a-half years later. Boys experienced many of the same issues, but at a less severe rate.

It is interesting to note that girls are harassed because they are girls and boys are most likely to be harassed because they don't conform to perceptions of ideal masculinity and are perceived to be too feminine or to be gay.

Many factors promote violence against girls in our society. Violence doesn't begin at school, but school reflects issues in the broader society. In some cases, violence begins at home with children who grow up amid abuse or exposure to domestic violence. These experiences, in turn, shape their attitudes and beliefs about healthy relationships. The media in all its various forms, from videogames to music to pornography, offer powerful images about sex roles and objectify girls as instruments of sexual pleasure. Recent research suggests that media images are not about respect and equality but are directed at denigration and abuse.

What are educators to do? Denying the extent of the problem has, unfortunately, been the response historically. This tacitly endorses sexual harassment and perpetrates its harmful effects. One could accept the magnitude of the issue but feel overwhelmed and ignore the potential role of schools to offer hope for social change.

Instead, we offer here a host of possibilities for meaningful ways to address violence against girls in schools. Schools can begin by examining their policies and procedures, interventions, prevention and school climate as part of their overall safe school initiatives and ensure that violence against girls is being addressed.

## KEY STRATEGIES AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

► **Develop a safe school committee** that includes community partners like the police, shelters for abuse victims and sexual assault/rape crisis centres to review and update policies and practices in regards to violence against girls. Inclusion of high school youth on such committees is essential. Review current school codes of conduct to ensure that gender-based violence is fully defined and



that there are appropriate consequences for those who commit such an offence.

► **Complete a survey** of students on the extent of harassment, including their views on why such behaviour is not reported and what they perceive as potential solutions.

The results should then be analyzed for action planning by the individual safe school committees to tailor a local response and respect the unique characteristics of each community.

► **Integrate the topic** of violence against girls into the curriculum at every opportunity.

The Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships has launched The Fourth R: Relationship Based Violence Prevention in Ontario and many other school boards across Canada as a means of promoting healthy adolescent relationships that centre on equality and respect. Visit [www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org).

Relationship knowledge and skills can and should be taught in the same way as reading, writing, and arithmetic: therefore the Fourth R—for Relationships—core program.

Initially developed as a grade 9 health and physical education program targeting high-risk behaviours, The Fourth R has been expanded to include a grade 8 health unit and grade 9 to 12 English units. In all of these programs, care has been taken to ensure that the criteria outlined in the curriculum guidelines are met so that teachers can deliver the curriculum at the same time as education on social skills. Standardized training for teachers ensures them the necessary information and skills to implement the program.

The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women & Children worked with the Ontario Women's Directorate to support the Equality Rules website ([www.equalityrules.ca](http://www.equalityrules.ca)) to help educate young people about the importance of gender equality as a foundation for a just society. The site offers advice on speaking up when they or their friends are being treated unfairly, as well as opportunities to practice healthy relationship skills through interactive scenarios. The

website also provides teacher resources including a comprehensive listing of programs matched to the Ontario curriculum ([www.toolsforchange.ca](http://www.toolsforchange.ca)). OSSTF/FEESO is working with other education partners to examine the impact of media violence on students. Sample curriculum in this area can be found at [www.crvawc.ca](http://www.crvawc.ca).

► **Raise awareness** through well-publicized events that engage boys and men to address these issues without defensiveness.

We have partnered with Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) over the past three years for a Fathers' Day breakfast that brings student leaders and community leaders together to address the problem of violence against women. Male speakers from sports and the arts inspire young men in their future role and responsibilities in this area.

► **Create opportunities** to practise the necessary skills to intervene in situations that involve violence against girls.

We have had tremendous success with a play called *Missed Opportunities* that deals with the impact of domestic violence on a mother and daughter as well as the potential role of friends, family and co-workers to intervene. In November 2009, a province-wide, youth-centred conference featuring diverse voices and perspectives will identify approaches to mentoring youth regarding violence and the promotion of healthy and equal relationships.

► **Celebrate successes** in order to sustain energy and commitment for these issues.

The TVDSB offers annual awards to high school students who have played a leadership role in violence prevention efforts at their school. We hope these are displayed as proudly as the football, hockey and basketball trophies. Look for opportunities to acknowledge students for the great work that they do on youth safe school committees, on gay/straight

alliances and working toward positive healthy relationships.

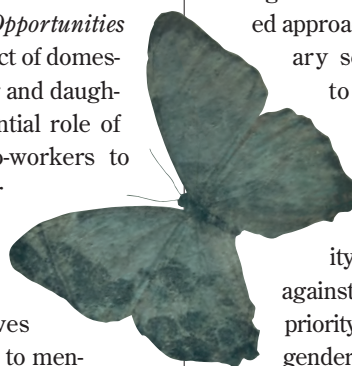
► **Offer training** for future teachers as well as continuing education opportunities and professional development for existing teachers.

The University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Education offers a course entitled Safe Schools that provides opportunities to learn about all types of school violence as well as effective intervention and prevention programs. Violence against women and engaging male staff and students are critical components of the course. Teachers, administrators and all support staff must practise their intervention skills so their policies come to life rather than gather dust in binders that are tucked away in drawers. Policies without ongoing training are not effective.

We envision a host of possibilities that currently exist as exemplary practices and programs within individual schools and boards across the province—many of which have been outlined above. What is lacking is a comprehensive and integrated approach allowing every secondary school student to access to these learning opportunities. From curriculum to school climate to the daily teachable moments, gender equality and an end to violence against girls must be seen as a priority. Without recognizing the gendered nature of violence and without an awareness of the multiple ways in which violence impacts on the lives of girls and young women, we will not have schools that are truly safe. 🦋

**Dr. Peter Jaffe**, PhD, is a Professor in the Faculty of Education and Academic Director at the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women & Children at the University of Western Ontario.

**Ray Hughes**, MEd, an OSSTF/FEESO member, is National Education Coordinator for the Fourth R Project with the Centre for Prevention Science as well as a part-time instructor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario.



# The Miss

*Four enterprising University of Western Ontario students, who felt very strongly about the lack of women's studies in the secondary school curriculum, decided to do something about it. They dubbed their venture The Miss G\_ Project, in wry reference to one of the first American women to attend university, known only as Miss G\_. Her death in 1873, at a young age, was attributed by doctors of the day to having over-exercised her brain. This is the students' story.*

# Project







Supporters of The Miss G\_ Project in action. (Opposite page) Playing croquet on the lawn of Queen's Park wearing "Miss Education" sashes. (Above) In front of the Ministry of Education office, holding a wall of headlines reporting sexual and gender-based violence in Canada

## A lesson in determination By Sarah Ghabrial

When we began *The Miss G\_ Project for Equity in Education*, one of our first meetings was with the then-Deputy Minister of Education.

At that point, the project was just Lara Shkordoff, Sheetal Rawal, myself and a slip of pink paper that contained the outline of our demand. Our demand was—and still is—that a Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) course be included in the Ontario secondary school curriculum. As we elaborated on this idea to the Deputy Minister, we explained how this could revolutionize the education system and make a crucial difference in the lives of countless students at a time when so many were forming ideas about gender and sexuality that would remain with them the rest of their lives. He looked, to put it politely, mildly uninterested. When we finished our earnest appeal, he paused and said, "This might be a very good idea, but as long as it's only the three of you, no one in government will listen. Asking for an entirely new course in the curriculum is a major demand and will take many years and a lot of backing."

To this day, I am still not sure whether he meant to inspire or discourage us, but we came away with a very clear idea of what we had to do: build a province-wide army of supporters with a collective voice too loud to be ignored. Only some hardcore active citizenship would persuade those in power to recognize the importance of gender-critical curricula at the high school level. So, build this army we did, in boots that were made for marching. Recently, we found out that our efforts have paid off: the Ministry is soon to roll out the WGS course we have been demanding. It is now up to educators to see the rest of this process through to fruition.



**Actions to advance**  
**The Miss G\_ Project** included marches, sit-ins, letter, postcard and email campaigns, t-shirts, a website, and crashing education conferences

### THREE YEARS IN THE MAKING

I remember when we began *The Miss G\_ Project* how we scoffed when people told us that a few years could pass before we'd see our goal realized. We couldn't imagine that such a good idea would fail to strike an immediate chord. And indeed, it did, with hundreds of Ontarians, and a few dedicated Members of Provincial Parliament who took up our cause. Desperate for the gov-





ernment's attention, the members of our small, but growing, group launched a series of letter- and postcard-writing campaigns, sat in the Gallery of the Provincial Legislature, crashed all the educator conferences we could find and played croquet on the lawn of Queen's Park wearing "Miss Education" sashes. We printed t-shirts, set up a website, posted on rabble.ca, and received media coverage by the *Toronto Star*, AM680, *Glow* magazine, and a number of local and campus newspapers. *Miss G\_* clubs popped up at universities, colleges and high schools across the province. In Parry Sound, OSSTF/FEESO member Shannon Mills started a locally-developed gender studies course in her high school and other pioneering teachers were inspired to follow.

Yet, with all this activity and hundreds of petitions pouring into the Ministry of Education, two Ministers would pass through the big corner office before anyone took our demand seriously. True to the predictions, three years went by before we heard anything more decisive than "you're all doing great work!" and "keep it up, girls!" Then, at a meeting in February 2007, with representatives from the Ministry of Education, including the Minister herself, Kathleen Wynne, the *Miss G\_ Project* was finally told our proposal was accepted. They even sealed the deal with a large government grant.

