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EDUCATION FORUM 3



Re: "International Solidarity: Neo-liberal policies threaten the public good the world over," Spring 2013

I was heartened to see that OSSTF/FEESO continues to take an interest in the plight of workers in Colombia who are victimized by paramilitary death squads and other forms of intimidation. Sandra Cordero's experience in some ways parallels that of another family, the members of which were part of a program to sponsor those in grave danger so they could immigrate to Canada. At the time, the Canadian government was somewhat more open to this than it is now.

A group of community members—in-

cluding members of District 11, Thames Valley, CAW, social-justice activists and others—offered to host a family where the father, a union member and trainer, had been targeted and internally displaced, only to find that his daughters and granddaughter were the object of a kidnapping attempt as a way of striking back at him. They arrived in Canada and, like Sandra, missed their colleagues, living and dead, and their country, beautiful yet mortally dangerous.

They have moved on with their lives, adapting to Canada and our very different culture. These stories do remind us, however, both of the advantage we have of living in a country less violent than

theirs and also of the need for vigilance in the face of the erosion of human and civil rights. As teachers and educational workers, we have to ask ourselves what we will do to protect our students from harm, subtle or otherwise. As citizens and community members, we have to ask ourselves and our colleagues how we can prevent such harm from happening in Canada. We are at less risk than this family or Sandra Cordero were, but we must speak up when infringements on our rights to fair work and pay, to a just society and to active participation in our daily and political lives occur.

Bryan J. Smith, retired
District 11, Thames Valley

International Solidarity

Neo-liberal policies threaten the public good the world over

By Sandra Cordero

My name is Sandra Cordero and I was an elected union leader for the Union of Workers of the Bogotá Telecommunications Enterprise (SINTRATELEFONOS) in Bogotá, Colombia. Maintaining a clear stand against the privatization of telecommunications and for social justice and sovereignty made me a victim of persecution. I was fired and rehired on three separate occasions. I was twice criminally charged for supposedly being a promoter and organizer of activities against privatization (a victim of the criminalization of social protest) but those charges were later dropped due to lack of proof. I was threatened with more persecution and even death by the government's paramilitaries if I continued my activities as a union leader—no idle threat, given that more than 198 leaders were killed in 2001. As a result of all this repression, and having chosen not to emigrate voluntarily, much less walk away from my commitment to fight, I was forced into political exile.

To safeguard my life and the history of the trade union fight in Colombia, in June 2002, I, my husband, five other members of my family and three other families in similar circumstances immigrated to Canada through a political sponsorship by the Canadian Labour Congress as part of a pilot project to help save the lives of Colombian trade unionists.

As new immigrants, we were full of expectations of continuing our fight in a new country, yet also full of anxieties for new obstacles: primarily, learning a new language

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Solidarité Internationale

Les politiques néolibérales menacent le bien commun dans le monde entier

par Sandra Cordero

Je m'appelle Sandra Cordero et j'étais dirigeante syndicale élue du *Union of Workers of the Bogotá Telecommunications Enterprise* (SINTRATELEFONOS), à Bogotá (Colombie). Le fait d'avoir maintenu une prise de position claire contre la privatisation des télécommunications et en faveur de la justice sociale et de la souveraineté m'a conduite à être victime de persécution. J'ai été renvoyée puis réembauchée à trois reprises. Des accusations criminelles ont été portées contre moi à deux reprises pour avoir été soi-disant l'initiatrice d'activités pour contrer la privatisation (une victime de la criminalisation de la contestation sociale), mais ces accusations ont été abandonnées par la suite faute de preuves. J'ai subi de menaces de persécution, voire de mort par les forces paramilitaires gouvernementales si je continuais mes activités des dirigeants syndicales; ce n'était pas une menace en l'air quand on sait que 198 dirigeants ont été assassinés en 2001. Après tant de répression et pour avoir fait le choix de ne pas émigrer de mon plein gré et encore moins d'abandonner mon désir de me battre, j'ai été forcée à l'exil politique.

En juin 2002, afin de sauver ma vie et l'histoire de la lutte syndicale en Colombie, mon mari, cinq autres membres de ma famille et moi-même, accompagnés de trois autres familles dans des situations analogues, avons immigré au Canada, grâce à un parrainage politique du Congrès du travail du Canada dans le cadre d'un projet pilote visant à aider à sauver la vie de syndicalistes colombiens.