But then more time passed, our calls went unreturned and we began to lose patience. On February 14, 2008, we launched our largest, and perhaps most important, public-action campaign to date, a phone-in called *No More Miss Nice G\_*. We invited all our supporters to call the Ministry of Education to ask why the promised provincial WGS course had not yet been approved. So many called in that the phone lines at the Minister's office were backed up, and people began sending emails instead, which soon filled the Minister's inbox. Meanwhile, a handful of us stood in front of Ministry headquarters holding a wall of headlines reporting sexual and gender-based violence that occurred in Canada over the previous three years—the same length of time we had been calling for a WGS course in high school.

In light of this mass show of support, we are glad to say that Minister Wynne responded not only favourably, but also with (relatively) little further delay, to the voices of Ontario's teachers, parents, students and other concerned citizens. This past summer a curriculum writing team began drafting a new



**A province-wide army of supporters with a collective voice too loud to be ignored have helped put women's studies in the curriculum**



WGS course. This course will be piloted in the winter of 2009, and will be available at the grades 11 and 12 levels, and with Open and College/University credit options, by September of 2009.

### WHY A WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES COURSE?

A few months after our first encounter with the Deputy Minister, we ran into him again. He vaguely recognized us as the young women who wanted to create what he called "that course for girls." We laughed, but were also dismayed to realize this was what most people thought we were asking for.

Since the beginning, the *Project* has worked hard to disabuse people of this false notion of what WGS, or feminism, is. It's hardly only a course for girls—WGS will benefit students of all genders and sexes, helping them dissect and

then shed confining gender constructions. The course also has important implications for violence prevention.

The four founding members of *The Miss G\_ Project* (Dilani Mohan joined very early on as our resident financial expert) came from different classes, and varied educational, economic and racial backgrounds.

But it didn't take long for us to identify the common theme that ran through our individual high school experiences: a sense that something was off. Something we could not then identify as patriarchy had cast an unpleasant, and sometimes deeply harmful tinge to our teenage years. Though these problems did not go away when we entered post-secondary education, there we made an empowering and liberating discovery: there was a history and politics of resistance to the problems of sexism, homophobia, racism, classism and ableism that we had found so disturbing and disheartening in high school, but felt powerless to challenge. And it was called feminism.



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The F-word. When I was in high school (and for generations before that), feminist was a word no student wanted to be associated with. Though I espoused feminism in my opinions and actions, I dodged the label, fearing its acidic effects on my social life. I have one memory of high school that will always stay with me.

One Friday night, a friend had gone to a party held by a neighbour. I left the party early, but on Monday I heard what had happened to her, and why she was now blacklisted. She had been drinking heavily and passed out in the backseat of a car parked in the yard. In front of dozens of witnesses, one boy climbed into the car and raped her while she was unconscious. When he finished, he jostled a friend to do the same, which he did.

On Monday morning, the boys were regarded no differently than they had been on the previous Friday—in fact, they received a few pats on the back. The girl, however, was made a primary object of ridicule and ostracism. She soon transferred to another school to avoid the shaming looks and rebukes facing her for being a “whore.” She received threats of beatings—from girls.

This is just one way that gender-based violence and oppression can have devastating effects on students. This may be an extreme case, but it is frighteningly common, and operates according to the same logic by which girls are teased and taunted about their bodies and sexuality on a daily basis—from both boys and other girls.

Had I, and even a handful of others, fully understood what was at work in that situation, would we have acted differently? Would we have supported that girl instead of shying away from her? Would we have encouraged her to report the crime? What about the boys? The bystanders? What if everyone had been taught that having sex with someone who is unconscious is not cool or manly, but rather that it is actually rape and therefore a crime?

I do not suggest that a WGS course will solve all these problems overnight. The cultural forces that influence students to hold and perpetuate these views do not come solely through their formal education. The larger influences are their families, television, advertising, film, music videos, magazines, video games, etc. Everything from *Grand Theft Auto* to *Seventeen Magazine*; from gangsta rap to My Little Princess dolls. That said, education could be a place of powerful inter-



Former Education Minister Sandra Pupatello (bottom photo) and current Education Minister Kathleen Wynne (top photo) speak to Miss G\_ supporters at Queen's Park

vention before these influences have a chance to settle and solidify.

High school students are smart. Many are aware of the problems around them; but too many have been let down by an education system that shirks political issues. They will continue to be affected by gender politics and oppression whether or not we recognize the issues. The real choice is whether we give them the language and the tools to begin challenging these injustices.

This has been the motivation behind *The Miss G\_ Project* since the beginning. While we recognize it is important to have feminist education throughout the curriculum and feminist pedagogy in all classrooms, we have stood by our belief that a dedicated, holistic WGS course is also critically important. This course will be a safe space in which to focus on gender construction and

oppression and its intersection with other forms of oppression; to explore alternative perspectives on history, politics, and culture; to de-centre white, middle-class, and androcentric curriculum; and to consider ways in which students participate in these politics and can seek justice in their daily lives.

## NEXT STEPS: IN THE HANDS OF EDUCATORS

About a year into *The Miss G\_ Project*, we determined a need to build stronger networks with the growing number of students and educators we were meeting through our work. Now this has become our highest priority. We co-hosted a teachers' conference with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto in the winter of 2007. We held a student summit at the YWCA in April, 2008 (on the heels of revelations by the Falconer Report and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health study about alarming rates of gender-



based violence in schools) where students shared their concerns and ideas for improving the education system directly with Minister Wynne.

We want to do everything an advocacy organization can do to ensure the availability and success of WGS in Ontario schools. To supplement the Ministry's courses, *The Miss G\_ Project* is creating an online database of feminist teaching kits with lesson plans, units, and resources on topics that include DIY Feminism, Aboriginal Women's issues, Gender and the Law, Women and Western Art, Trans/Intersex issues and Reproductive Health/Choice.

The continued dedication of teachers and others in education to provide anti-oppression education, especially within the context of a WGS course, remains vital: a WGS subject council must be created to maintain the standards and relevance of the course; school boards must approve and/or create professional development days on gender equity and feminist pedagogy, and faculties of education must ensure their graduates meet woman-affirming and gender-critical teaching standards; women's and gender studies departments must reach out both to faculties of education and to local school boards to create cross-disciplinary course work and research.

With nearly four years behind us, the members of *Miss G\_* are proud of the work we have done and are excited about Ontario's unprecedented step toward truly equitable education. Many long days, late nights and face-offs with patriarchy later, I write this in hope and anticipation that an army of courageous and visionary educators will finally have the institutional support they need to end patriarchal oppression through social justice driven education. And that students—all students—will soon begin to reap the benefits. Find out more at [www.themissgproject.org](http://www.themissgproject.org).

**Sarah Ghabrial** is one of four University of Western Ontario students behind the push to have women's studies recognized as an optional grade 11 or 12 course under Ontario's new four-year curriculum.



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# ALMA COLLEGE

A chapter in OSSTF/FEESO history goes up in flames

By Rod Heikkila

**W**hile Alma College burned, thousands of locals looked on in stunned silence. It was the end of the 2008 school year, and Alma College, St. Thomas' venerable Victorian gothic building, was in flames, set ablaze by two high school boys. It had not operated as a school since 1988, yet even after all those years of neglect—windows long missing, grounds overgrown, the wrecking ball waiting in the wings—there was no denying its awesome presence. The architecture recalled another era, a bold statement born of the optimism of a young railway city in a young country in 1881—the height of the railway age. The ashes

cooled and just days later the brick shell was pulled down, leaving a gap in the skyline and in the city's sense of itself. However, few realize its contribution to a short but significant chapter in the history of the OSSTF/FEESO.

Those who taught at this private girls' boarding school over the years have since shared memories of their time at Alma. When a teacher entered the classroom, the students, (all dressed in uniform), stood up, fell silent, and waited for the teacher to tell them to be seated and to begin the lesson. In 1988, there were 14 teachers (only two of whom were male) and the student body of 105 was a mix of foreign and

Canadian girls. More than 100 years of history and gifts yielded a priceless collection of international dolls, grand pianos and a stuffed bird collection from the Victoria era. This collection was displayed in Darwinian-type display cases and also included a long-extinct passenger pigeon. Magnificent grounds boasted a stone amphitheatre nestled among Carolinian hardwoods, and gardens tended by a permanent groundskeeper. Picture *Dead Poets' Society* meets Hogwarts. Everyone knew about the school's ghost, Angela, and only the bravest souls dared enter Ivory Tower.

Sadly, however, like the building itself, there were /*Continued on page 28*







# COLLÈGE ALMA

Un chapitre de l'histoire d'OSSTF/FEESO s'envole en fumée

par Rod Heikkilä

Lorsque le Collège Alma, un vieil édifice gothique victorien vénérable de St. Thomas, a été victime d'un incendie vers la fin de l'année scolaire 2008, des milliers de personnes de la région l'ont regardé avec un silence stupéfait. Depuis 1988, le Collège n'était plus une institution d'enseignement, mais même après des années de manque d'entretien, les fenêtres manquantes depuis longtemps, la cour complètement envahie d'herbe, le boulet de démolition attendant dans les coulisses, sa présence imposante ne faisait aucun doute. Alma était la proie des flammes déclenchées par deux garçons d'une école secondaire.

L'architecture à elle seule rappelait une autre époque issue de l'optimisme d'une jeune ville ferroviaire dans un jeune pays à l'aube du chemin de fer en 1881. Les cendres ont refroidi et la carcasse de briques a été démolie en l'espace de quelques jours, laissant un trou à l'horizon et dans le sentiment de la ville. Toutefois, peu de personnes ont réalisé le trou laissé dans un chapitre court, mais important de l'histoire d'OSSTF/FEESO.