En tant que nouveaux immigrants, nous étions emplies d'espoir de pouvoir poursuivre notre lutte dans notre

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EDUCATION FORUM 13



Farewells and greetings

Another torch is passed

Farewells

It is with considerable sadness that I begin this, my last “Openers,” as the outgoing editor of *Education Forum*. These last six years at the helm of this wonderful magazine have flown by and working on the magazine has been my favourite part of my portfolio. Each issue has been a labour of love. It was not my choice to leave the position but, as with most things in life, sometimes changes within an organization also necessitate a reallocation of responsibilities.

As I leave, I would like to thank the support staff in the Graphic Arts and Translation departments at the provincial office: Marianne Clayton, former Managing Editor, now retired, who showed me the ropes; Ronda Allan, our talented Managing Editor and writer of the “Beyond the classroom” column; Audrey Bourque, Kristina Ferorelli and Anna Zhyn, who variously take care of the advertising; and Diane Saint-Pierre and Catherine Poëzévara, who handle most of the translation tasks necessary in each issue. Your professionalism and efficiency helped to ensure that each issue is the best it could possibly be.

Thanks to all of the writers and reviewers who have written for the magazine during my tenure—without you, there would be no magazine! Thanks also to the staff at Fresh Art & Design: owners Dean and Susan Mitchell; graphic designers Johanna Ritgen-Sheobaran, Ruta Kordowska and, formerly, Dale Vokey; and copy editors Jocelyn Laurence and, formerly, Dawn Martin. It was a pleasure to work with all of you and to get to know you.

As I pass the editor’s torch to my colleague, Randy Banderob, I also want to thank General Secretary Pierre Côté for showing confidence in me six years ago when I was offered the position. It has

“Working on the magazine has been my favourite part of my portfolio. Each issue has been a labour of love.”

- Wendy

“Our federation’s magazine is both well respected and well read. What we write about public education is noted throughout the province.”

- Randy

been an honour to serve the members as editor. With Randy, a new era will begin for the magazine, but I am confident it is in good hands! Best wishes, Randy, and take good care of my “baby!”

Greetings

I can’t thank Wendy enough for her assistance in helping my transition to *Education Forum*. Who knew there were so many people working on each issue and that so many steps were required to produce our magazine?

I must admit, being appointed editor of *Education Forum* has been a daunting experience. Beyond the 60,000 members, we know it also lands on the desks and coffee tables of administrators, Ministry staff and politicians. Our federation’s magazine is both well respected and well read. What we write about public education is noted throughout the province.

We will continue to bring you poignant tales of personal experiences such as this month’s “A PhD as professional development?” and “Our passion, their voice,” along with stories of inspiration such as “The lacrosse course,” as well professionally minded articles such as “That’s me in the corner” and “Anxiety goes to school” that focus directly on our members’ work in public education.

That’s not to say that some things about *Education Forum* won’t change. We’ve changed the name of our “Stills” page to “Showcase” to indicate our new, broader search for not just our members’ photos but for images of any type of visual art created by our members. If you have a colleague whose art should be showcased in *Education Forum*, please let us know!

We are always looking for story ideas that are important and relevant to our members. If there is a topic you want to read about or you have an idea for an article that you would like to write, send me an e-mail and let me know.

Please enjoy this issue and the ones to come. ☺

Randy Banderob, Editor
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Adieux et bienvenue

Un autre flambeau change de mains

Adieux

C'est avec une grande tristesse que je commence mon dernier « Mot de l'éditrice », en tant qu'éditrice sortante d'*Education Forum*. Les six dernières années passées à la barre de cet extraordinaire magazine ont défilé à vive allure et le travail lié au magazine a été la partie préférée de mon portfolio. Chaque numéro a été fait avec amour. Je n'ai pas choisi de quitter ce poste, mais comme c'est souvent le cas dans la vie, les changements au sein d'un organisme requièrent parfois une nouvelle répartition des tâches.

Alors que je quitte ce poste, j'aimerais remercier le personnel de soutien des services d'arts graphiques et de traduction du Bureau provincial : Marianne Clayton, éditrice en chef maintenant à la retraite qui m'avait montré les ficelles du métier; Ronda Allan, talentueuse éditrice en chef actuelle et rédactrice de la colonne *Beyond the classroom*; Audrey Bourque, Kristina Ferorelli et Anna Zhyn qui à tour de rôle se sont chargées de la publicité; de même que Diane Saint-Pierre et Catherine Poëzévara qui s'occupent de la plupart des tâches de traduction nécessaires pour chaque numéro. Votre professionnalisme et votre efficacité ont contribué à assurer que chaque numéro est le meilleur possible.

Merci à tous les rédacteurs et critiques littéraires qui ont écrit pour le magazine durant mon mandat. Sans vous, il n'y aurait pas de magazine! Merci aussi au personnel de *Fresh Art & Design* : les propriétaires Dean et Susan Mitchell; les graphistes Johanna Ritgen-Sheobaran, Ruta Kordowska et autrefois Dale Vokey; et les réviseurs Jocelyn Laurence et avant elle Dawn Martin. Ce fut un plaisir de travailler avec chacun de vous et d'apprendre à vous connaître. Tandis que je passe le « flambeau » à mon collègue, Randy Banderob, j'aimerais également

remercier Pierre Côté, secrétaire général, qui, il y a six ans, m'a fait confiance en me proposant le poste. Ce fut un honneur de servir les membres à titre d'éditrice. Avec Randy s'ouvre une nouvelle ère pour le magazine, mais je suis certaine qu'il est en de bonnes mains! Bonne chance Randy! Prends soin de « mon bébé! »

« Le travail lié
au magazine
a été la partie
préférée de
mon portfolio.
Chaque numéro
a été fait
avec amour. »

- Wendy

Bienvenue

Je ne saurais trop remercier Wendy pour l'aide qu'elle m'a apportée pour faire la transition à *Education Forum*. Qui aurait su qu'il y avait autant de personnes qui travaillent sur chaque numéro et que tant d'étapes étaient nécessaires pour la production de notre magazine.

Je dois admettre que d'avoir été nommé éditeur d'*Education Forum* s'est révélé être une expérience intimidante. En plus des 60 000 membres à qui il est destiné, le magazine se retrouve également sur le bureau ou les tables à café des administrateurs, du personnel des ministères et des politiciens. Le magazine de notre Fédération est à la fois très respecté et très lu. Nos textes sur l'éducation publique sont reconnus dans toute la province.

Nous continuerons de vous livrer des histoires émouvantes relatant des expériences personnelles comme pour ce mois-ci « *A PhD as professional development?* » et « Notre passion, leurs voix » en plus des histoires inspirantes comme « *The lacrosse course* » ainsi que des articles à connotation professionnelle comme « *That's me in the corner* » et « L'anxiété à l'école » qui traitent directement du travail de nos membres au sein de l'éducation publique.

Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il n'y aura pas de modifications à *Education Forum*. Nous avons changé le nom de notre section « *Stills* » pour « *Showcase* » afin d'indiquer notre nouvelle quête plus vaste de présenter non seulement des photos prises par nos membres, mais également des images d'arts visuels créées par nos membres. Si l'œuvre artistique d'un collègue devrait être valorisée dans *Education Forum*, faites-le nous savoir!

Nous sommes constamment à la recherche d'idées d'articles qui sont importants et pertinents pour nos membres. Si vous souhaitez en savoir plus sur un sujet ou avez vous-même une idée d'article que vous aimeriez couvrir, envoyez-moi un courriel et dites-moi de quoi il s'agit.

Bonne lecture de ce numéro et des prochains à venir. ☺

Randy Banderob, Éditeur
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Caring adults make the difference!

Students meet with success



“WE know that students who have caring adults in their life are better engaged and achieve better results.”

—Kathleen Wynne

In 2004, the Ministry of Education commissioned a study to examine the factors that contribute to students leaving school early. Dr. Bruce Ferguson and his colleagues concluded that almost all early school-leavers feel disconnected from their schools and had the perception that teachers were unconcerned with their well-being and made no attempts to assist them in their learning. In addition, missing credits were among the most commonly cited reasons students gave for leaving. As a result of missing credits, students felt it was not worth continuing in school. Two key recommendations for reducing early school-leaving and improving student success included linking relevant and significant

community-service experiences with academic learning, and pairing at-risk students with a caring adult who would work with them personally and provide advice to individual students.

Here are two examples of this in action. The Ontario Youth and Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) provides opportunities for students to explore career options while attending high school. This school-to-work program allows students to register as an apprentice and work towards certification as a journey person in a skilled trade while completing their requirements for a secondary school diploma. Beginning in Grade 11 or Grade 12, students at W.F. Herman Secondary School in the Greater Essex County District School Board can earn co-operative education credits through a paid placement in the precision metal-cutting trade.