Le personnel enseignant du pensionnat privé pour filles a de bons souvenirs de leur passage à Alma. Par exemple, lorsqu'une enseignante entrait dans la classe, toutes les filles en uniforme se

levaient, en silence, et attendaient qu'elle leur dise de s'asseoir et de commencer la leçon. En 1988, il y avait 14 membres du personnel enseignant (dont seulement deux étaient des hommes) et 105 filles canadiennes et de nationalité étrangère. Au cœur des 100 années d'histoire et de talents se dressaient une collection inestimable de poupées internationales, de pianos à queue et même une collection victorienne d'oiseaux empaillés dans des vitrines d'exposition darwiniennes, y compris un pigeon voyageur depuis longtemps disparu. Les jardins magnifiques, assez uniques grâce à un amphithéâtre en pierres, étaient nichés parmi les /Suite à la page 29

*Continued from page 26/* anachronisms in labour practices. One teacher recalls going into the principal's office each year, alone, to negotiate her salary. Later, and without consultation, the Board developed a grid of sorts that would often be frozen. The preferred method of communication was to invite teachers to a dinner (which one staff member nicknamed "the last supper") at a local United Church where they were informed that grid movement was impossible—a microcosmic foreshadowing of the NDP's Social Contract, half

for Private Schools suddenly took a keen interest.

On January 23, 1988, Alma teachers voted for "provincial takeover" that enabled OSSTF/FEESO provincial negotiators to step in. The writing was on the wall. On February 15, the first strike by members of a private school in Ontario was under way—the bold and perhaps naïve slogan for the Alma strikers: "The Edge of the Wedge." Ontario private schools lined up with the Alma Board, and one of Ontario's most powerful unions, OSSTF/FEESO, set up its

Alma teacher would later win damages in court, thanks to legal representation provided by OSSTF/FEESO, a service not provided to the replacement worker by his employer.

There were some peculiar ironies. One scab turned out to be an Ontario Teachers' Federation member on a leave of absence. A retired United Church minister (from the institution that appointed the Board, and which as early as 1942 declared its support for Canadian workers and collective bargaining) regularly crossed the picket



There was no just cause clause either. Staff could be fired with two weeks' notice. A family studies teacher was simply let go after 30 years, a drama teacher after 40 years

a decade later. By 1987, teachers at Alma were earning about half that of local public high school teachers, they were again frozen on the paltry grid, they were assigned an extra course and part-time teachers were being scheduled sporadically throughout the day. Benefits remained the same: none. There was no seniority list.

There was no just cause clause either. Staff could be fired with two weeks' notice. A family studies teacher was simply let go after 30 years, a drama teacher after 40 years. When a staff delegation was rebuffed by the administration, Alma teachers turned to the OSSTF/FEESO, through what was then District 35, Elgin, for help. History was made when the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) approved the first private school bargaining unit of OSSTF/FEESO in 1987. The Alma Board was horrified. The Association

strike office in St. Thomas, complete with a phone, a fridge, a fax machine and a photocopier.

Twenty years later, the man who had been Alma's Bargaining Unit President in 1988, and who is now retired from a long teaching career, is still "amazed it was such a hornet's nest" and still expresses deep gratitude for the support his tiny bargaining unit received from the union.

The strike dragged on. On March 21, the Alma Board brought in scab workers. There was violence on the picket line. An Etobicoke teacher supporter ended up on the hood of a car that day, as did the Provincial President-elect. One Alma teacher was slightly injured days later when a car driven by a scab teacher accelerated through the line, carrying him 13 metres and then hurling him to the gravel, where he landed perilously close to a parked car. The

line to teach religion. One Alma Board member, a member of OSSTF/FEESO with all its rights and privileges, was actually teaching in the public system while fellow members took a beating in the press and on the line. Perhaps the greatest irony is that OSSTF/FEESO had ultimately hoped to work with the Board to see the College thrive with a unionized staff, even with a modest contract, "The Edge of the Wedge." It is an irony because rather than work with OSSTF/FEESO, the Alma Board refused to bargain at all and ultimately severed its ties with the United Church also, rather than follow the Church's policy of respecting workers' rights.

Three months and one day after it began, the strike ended. The OLRB ruled the Alma Board was guilty of unfair labour practices, awarded a first contract and turned over outstanding issues to binding /Continued on page 30



*Suite de la page 27/* feuillus caroliniens et les jardins entretenus par un jardinier permanent. Imaginez « La société des poètes disparus » qui rencontre Hogwarts. Tous connaissaient le fantôme de l'école, Angela, et seuls les plus braves osaient pénétrer dans la tour d'ivoire.

Malheureusement, tout comme l'édifice lui-même, il y a eu cependant des anachronismes dans les pratiques de travail. Une enseignante se souvient d'être allée seule au bureau de la directrice pour négocier annuellement son salaire. Plus tard et sans consultation, le Conseil a élaboré un genre de grille qui serait sou-vent gelée. Le moyen privilégié pour informer le personnel du gel de la grille (ce qu'un membre appelait « le dernier souper ») était de les inviter à un souper à l'Église Unie locale (*United Church*) afin de les informer que la progression sur la grille était impossible; un présage microcosmique du contrat social du NPD cinq ans plus tard. En 1987, les enseignantes d'Alma gagnaient environ la moitié du salaire du personnel enseignant des écoles secondaires publiques, leur salaire était encore gelé sur la grille dérisoire, leur assignation comportait un cours supplémentaire et les enseignantes à temps partiel étaient prévues sporadiquement durant la journée. Les avantages sociaux restaient les mêmes : aucun. Les listes d'ancienneté n'existaient pas.

Il n'y avait pas non plus de disposition sur les motifs valables. Le personnel pouvait être congédié avec un préavis de deux semaines. Une enseignante d'initiation à la vie familiale a tout simplement été mise à pied après 30 ans et une enseignante d'art dramatique après 40 ans. Lorsqu'une délégation du personnel a été rabrouée par l'administration, les enseignantes d'Alma se sont adressées à OSSTF/FEESO afin d'obtenir de l'aide par l'entremise à ce moment-là du District 35. Elgin. Le cas est passé à l'histoire lorsque la Commission des

relations de travail de l'Ontario (CRTO) a approuvé la première unité de négociation d'OSSTF/FEESO représentant les écoles privées en 1987. Le Conseil d'Alma était scandalisé. L'Association des écoles privées est subitement devenue intéressée.

Le 23 janvier 1988, les enseignantes d'Alma ont voté en faveur d'une « prise en charge provinciale », ce qui a permis aux négociateurs provinciaux d'OSSTF/FEESO d'intervenir. C'était écrit dans le ciel. Le 15 février, c'était la première grève des membres d'une école privée

Il n'y avait pas non plus de disposition sur les motifs valables. Le personnel pouvait être congédié avec un préavis de deux semaines

ontarienne; le slogan audacieux et peut-être naïf des grévistes d'Alma était « *The Edge of the Wedge* ». Les écoles privées de l'Ontario se sont ralliées au Conseil d'Alma et à OSSTF/FEESO, l'un des syndicats les plus puissants en Ontario, établissait son bureau de grève dans une petite ville il comprenait un téléphone, un réfrigérateur, un télécopieur et un photocopieur.

Vingt ans plus tard, le président de l'unité de négociation d'Alma de l'époque, maintenant à la retraite après une longue carrière dans l'enseignement est encore « stupéfait que c'était aussi épique » et exprime toujours sa profonde reconnaissance pour le soutien que sa petite unité de négociation a reçu du syndicat.

La grève s'est éternisée. Le 21 mars, le Conseil d'Alma a fait entrer des briseurs de grève. Il y a eu de la violence sur la ligne de piquetage. Un enseignant

d'Etobicoke qui était là par solidarité s'est retrouvé sur le capot d'une automobile le même jour que le président provincial nouvellement élu. Un enseignant d'Alma a été blessé légèrement quelques jours plus tard lorsqu'une automobile, conduite par un briseur de grève, a accéléré pour passer la ligne, le transportant sur 13 mètres et le projetant sur le gravier, terriblement près d'une automobile stationnée. Il a par la suite obtenu une compensation en cour grâce à la représentation juridique d'OSSTF/FEESO, un service qui n'était pas offert au travailleur suppléant par son employeur.

Il y a eu quelques faits bizarres. Un briseur de grève s'est avéré être membre de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario qui était en congé autorisé. Un pasteur à la retraite de l'Église Unie (l'institution qui avait nommé le Conseil et qui, dès le début de l'année 1942, avait déclaré son appui aux travailleurs canadiens et à la négociation collective) a régulièrement traversé la ligne de piquetage pour enseigner la religion. Un membre du Conseil d'Alma enseignait en fait au système public, un mem-


bre d'OSSTF/FEESO avec tous ses droits et privilèges alors que ses confrères se sont faits massacrer dans les médias et sur la ligne de piquetage. L'aspect sans doute le plus ironique est qu'OSSTF/FEESO espérait en fin de compte travailler avec le Conseil pour que le collège se développe avec du personnel syndiqué, même avec une convention collective modeste « *The Edge of the Wedge* ».

La grève a pris fin trois mois et un jour après son début. La CRTO a conclu que le Conseil d'Alma était coupable de pratiques de travail déloyales, a accordé la première convention et renvoyé toutes les questions en suspens à un arbitrage exécutoire. Un panneau « Nous avons gagné » était affiché à la fenêtre du bureau de grève. Quatre enseignantes ont été mises à pied conformément à la nouvelle liste d'ancienneté. Le reste était /*Suite à la page 30*

*Continued from page 28/* arbitration. A "We Won" sign was posted in the window of the strike office. Four teachers were laid off in keeping with the new seniority list. The rest were subjected to an outdoor reception at which a small number of handpicked student protesters derided returning teachers before invited media guests. Administration cancelled classes for the rest of the year, relegating teachers to "tutorial help" in empty classrooms. The 75 remaining students were told by the Board they would not lose credits. During the final assembly, the Alma teachers seated in the front row, were informed, "Your services are no longer required. The school is closing."