The benefits of this program are numerous. The option to experience learning in

a trade or service industry that is of interest to students can make a big difference. Suited for students who learn best by doing and enjoy working with their hands, this alternative to a traditional classroom environment paves a pathway to success for many who pursue it. Furthermore, as the vacancy rate for skilled trades continues to grow, OYAP helps to provide a viable solution to the shortage of skilled trades in Ontario.

Brad McIntosh, a technological OYAP/Co-Op teacher, has been working with OYAP students for the past three years. Ensuring that students meet training-standard expectations is part of what he does to prepare students for work placements. As he recruits students to the program, he feels an added responsibility to make sure students successfully reach their desired goals.

McIntosh was troubled by a pattern he observed over time. Work placements for

many of the students enrolled in OYAP at his school had to be postponed because, regardless of the interventions and numerous supports in place, students were experiencing difficulty attaining their mathematics and/or English credits at the beginning of their Grade 11 year. Many

In order to ensure that students met deadlines, McIntosh dedicated his preparation period to students while they were in their manufacturing class so they could complete their mathematics and English assignments. Recognizing how instrumental the provision of additional time

science, mathematics and English teachers who were teaching Grade 9 and 10 locally developed and applied-level courses with the Technical Department.

The primary goals of this project were threefold. First, to utilize the Technical Department fully by increasing awareness of the resources available throughout the department and to develop teachers' understanding of how these resources could be used to enhance student learning across different subject areas. Second, to address the learning needs and increase the engagement of students enrolled in applied-level and locally developed courses by providing project-based learning opportunities. And third, to provide structures that would enable greater peer-to-peer collaboration for both students and teachers.

Strategies to connect teachers both with each other and with community members were put into place. Teachers visited the local college and local tool shops in order to gain a better understanding of the needs of the industry. Release time, provided through the Student Success Great to Excellent: Innovative Programs and Practices grant, was used by teachers to collaboratively develop lesson plans, complete with learning goals and success criteria based on curriculum expectations from different subject areas. Teachers accompanied students to the Technical Department and drew explicit connections to what they were currently teaching in their content area.

Providing opportunities to engage in cross-curricular learning resulted in greater student engagement and increased peer-to-peer collaboration. By utilizing the resources available through Technical Education and taking on the role of a caring adult, the teachers involved in this project were better able to meet the needs of students studying in applied-level courses while realizing the potential to increase success for all and develop the quality of leadership in all students. ☺

Jenni Donohoo, a Research Consultant on leave from the Greater Essex County District School Board, is working for Growing Accessible and Interactive Networks (GAINS) Literacy for the 2013-2014 school year.

OYAP helps to provide a viable solution to the shortage of skilled trades in Ontario.



of the students who enroll in OYAP do so because they are well suited for on-the-job training. Postponing placements can have huge consequences on the lives of some students, causing them to fall behind and, at worst, drop out and not graduate from secondary school as a result.

With the full support of his department head and administrators, McIntosh made it his mission to ensure that every one of his Grade 11 OYAP students met with success so they could begin their work-placements on time. In early October, armed with his class list, he obtained current mathematics and English grades for each of his students from their respective teachers. He was surprised to find that almost half of his students had a grade below 59 per cent in English and four had a grade below 59 per cent in mathematics. In talking with the other teachers, McIntosh learned that the students' poor grades were most often explained by late or missing work.

and support was to the ultimate success of his students, he also recruited teacher candidates to assist if they were available.

Throughout the semester, McIntosh consulted with mathematics and English teachers, obtaining up-to-date grades and details about his students' assignments. Scheduling regular interviews with his students and being relentless about the non-negotiable completion of all assignments paid off. All 27 students successfully obtained their mathematics and English credits in the first semester of this school year. Although it proved to be occasionally challenging, all of the students entered their placements on time in the second semester.

A second example in which caring adults engaged at-risk students in innovative ways is W.F. Herman Secondary School's Great to Excellent project. This project, initiated and led by Ed Kotevich, a technological/OYAP department head, involved alternative-education,



The lacrosse course

Enhancing student engagement and community partnerships



There is a strong history of lacrosse at Hagersville Secondary School (HSS). Most of that history has been as a highly successful extra-curricular program. But last year, the status of Canada's national summer sport was raised even higher at HSS when it was introduced as a full credit-bearing course. Yes, that's right, a lacrosse-focused physical education course that allows students who successfully complete the course to earn a credit towards their OSSD! And what amazing results transpired in community partnerships and student engagement.

The Lacrosse Course, formally coded PAL2OL, is the first of its kind in the Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) and in the province's public education system. With little to model it on and minimal teacher experience with the sport, there was much work done to develop a program that maintained the

highest quality of instruction and would be easy to teach even for those who were unfamiliar with the sport. The HSS teachers' goal was to provide a program that was relevant to students by drawing on the wealth of local knowledge and skills. The end result was a Grade 10 course, open to both male and female students, that incorporates learning in both the field and box versions of the game. The historical and cultural components of lacrosse in Canada are strong focus areas, as are career opportunities in the world of lacrosse and athletic health and fitness. Specific components of the course include first-aid certification for all students, rules and regulations for both field and box lacrosse, athletic nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices, goal-setting for post-secondary achievement in both lacrosse and life skills, and, of course, lacrosse skills.

Community partnerships were vital to building a strong program. HSS has the

advantage of being located next to one of the largest Iroquois communities in Canada: the Six Nations of the Grand River. This provided an invaluable resource base of lacrosse knowledge and skill that was vital to the success of the program. Hearing directly from people who were involved in the world of lacrosse added an authenticity to the course that appealed to the students and drew them in. Different guests were scheduled for every week of the semester and students were often eager to learn from those with first-hand knowledge and experience in their topic area and players who are currently playing the game. HSS and GEDSB have a number of graduates who are now involved in professional lacrosse with the National Lacrosse League (NLL). Partnering with the Rochester Knighthawks, an NLL team that has strong ties to the Six Nations community, provided a solid roster of professional players willing to



Hearing directly from people who were involved in the world of lacrosse added an authenticity to the course that appealed to the students and drew them in.

share their skills and expertise with HSS students. It's rare that students are exposed to such high-quality players and an amazing level of lacrosse, brought to the course by NLL players like Cody Jamieson, Craig Point and Johnny Powless, all GEDSB grads. These players not only shared their skills but also how their personal lives have been positively affected by lacrosse. Kristen, one student in the course, describes her reaction: "Having the experience to talk to and play with such role models is an unbelievable opportunity."

The history and cultural roots of lacrosse were important aspects of this course too. Lacrosse is known by Aboriginal people as the Creator's Game, and one priority of the program was to

share the cultural origins and teachings of the game. One guest to the class was Cayuga (Iroquois) faith-keeper Dao Jao Dre, who explains it this way: "The Creator's Game is holistic. Besides being a game, it is considered to be medicine. In this manner we play the game to heal someone in our community, our families or for friendships." Understanding the cultural traditions and beliefs around the game challenged the students to reach a higher level of good sportsmanship and respect for coaches and officials. Moreover, many students in the course were of Aboriginal descent, and it was a point of pride for these students to be able to share "their" game with their non-Aboriginal classmates. It provided them with the opportunity to shine in an area

in which they feel confident and to take pride in demonstrating their skills and ability in a game they have loved for years. "We get to share our knowledge and understanding of the game with other students from other [non-Native] communities," said Jaylyn. "This class gives us a chance to share how our sport is played and also how it is such an important aspect of Native culture." Thus the program offers a rare opportunity to learn about the history and origin of lacrosse in a classroom setting.

Finally, first-aid certification was provided for all students. Students felt this was a great feature of the course, since it provided them with a concrete skill that would help down the line when seeking employment. Many students saw the first-aid certification as an asset to offer as a community volunteer. "It's great because now I can help as my own team's trainer or use it in any other job in the future," said Fawn. Coaches, referee officials, trainers and athletic nutritionists were among some of the other guest speakers who came to participate in the course and share their expertise.