It is unclear whether the Board thought it might reopen the school at a future date, without the union. The Alma Bargaining Unit remained on the minutes of District 35 (Elgin) until amalgamation in 1998. Alma College itself, unable to be retrofitted sufficiently to meet the fire and building codes

required to reopen, never did. One Alma teacher said recently that the Alma fire of 2008 was terrible, of course, but "As far as I'm concerned, the school died 20 years ago. The fire is an epilogue, not a conclusion."


Alma teachers who wanted to continue teaching quickly found positions in other schools (in many cases, at double their previous salary) and began working under what many of their new colleagues sometimes take for granted: a contract. A just cause clause alone is worth its weight in platinum. Every comma, "shall," "will," number, grid, clause and protection has been hard won since 1919, and we might well need determination again if contracts are to be maintained. We should do well to remember Alma for what she was, what she was not, and what she never will be. 

**Rod Heikkila**, a long-time OSSTF/FEESO activist, teaches for the Thames Valley District School Board.

*Suite de la page 29/* soumis à une réception en plein air au cours de laquelle une poignée d'élèves manifestant avec des pancartes ont tourné au ridicule les enseignantes devant les médias invités. L'administration a annulé les cours pour le reste de l'année, reléguant les enseignantes à du « tutorat » dans des salles de classe vides. Le Conseil a dit aux 75 élèves qui restaient qu'ils ne perdraient pas leurs crédits. Durant les cérémonies de fin d'année, les enseignantes d'Alma, assises à la première rangée, ont été informées « Vos services ne sont plus requis. L'école ferme ses portes. »

On ne sait pas bien si le Conseil pensait que l'école pourrait ouvrir plus tard, sans le syndicat. L'unité de négociation d'Alma est restée dans les procès-verbaux du District 35 (Elgin) jusqu'à la fusion. Quant à lui, le Collège, incapable de se conformer aux normes des codes de prévention des incendies et du bâtiment requises pour rouvrir, ne l'a jamais fait. Une enseignante d'Alma a dit dernièrement que l'incendie d'Alma en 2008 était bien entendu terrible, mais « en autant qu'elle était concernée, l'école s'était éteinte il y a 20 ans. L'incendie est un épilogue et non pas une conclusion. »

Toutes les enseignantes d'Alma qui désiraient continuer d'enseigner ont rapidement trouvé du travail dans d'autres écoles, doublant en règle générale leurs salaires et étant régies par ce que plusieurs de leurs nouveaux collègues considéraient parfois pour acquis : une convention collective. À elles seules, les dispositions pour motifs valables valent leur pesant d'or. Chaque virgule, devoir, chiffre, grille, article et protection ont été difficiles à remporter depuis 1919 et pourraient bien nécessiter encore de la détermination si l'on veut défendre nos conventions collectives.

On doit se souvenir d'Alma pour ce qu'elle était, ce qu'elle n'était pas et ce qu'elle ne sera jamais. 

**Rod Heikkila**, activiste de la OSSTF/FEESO depuis longtemps, enseigne au Thames Valley District School Board.





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# SCHOOL AND THE READING BRAIN

A reciprocal union

BY JON COWANS

**T**eaching students to read: it is the school's original and still primary function. Nowadays, it is also its most challenging one.

Since the publication of Rudolph Flesch's controversial bestseller *Why Johnny Can't Read* in 1955, there has been widespread public concern that a growing number of students are leaving school unable to read proficiently. In response, education authorities across North America have invested heavily in remediation classes, reading programs and literacy tests. Yet real success has proven elusive. What then makes the teaching of reading so difficult? To Flesch, the problem lay primarily with the flawed reading pedagogy of the 1950s, the so-called "look-say" method, but this explanation alone is inadequate.

Two recent books, Maryanne Wolf's

*Proust and the Squid* (2007), and Mark Bauerlein's *The Dumbest Generation* (2008), offer insights not discernable half a century ago as to why Johnny can't read.

## WE WERE NEVER BORN TO READ

The subtitle of Wolf's work, *The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, identifies her subject matter more clearly than the cryptic main title. A professor of child development at Tufts University and director of its Center for Reading and Language Research, Wolf brings to the book both expertise and a strong personal belief in reading as a civilizing activity. In clear, non-technical language, she describes the historical development of reading and the results of the latest research into how reading changes the brain.

Wolf's opening statement, "We were

never born to read," establishes the central problem with acquiring facility in the medium. Unlike the spoken language, which is partly innate, the written language is a cultural invention. Just a few thousand years old, it works by piggy-backing on other basic brain functions. In doing so, reading modifies the physical structures of the adapting organ. But the change is not just physical: "In much the way reading reflects the brain's capacity for going beyond its structures, it also reflects the reader's capacity to go beyond what is given in the text."

Through reading, the natural mind is enlarged, and thereby enabled to reason, imagine, create, feel and experience life more fully and subtly. Over the course of history, human thought and literature have grown in a reciprocal union. As a result, the written language has become



more extensive and complex than the spoken, making the former harder and slower to master—to the frustration of generations of students.

Wolf informs us: “To acquire this unnatural process, children need instructional environments that support all the circuit parts that need bolting for the brain to read.” The initial environment for this is the home, but, unfortunately, not all homes are equal in this respect. The average middle-class five-year-old, she informs us, will enter school having heard an astounding 32 million more words than an underprivileged child. The result is obvious: “Children who begin kindergarten having heard and used thousands of words, whose meanings are already understood, classified, and stored away in their young brains, have the advantage on the playing field of education.”

In some cases, a student’s original disadvantage comes from another source—the reading disability known as dyslexia. Wolf devotes two of her nine chapters to this topic. Her interest is both professional and personal: her son Ben is dyslexic.

Wolf’s detailed discussion of dyslexia and the various theories accounting for it will be of particular value to educators. Ongoing research suggests that the disability stems from a variety of causes, one of which concerns how the left and right hemispheres of the dyslexic brain are wired. Even here, the evidence is ambiguous, and Wolf is unsure “whether right-hemisphere reading circuits are the cause of not being able to name letters and read words, or the consequence.”

Another impediment to reading development is cultural, namely the potentially adverse effects of digital media, leading Wolf to ask: “What would be lost to us if we replaced the skills honed by the reading brain with those now being formed in our next generation of ‘digital natives,’ who sit and read transfixed before a screen?” She wonders whether “the immediacy and seeming comprehensiveness of the on-screen information” render students less willing to engage in the close reading and creative interpretation of texts they

increasingly regard as anachronistic.

Somewhat optimistically, however, she offers the McLuhanesque hope that we can combine “books and screens” and unite “the analytical, inferential, perspective-taking, reading brain” with “the nimble, multi-functional, multi-modal, information-integrative capacities of a

## The average middle-class five-year-old will enter school having heard 32 million more words than an underprivileged child

digital mind-set.” Perhaps we can, but many educators will contend that Wolf’s hope is naïve, and that, among today’s students, the “reading brain” is being supplanted by the “digital mind-set.”

### THE NEW BIBLIOPHOBES

One such educator is Mark Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory University in Atlanta and former director of Research and Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in Washington.

In 2004, Bauerlein oversaw the publication of the NEA’s controversial report *Reading at Risk*, which revealed a substantial decline in American reading habits among both young and old over the past three decades. The title of his most recent book, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*, bluntly sets forth the work’s provocative tone and topic.

But Bauerlein’s book is no mere rant. Rather, it’s a well-researched, articulate, and impassioned statement of the case, one almost overwhelming in supporting evidence. *The Dumbest Generation* recalls an earlier book with a similar thrust: Neil Postman’s *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, the 1985 classic about the debilitating effects of television on modern discourse. Viewing popular culture some 20 years later,

Bauerlein focuses on the effects digital media is having on students’ academic performance, and particularly on their ability to read.

In part, *The Dumbest Generation* is a response to Steven Johnson’s 2005 best-seller, *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today’s Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*. Johnson contends that popular media, once regarded as dumbed-down and potentially harmful, has matured to the point that it actually increases intelligence. His evidence? The fact that scores on IQ tests have been rising over the past half-century, a trend only accountable, he claims, by a rise in the level of popular culture.

Bauerlein answers Johnson’s use of IQ test evidence with several strong counterarguments, of which the most convincing is his question: “Why haven’t knowledge and skill levels followed the same path?” Bauerlein cites a host of studies indicating that students’ knowledge and skill levels have in fact fallen markedly over recent decades. Educators can decide for themselves whether his evidence corresponds to their own classroom experience.

Bauerlein identifies reading, especially, as being under threat from digital media. Using a variety of data, he demonstrates that not only has students’ ability to read declined, but so too has their desire, naming them “the new bibliophobes.”

He cites a few telling statistics:

- 1 The 2003 *National Assessment of Adult Literacy*: Only 31 per cent of university graduates tested attained “proficiency” in reading.
- 2 The 2005 *American Time Use Survey*: 15- to 24-year-olds read on average about eight minutes a day in their spare time.
- 3 The 2007 *National Freshman Attitudes Report*: 53.3 per cent of students disagreed with the statement “I get a great deal of satisfaction from reading” while 42.9 per cent disagreed with “Over the year, books have broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination.” (These are first-year university students, remember.)

Compare these to a fourth statistic:





4 The 2005 *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8 18-Year-Olds*: Those tested spent an average of five-and-a-half hours a day in front of a screen (TV and computer) outside school. (Time devoted to iPod, cell phone and radio use was not tracked.)

Given the importance of reading to education, these are disturbing figures. To Bauerlein, students' excessive use of digital media takes up time they could be reading, while its flashy and fragmented content conditions them "against quiet, concerted study, against imagination unassisted by visuals, against linear sequential analysis of texts."

Accordingly, he questions the school's increasing use of electric media to make curriculum seem more relevant and accessible. Bauerlein argues that the young "don't need more pop culture and youth perspective in the classroom. They get enough of these on their own." The trend towards relevance merely reinforces the limited and narcissistic worldview served up to the young in the digital culture, one focused largely on their present personal and social needs. Bauerlein describes the result: "Dissociated from tradition, with nobody telling them that sometimes they must mute the voices inside them and heed instead the voices of distant greatness, young people miss one of the sanative, humbling mechanisms of maturity.... Tradition provides grounding against and refuge from the mercurial ebb and flow of youth culture."

The most comprehensive medium through which the "voices of distant greatness" can be heard is reading, the very activity many students now neglect. In doing so, they cut themselves off from its significant benefits: "more civic and historical knowledge, familiarity with current events and government actions, a larger vocabulary, better writing skills, eloquence, inexpensive recreation, and contact with the great thoughts and expressions of the past."

Bauerlein dismisses the claim that the same benefits can be gained through on-line learning. In spite of the growing availability of educational resources on the Internet, he argues

that the seductive, multiform nature of the medium distracts the young, and reduces reading to mere scanning: "With the read/write/film/view/browse/message/buy/sell web, adolescent users govern their own exposure, and the didactic and artistic content of smarter sites flies by unseen.... The



popular digital practices of teens and 20-year-olds didn't and don't open the world. They close the doors to maturity, eroding habits of the classroom, pulling hours away from leisure practices that complement classroom habits."

Apparently, the young aren't the only ones whose reading ability is being compromised by the Internet. In a recent article in *Atlantic Monthly* (July/August 2008), "Is Google Making Us Stupid?", writer Nicholas Carr complains that extensive use of the Internet for personal research has been "chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Internet distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles.... I'm not the only one. When I mention my troubles with reading to friends and acquaintances—literary types, most of them—many say they're having similar experiences."

### IN DEFENSE OF READING

*The Dumbest Generation* could be more forthright in assigning blame for the decline it describes. If many young people are no longer making books their first choice of media, they are merely following the general drift of their cultural environment, one created by adults. It therefore seems hypocritical of the latter to decry the young's declining reading ability while providing them

with the very devices responsible for it, and reading less themselves.

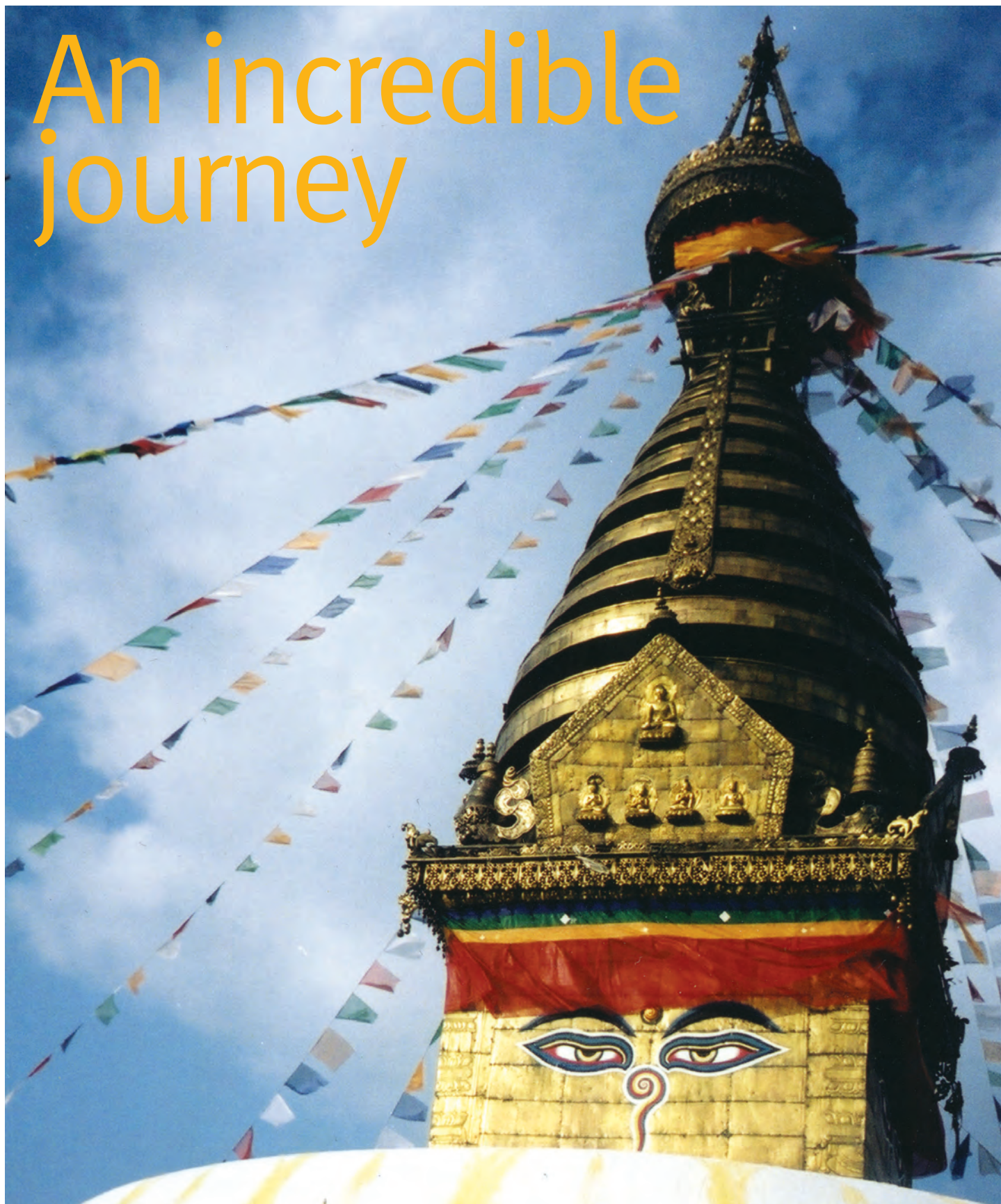
Parents, in particular, need regular reminding that reading must be nurtured at home as well as at school, and that children's use of digital media, now far more plentiful in most homes than books and newspapers, has to be monitored and regulated. Educators, meanwhile, must set as their principal task—at all levels of education—the immediate improvement of students' reading skills.

Here are some simple ways that I think Ontario's secondary schools might achieve this:

- 1 Build 15 minutes of daily quiet reading into all academic courses, where practical. (The semester's 75-minute period is ideal for this purpose). In a four-period schedule, this would result in one hour of sustained reading per day and compensate for any lack of personal reading outside school. Allow students to choose their own subject-related material. Include this reading in their evaluation.
- 2 Remove the media strand from English courses. Since there are now three media arts courses in the Ontario curriculum, media study no longer needs to piggyback on English, a subject which requires all the time it can get.
- 3 Replace the library's computers with books. Let students do their web surfing, academic or otherwise, at home and use the library for the print-based research characteristic of higher learning.
- 4 Get rid of the Literacy Test. This multi-million-dollar exercise in political PR shows teachers, students and parents nothing they don't already know from the classroom. If anything, the test turns kids off reading and writing. Invest the money saved into more library books—and more librarians.

**Jon Cowans**, a frequent contributor to *Education Forum*, recently retired from teaching with the Durham District School Board.

# An incredible journey







York Region secondary school teacher Angie Dornai travelled through Asia, Europe, South and Central America during much of 2000 and 2001 thanks in part to an OSSTF/FEESO Dr. S.G.B. Robinson Travelling Fellowship.

“I visited schools in 15 different countries, sometimes teaching and always learning,” said Dornai. “I also visited teachers’ unions in many of the countries in which I travelled and was invited to participate in educators’ workshops that included union leaders from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Western Australia.”

Dornai experienced a wide variety of situations in her travels. Pakistan was under martial law, which prevented anyone belonging to a union from leaving the country. Maoist rebels were killing teachers in Nepal. Indian teachers were conducting effective “cycle protests”: converging by the thousands on bicycles to make their voices heard. Sri Lankan teachers were actively supporting their women’s movement to help widows and orphans get pensions, death gratuities and compensation during this time of war. As a result, “my travels were incredibly eye-opening, educational and inspirational,” she said.

More information about the Dr. S.G.B. Robinson Travelling Fellowship can be found on the provincial website [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca), on the Services menu under Awards, Scholarships, Grants and Bursaries. 🐦



Throughout Dornai’s incredible journey she captured spectacular sights. Included in her photo essay are: (opposite page) A temple in Nepal; (this page, clockwise from top) Mt. Everest; A Tibetan mother and her son—sellers of prayers; Ecuadorian market at dawn; the Galapagos Post Office; two Iguanas in Ecuador



Edited by Marianne Clayton

# Forum Picks



The Macdonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph hosts an exhibit entitled "Searching for Home: The Lives of Lucy Maud Montgomery." This extensive exhibit of one of Canada's most famous authors is open from Oct. 25, 2008 to Jan. 18, 2009. Photos show Montgomery (l-r) at age 8, at age 34 and at age 17

## OUTINGS



### Searching for Home: The Lives of Lucy Maud Montgomery

As part of a celebration marking the centennial of the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph is hosting an extensive exhibit depicting the life of one of Canada's most famous authors, Lucy Maud Montgomery. Through personal

diaries, handiwork, scrapbooks and images gleaned from the University of Guelph's extensive archival collection of Montgomery memorabilia, the exhibit highlights her work and explores how her own, real-life situations were woven into her novels. Not only does this exhibit record her life, it gives us an idea of what made her tick. The exhibit opens October 25, 2008 and continues until January 18, 2009.

Montgomery was born in Prince Edward Island in 1874. When she was 21 months old, her mother died and her father left her to be raised by her maternal grandparents, Alexander and Lucy Woolner Macneill. The Macneills, and

their extended family, lived in Cavendish and they summered in Park Corner.

From an early age, Montgomery had an insatiable appetite for writing and storytelling and by the time she was nine she was writing poetry and keeping a daily diary. She began churning out stories and poems in her teens and these were published in periodicals throughout North America. She trained as a teacher and taught for a few years in rural PEI schools, but soon was making enough money writing that she was able to quit teaching to write full-time. Her first novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, was published in 1908. With the success of *Anne* and its sequels, Montgomery



soon became a household name.

In 1911, Montgomery married Rev. Ewan Macdonald, a Presbyterian minister. They moved to Ontario where he preached in Leaside (near Uxbridge) and Norval (near Georgetown). The couple had two sons, but the marriage was a disaster as Ewan fought a life-long



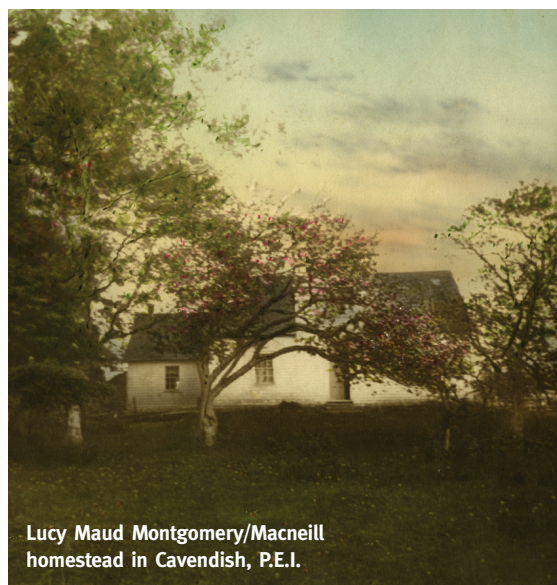
"BALANCED HERSELF UPRIGHTLY ON THAT PRECARIOUS FOOTING."

battle with mental illness.

Those familiar with Montgomery's books, especially the *Anne* series, can see in this exhibit how her characters mirrored her personal life. Even the exhibit's title, *Searching for Home*, comes from her yearning to have a home of her own. Throughout her life she always lived in someone else's house, and even during her married life she lived in church-owned manses. After 25 years of borrowed housing, she purchased a house above the Humber River in Toronto's west end. She called it Journey's End—her search for a home was now over.

Montgomery was a great storyteller who also possessed a fantastic sense of humour and a vivid imagination. That is probably why her books have staying power—they are as interesting now as the day they were published.

Searching for Home: The Lives of



Lucy Maud Montgomery/Macneill homestead in Cavendish, P.E.I.

Lucy Maud Montgomery is open Tues. through Sun., noon to 5 p.m., and can accommodate groups between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. This exhibit is very appropriate for a high school audience. The Macdonald Stewart Art Centre is located at 358 Gordon St., Guelph, ON N1G 1Y1.

For more information, contact Aidan Ware. Telephone: 519-837-0010, ext. 2. E-mail: aware@msac.ca.

## BOOKS



### 180 Tips and Tricks for New Teachers by Melissa Kelly

Published by Adams Media Corporation,  
US, 2008

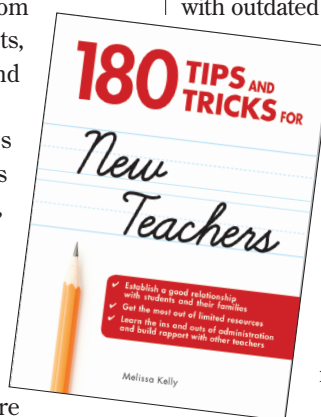
224 pages, \$9.95

Reviewed by Jacki Watson

With all of the acronyms, curriculum expectations and policies that new teachers must master, it's clear that there is a lot to learn when starting out in a teaching career. This is why a book like Melissa Kelly's *180 Tips and Tricks for New Teachers* is a great tool for the new teacher. Kelly has over nine years' teaching experience and is currently the sec-

ondary school guide for About.com. Using a calm and collegial tone, her book does a great job of providing advice in areas such as classroom management, assessments, unexpected stresses and personal growth.

Perhaps the book's most convenient feature is its design. With 180 topics, new teachers can take a minute or two every day to learn and develop their teaching know-how. As a new teacher, I found that many of these topics were ones I'd come across, but had forgotten in the craziness of my first year in teaching. Sitting down with this book allowed me not only to take a minute to work on my own development, but also to activate my prior knowledge and find ways to work these simple tips and tricks into my everyday practice.



The design makes this book user-friendly and it is packed with straightforward practicality. Topics such as dealing with outdated textbooks, learning to han-

dle high-stakes testing, and getting to know the right people, show that the author understands the challenges that new teachers face in today's educational job market. The majority of the topics would be useful for any new teacher to review and reflect on.

New teachers should find the daily doses of practical tips and tricks to be quite effective and applicable in their classroom and in their lives.

**Jacki Watson** teaches English at Gravenhurst High School in District 15, Trillium Lakelands.



## HOT LINKS



### LES RÉFUGIÉS DE LA PLANÈTE BLEUE/ REFUGEES OF THE BLUE PLANET

Written and directed by **Hélène Choquette and Jean-Philippe Duval**

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada

57 minutes; \$59.95

Reviewed by Tamara Massey

The Maldives are slowly sinking. This archipelago southwest of Sri Lanka consists of 19 major atolls, or coral islands, some of which are no longer habitable because of global warming and climate change—phrases Maldivians use with ease. They are refugees in their own country, and are being treated like prisoners as they move from island to island. On Kandholhudhoo atoll, Soraya goes back to the debris that was once her home to collect whatever she can salvage. “Everything we had is destroyed,” she says through a translator, as she points up to the waterline. “There was water over my head.”

In this poignant National Film Board (NFB) documentary, we learn that refugees are not only the result of wars or political unrest. In December 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami created 1.7 million “environmental refugees” while another 270,000 people died. Even before the tsunami, the United Nations (UN) reported that for the first time in history the number of environmental refugees was greater than political and war refugees: 25 million compared to 23 million.

Environmental refugees exist not only in the Maldives, but also all around the world, including Brazil, India, China and Canada. The film offers global and local perspectives—the latter part of the film is devoted entirely to environmental refugees in Canada. Doris and her husband, William, talk about how sour gas

Islands southwest of Sri Lanka are slowly sinking because of global warming—making their inhabitants environmental refugees. (Below) Maldavian fishers.



wells in Alberta has displaced them from their farm, with no recourse from the oil and gas corporation or the government.

Perhaps the film’s greatest accomplishment is that it makes it clear that the poor of the world are fully cognizant of the effects of global warming and climate change because they are living with the consequences. The poor are losing their

land, their homes and their livelihoods.

The issues in this 57-minute, award-winning film are ideal for debate or discussion on any level, in any classroom: civics, geography, science, law, politics or English. The film, in French with English subtitles, offers an opportunity to include a literacy angle. There are opportunities for team teaching: for example, students could be assigned both an English and a geography activity, thereby helping them make connections in their learning.

Topics for student activities could include:

- outline the role of government in developing natural resources and ensuring environmental sustainability,
- calculate an environmental footprint as a citizen of China or Brazil,
- research the effect on environmental pollution on the health of people and animals,
- identify environment laws and analyze their effectiveness,
- research the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund,
- analyze the commercials used in the film as historical footage, identify bias







and debate the issues raised by those advertisements.

As *Refugees of the Blue Planet* appears to have been completed just before the New Orleans disaster, Hurricane Katrina is mentioned only briefly. It does, however, offer a perfect opportunity for students to choose a North American city and compare its sustainable practices before and after the Indian Ocean tsunami and/or Hurricane Katrina to explore whether environmental disasters have changed the way North Americans view their planet.

**Tamara Massey** teaches at Emery CI in Toronto.

**EQUALITY ONCE AND FOR ALL!**  
**Canadian Labour Congress Women's Economic Equality Campaign**  
[www.canadianlabour.ca/en/womens\\_economic\\_equa](http://www.canadianlabour.ca/en/womens_economic_equa)  
 Reviewed by Margaret McPhail

Searching for informative, yet concise and student-friendly resources on issues of women's equality can be a chal-

lenge—even for those highly committed to building this content into their courses. The wealth of material posted on the website for the Canadian Labour Congress' (CLC) campaign on women's economic equality is a great find, particularly for courses including history, sociology, family studies, politics and economics.

The Women's Economic Equality Campaign main page offers resources through links on two menus on the right hand side of the page. Separate and easy-to-read fact sheets offer a short overview on topics such as child care, the gender wage gap, pensions, the role unions have played in promoting women's equality in the workforce and society and one which gives a more focused look at the situation facing young women entering today's job market. Other resources include a research paper showing in-depth analyses and data on these issues, workshop outlines and exercises, as well as CLC press releases on issues being highlighting during this year-long campaign. All of the above are available in both English and French.

The website is easily accessed directly for student research and assignments and for handout material that is easily downloadable.

It is strongly recommended that you save these resources for future use as it is likely that this website will come down at the end of the CLC campaign in March of next year.

**Margaret McPhail** is an Executive Assistant at OSSTF/FEESO's provincial office. One of her responsibilities is women's issues.

### **L'ÉGALITÉ UNE FOIS POUR TOUTES!** **Campagne du Congrès du travail du Canada pour l'égalité économique des femmes**

[www.congresdutravail.ca/fr/campagne\\_pour\\_lgalite](http://www.congresdutravail.ca/fr/campagne_pour_lgalite)  
 Critique par Margaret McPhail

Trouver des ressources concises, instructives et faciles à utiliser pour les élèves, sur les préoccupations concernant l'égalité économique des femmes peut s'avérer un défi même pour ceux qui font un effort d'inclure ce contenu dans leurs cours. Le matériel affiché sur le site Web de la campagne du Congrès du travail du Canada pour l'égalité économique des femmes est donc une excellente découverte surtout pour des matières telles que l'histoire, la sociologie, l'initiation à la vie familiale, les sciences politiques et économiques.

À partir de la page d'accueil de la Campagne pour l'égalité économique des femmes, on peut accéder à un certain nombre de ressources en cliquant sur les liens des deux menus sur le côté droit de la page. Des fiches d'information distinctes et faciles à lire donnent un aperçu des sujets tels que les services de garde, l'écart salarial entre les hommes et les femmes, les régimes de retraite et le rôle qu'ont joué les syndicats dans la promotion de l'égalité des femmes sur le marché du travail et au sein de la société. Une des fiches portent tout particulièrement sur la situation à laquelle sont confrontées les jeunes femmes qui entrent aujourd'hui

sur le marché du travail. D'autres ressources comprennent un rapport de recherche qui fournissent une analyse et des données sur les différentes préoccupations. Il y a aussi des descriptions d'atelier et des exercices de même que des communiqués de presse réguliers émis par le CTC sur les enjeux qui ressortent durant cette campagne qui durera toute l'année. La page d'accueil et toutes les ressources sont disponibles tant en français qu'en anglais.

On peut accéder au site Web pour les recherches des élèves et les devoirs où le matériel peut être téléchargé facilement et utilisé comme document d'appui. Si vous avez l'intention de les utiliser dans l'avenir, on recommande fortement de sauvegarder ces ressources, car il est probable que le site Web soit fermé à la fin de la campagne du CTC en mars prochain.

**Margaret McPhail** est adjointe exécutive au Bureau provincial d'OSSTF/FEESO et les préoccupations féminines sont une de ses responsabilités.

## TEACHING THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN DVD with Facilitator's Guide

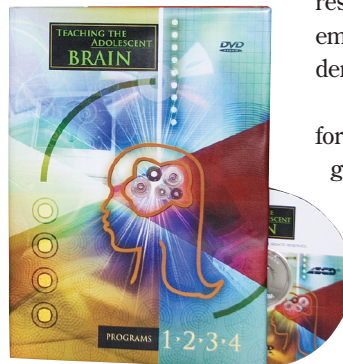
Published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

\$429 (members);

\$539 (non-members)

Reviewed by Tammy Groleau

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a non-profit, non-partisan organization that develops learning and teaching resources, has created a video-based staff development series consisting of four video programs with a facilitator's guide. The target audience is teachers, administrators, students and those interested in learning more about the adolescent brain. This series is composed of detailed agendas and activities for seven workshops including handouts,



overheads and additional resources.

This series was developed with the philosophy that it is possible to reach all students if we understand how to engage the adolescent brain. Current research suggests that the adolescent brain is like a sieve through which irrelevant information simply passes. Adolescents become engaged in learning when such learning becomes relevant to them. The DVD introduces strategies that are based on research and that can be employed to improve student learning.

Two formats are used for each of the three programs designed for educators. The first is appropriate for a short (60- to 90-minute) meeting where participants would view the DVD

then complete activities that foster some reflection and sharing. The second encourages a more in-depth consideration and is appropriate for a half-day symposium when the DVD could be viewed in segments that would allow participants time to reflect, share, discuss and design strategies together.

The fourth program, designed specifically for teens, is entitled *Know Your Brain...Know Yourself*. The 13-minute DVD lays out an explanation as to why adolescence is so challenging by describing how teenage brains work.

A presentation of the full program would be an excellent professional development opportunity for all educators and an essential in-service program for new educators. The facilitator's guide is most beneficial for a stakeholder organizing a symposium; the ready-made worksheets are well organized and focused. This series will not only help teachers understand their students, but will also allow students to understand themselves.

For more information, visit the ASCD website at [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org).

**Tammy Groleau** teaches at Prince Edward CI in District 29, Hastings-Prince Edward and is a member of OSSTF/FEESO's Educational Services Committee.

email: [info@schooltattoos.ca](mailto:info@schooltattoos.ca)

[www.schooltattoos.ca](http://www.schooltattoos.ca)

Tel. (613) 567-2636 Ottawa, Ontario





## CONFERENCES



### Nov. 2 to 4

**Engaging our Community of Learners**  
The annual conference of the Ontario School Counsellors' Association will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton, Toronto Airport, Dixon Road. It is the premiere professional development event of the year for over 600 guidance counsellors, student success teachers, Ministry of Education delegates, university and college representatives and many other stakeholders. There will be more than 70 workshops and three keynote speakers: Dr. Maggie Mamen, a practising child psychologist from Ottawa kicks off the conference;

Max Valiquette, a prominent youth culture expert provides inspiration; and Mike Lipkin, a well-known speaker and motivator wraps up the conference. For more information, contact Marc Verhoeve. Telephone: 519-575-0513. E-mail: [scadirector@sympatico.ca](mailto:scadirector@sympatico.ca). Visit [www.osca.ca](http://www.osca.ca).

### Nov. 3 and 4

**Schools that Shine with Character**  
One of the most dynamic conferences of the year will be held at the Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville. The agenda for the 29th annual National Character Education Conference includes an energetic roster of keynote and pre-conference speakers, including: Dr. Eva Olsson, Barbara Coloroso, Dr. Terry Scott, Hal Urban, Michael "Pinball" Clemons and Stephen Lewis. For more information, contact Ian McTavish. Telephone: 705-789-5594. Email: [ncecregistration@tldsb.on.ca](mailto:ncecregistration@tldsb.on.ca). Visit [www.ncec.ca](http://www.ncec.ca).

### Nov. 12 to 14

**ECOO 2008: Inspire, Connect, Teach**  
The 29th annual conference of the Educational Computing Organization of Ontario is being held at the Sheraton Parkway North Hotel and Conference Centre, 600 Highway 7 East, Richmond Hill. Speakers include Gary Stager, Constructivist Consortium; Mitch Resnick, MIT Media Lab and Hall Davidson, Discovery Education. For more information, visit [www.ecoo.org](http://www.ecoo.org).

### Nov. 13 to 15

**Making Connections for a Sustainable Future: The More We Know, the More They Grow**  
The Science Teachers' Association of Ontario (STAO) 2008 conference, to be held at the Doubletree by Hilton, Toronto Airport, Dixon Road, features student-centred learning experiences and resources that address the most important science and technology-related issues facing society and the environment today. The release of the revised

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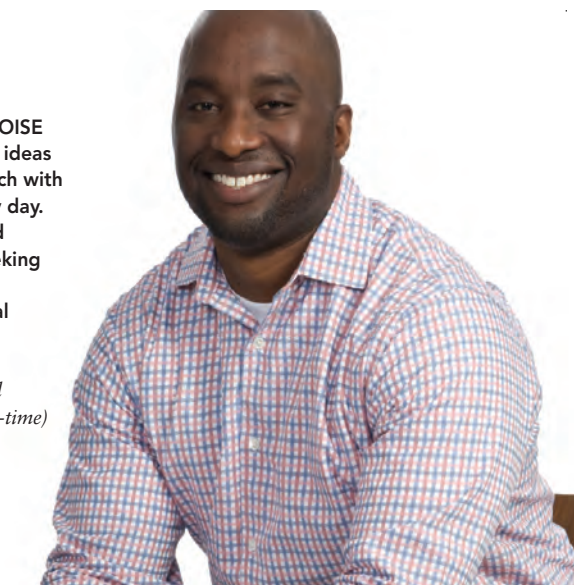
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EDUCATION FORUM 43

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Science and Technology (grades 1-8) curriculum, and the upcoming release of the Science (grades 9-12) curriculum, with their much greater emphasis on Science, Technology, Society, and the Environment (STSE) requires that this critically important aspect be addressed with a comprehensive and research-supported approach. As with all STAO conferences, it will provide a comprehensive and balanced program with topics and issues related to all aspects of science and technology and science education. For more information, visit [www.stao.org/stao-conference/conference.htm](http://www.stao.org/stao-conference/conference.htm).

### March 26 to 28

#### OMLTA Spring Conference

The planning committee of the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association is putting out the call for presenters at its spring conference, to be held at the Doubletree by Hilton, Toronto Airport, Dixon Road.

For more information, contact Heidi Locher. Telephone: 519-763-2099.

Email: [omlta@omlta.org](mailto:omlta@omlta.org).

Visit [www.omlta.org](http://www.omlta.org).

### April 18 to 25

#### Forum Teachers' Conference

Sixteen teachers from across Canada are invited to Ottawa to learn, in detail, how the Canadian system of government works. It is a week of intense activity and includes presentations and observations of student simulations of Cabinet meetings and a First Ministers' conference. Applications are available on the Forum website [www.forum.ca](http://www.forum.ca).

For more information, contact the Forum for Young Canadians, 81 Metcalfe Street, Ste 800, Ottawa, ON K1P 6K7. Telephone 613-233-4086.

E-mail: [forum@forum.ca](mailto:forum@forum.ca).

#### Workers' Health and Safety Centre

The Workers' Centre has more than 100 hazard-specific awareness programs for delivery. For more information, visit [www.whsc.on.ca](http://www.whsc.on.ca)

Visit OSSTF/FEESO's website for an up-to-date listing of conferences, [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca) under Training.







## Getting the job done

Building on a proud history of effective collective bargaining

**W**ith a new school year well underway, I want to express my best wishes to all OSSTF/FEESO members for a good year, and to welcome to OSSTF/FEESO our newest members from the Royal Conservatory of Music.

As you know, preparations for the current round of collective bargaining have been in progress for the last two years. Initiatives include a video entitled *Then and Now* that outlines the 35 year history of OSSTF/FEESO to share with new members; a public relations campaign both at the local and provincial levels to lay the foundation for bargaining; ads on buses, radio and websites, in *Education Forum* and newspapers to highlight the fact that no student succeeds alone, and that investing in staff is investing in students.

At this summer's annual Leadership Conference we debuted another video, *The School Zone*. It is a humorous exploration of the benefits and protection OSSTF/FEESO has gained for members through advocacy and collective bargaining. View it at [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca).

OSSTF/FEESO is unlike any other education union in Ontario. We are diverse. We represent members who work with students from pre-kindergarten to post-secondary and who work in the public English and French as well as Catholic school boards. When it comes to strength in numbers, OSSTF/FEESO has it—with a total of 60,000 members—and when we bargain, we bargain from that position of collective strength.

Whether or not bargaining involves a provincial discussion table, OSSTF/FEESO supports negotiating strong local agreements that address local priorities.

We began bargaining at the earliest opportunity and our priorities are straightforward. We want to ensure that in an era of declining enrollment, the current complement of educational workers is not only maintained but also expanded and that programs and services are enhanced. We believe that smaller classes, increased individual student attention, cleaner and safer schools, more services and shorter waiting lists are what Ontario students deserve.

After extensive consultation with bargaining unit presidents and chief negotiators, OSSTF/FEESO proceeded with bargaining strategies that recognized the diverse needs of our bargaining units—both support staff and teacher/occasional teacher. At this time, OSSTF/FEESO has chosen to remain at the provincial table for support staff only and to concentrate on local bargaining for teachers.

## Accomplir le travail

Bâtissons sur notre longue histoire de négociation collective efficace

**EN** ce début de nouvelle année scolaire, j'aimerais souhaiter une bonne année à tous les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO et la bienvenue aux tous nouveaux membres d'OSSTF/FEESO œuvrant au *Royal Conservatory of Music*.

Comme vous le savez, les préparatifs pour la ronde de négociation collective actuelle se multiplient depuis les deux dernières années. Nous avons pris l'initiative de produire une vidéo décrivant les 35 années d'histoire d'OSSTF/FEESO à utiliser avec les nouveaux membres puis d'organiser une campagne de relations publiques tant au niveau local que provincial afin de jeter les bases pour la négociation. Nos annonces publicitaires ont été affichées sur les autobus, sont parues à la radio, sur les sites Web, ici dans *Education Forum* et dans les journaux pour souligner le fait qu'aucun élève ne peut réussir seul et qu'un investissement dans le personnel est un investissement dans les élèves.

Lors de la conférence annuelle de Leadership de cet été, une autre vidéo a été lancée. « *The School Zone* » examine de façon humoristique les avantages et la protection qu'OSSTF/FEESO a obtenu grâce à la défense et à la négociation collective. On la trouve et on peut la visionner sur notre site Web provincial sous le lien « Membre ».

OSSTF/FEESO est différent des autres syndicats en éducation de l'Ontario. Nous sommes diversifiés. Nous représentons les membres qui travaillent avec des élèves de la prématernelle jusqu'au postsecondaire, dans les systèmes publics anglophones et francophones ainsi qu'au sein de conseils scolaires catholiques. Lorsqu'on parle de la force de l'effectif, OSSTF/FEESO l'a et quand vient le temps de négocier, nous négocions avec cette position de force collective.

Que la négociation implique ou non une table ronde provinciale, OSSTF/FEESO appuie la négociation de conventions collectives fortes qui abordent les priorités locales.

Nous avons débuté la négociation dès que nous en avons eu la chance et nos priorités sont simples. Nous voulons nous assurer, qu'en période de diminution des inscriptions, que l'effectif actuel de travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation soit non seulement préservé, mais qu'il soit augmenté et que les programmes et services soient améliorés. Nous sommes d'avis que des salles de classe plus petites, une attention accrue à chaque élève, des écoles plus propres et plus sécuritaires, davantage de services et des listes d'attente plus courtes sont ce que méritent les élèves ontariens.

### **Last Word** *continued/*

In the area of teacher/occasional teacher bargaining, there have been varying degrees of meaningful discussion related to bargaining with school boards, ranging from a refusal to meet, to a number of agreements on contract language.

The government must promote the importance of local flexibility to address specific issues identified by individual bargaining units. OSSTF/FEESO needs the assurance that local issues will not be sacrificed to pave the way for speedy settlements. Once the funding flexibility is in place, we need the boards to come to the table and hammer out deals that address local priorities.

**Our strength, paired with  
our willingness to act, is  
how we have created history  
and how we will continue  
to break new ground**

Usually, if there are any negotiations over the summer months, they are limited, but we did expect to see progress at local bargaining tables in September. Since there was too little progress, the Provincial Executive recommended to our Provincial Council at the end of September that all teacher and occasional teacher bargaining units be placed in resumption, joining all the support staff units that were placed in resumption before the summer. As a result, OSSTF/FEESO provincial negotiators have now been assigned to all local bargaining teams.

Lobbying of government as well as trustees and school boards will continue as we work locally through the bargaining process. The natural course of bargaining, including conciliation, strike votes and appropriate deadlines, will also unfold. When we bargain, we focus on progress. We are deliberate and determined. We do not issue idle threats nor do we gear up our members unnecessarily. When it is necessary, our actions speak louder than any speech or press release possibly could.

We expect our employers to negotiate fair local agreements in good faith. If that is not the case, then our members will once again relive their proud history of being the most effective, the most resourceful and the most powerful force when united under a common cause.

Our strength, paired with our willingness to act, is how we have created history and how we will continue to break new ground.

We have planned. We have prepared. We have involved our leaders and members from all over the province. We are now executing the plan with confidence and discipline.

We will get the job done!



### **Mot de la fin** *suite/*

Après de nombreuses consultations auprès des présidences d'unité de négociation et des négociateurs en chef, OSSTF/FEESO a mis en place des stratégies de négociation qui reconnaissent les besoins variés de nos unités de négociation, tant pour le personnel de soutien que pour le personnel enseignant/suppléant. En ce moment, OSSTF/FEESO a choisi de rester à la table provinciale pour le personnel de soutien seulement et de se concentrer sur la négociation locale pour le personnel enseignant.

En ce qui concerne la négociation pour le personnel enseignant/suppléant, les discussions connexes à la négociation avec les conseils scolaires sont à des étapes différentes, allant du refus de se réunir jusqu'à des ententes sur du libellé de convention.

Le gouvernement doit insister sur l'importance de la souplesse locale pour aborder les préoccupations spécifiques qui ont été identifiées par les unités de négociation particulières. OSSTF/FEESO doit obtenir l'assurance que les préoccupations locales ne seront pas sacrifiées pour ouvrir la voie à des ententes rapides. Avec la flexibilité des fonds, nous avons besoin que les conseils viennent à la table et trouvent des solutions pour traiter les priorités locales.

Que ferons-nous si les négociations locales ne progressent pas? D'habitude, il y a peu ou pas de négociations durant les mois d'été, mais nous nous attendons à des progrès aux tables de négociation locales. S'il n'y en avait pas, l'Exécutif provincial aurait probablement recommandé à notre Conseil provincial que la négociation pour toutes les unités de négociation du personnel enseignant et du personnel enseignant suppléant soient prises en charge, rejoignant toutes les unités du personnel de soutien qui ont été prises en charge avant l'été. Au moment de la rédaction de cet article, aucune décision n'a encore été prise.

Les pressions auprès du gouvernement ainsi que des conseillers scolaires et des conseils scolaires se continueront au fur et à mesure que nous avancerons dans le processus local de négociation. De plus, le cheminement normal de la négociation, y compris la conciliation, les votes de grève et les échéances appropriées, se déroulera. Lorsque nous négocions, nous nous concentrons sur les progrès. Nous sommes fermes et déterminés. Nous ne proférons pas de vaines menaces pas plus que nous préparons inutilement nos membres. Le moment venu, nos gestes témoignent avec plus d'éloquence que la plupart des discours ou des communiqués de presse.

Nous espérons que nos employeurs négocieront de bonne foi des conventions locales équitables. Si ce n'est pas le cas, alors nos membres revivront à nouveau avec fierté leurs antécédents d'être la force la plus puissante, la plus ingénieuse et la plus efficace lorsqu'ils sont réunis pour une cause commune.

Grâce à notre force, jumelée à notre volonté d'agir, nous avons bâti notre histoire et nous continuerons à tracer de nouvelles voies dans l'avenir.

Nous avons mis en place un plan. Nous nous sommes préparés. Nous avons impliqué nos dirigeants et les membres à travers la province. Nous exécutons maintenant ce plan avec confiance et discipline. Nous accomplirons le travail!





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