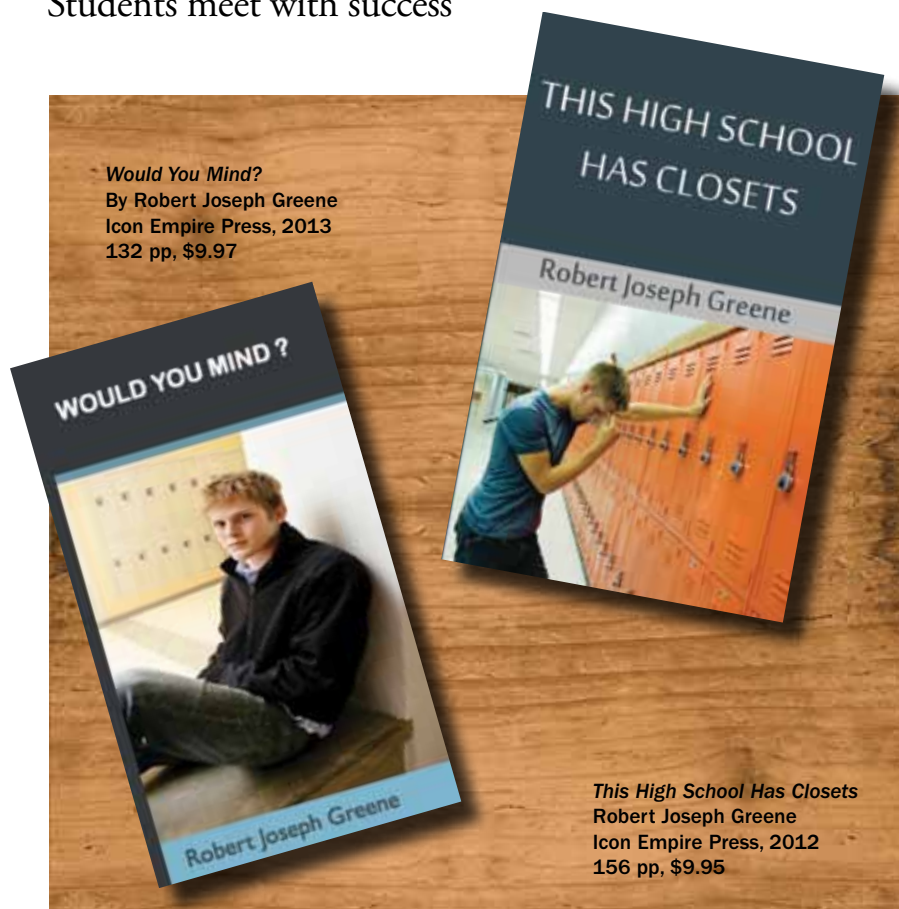
This program has proven to engage even those who may not typically feel connected to school. Of the 21 students enrolled in the course, 20 successfully completed the course and earned their credit. That's a 95 per cent success rate! Attendance in the course also showed significant improvement for the students enrolled. Future program plans include adding a second-level lacrosse course in Grade 11 to further enhance student knowledge and skills, particularly in areas beyond the playing field/floor, and possibly incorporating level-one coaching certification into the program. One thing is for certain. This course will continue to be the vehicle to help build student confidence and spark inter-community understanding and friendships. Lacrosse was conceived as a healing game and it is doing just that for the students at Hagersville Secondary School. 🍁

Jeannie Martin is a native education counselor and **Jordan Charter** is a physical education teacher at Hagersville Secondary School in District 23, Grand Erie.



LGBTQ book reviews

Students meet with success



A coming-of-age story, Robert Joseph Greene's *Would You Mind?* provides a lighter look at the experience of a young man coming out—to himself, his friends and his family—in his senior year of high school. In an almost utopian fashion, the main character, Nate, manages his coming out with few hiccups, thanks to a wonderfully supportive family. The novel is a quick, easy read: definitely a high-interest, low-reading-level product that may appeal to some audiences.

For an LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two Spirit, Queer and/or Questioning) student, this novel may provide some relief or hope that things do get better. It also demonstrates that often friends and family will be less sur-

prised and more supportive than anticipated. The book provides an alternative to some of the young adult literature out there that highlights the ongoing struggles facing LGBTQ youth. Inherent in the narrative is also the reminder that, just as it often takes some time to understand our own identity, it may take friends and family some time to understand or adjust as well. This serves readers well, especially youth who may struggle to find support from some of their family and friends.

The innocuous title and cover seek to balance the normalcy it underlines while still functioning as a text with overriding themes of LGBTQ identity. That makes it more likely that students who are not comfortable in sharing their interest in

these issues will actually sign out such a book from a library. However, for those seeking LGBTQ literature, it may also make it more difficult to find this book without prior knowledge about its content or a prominent location in a pride library section.

For educators, this book provides opportunities to discuss sexual identity issues through the lens of the characters: the protagonist, Nate, his friends, his boyfriend, his parents and sister. How each of these characters reacts to the news of Nate's new-found understanding of his sexuality can lead to meaningful dialogue about identities, prejudices and understanding relationships.

While it is unlikely that many classrooms will use this book as a class novel study, it may be instructive for small-group or individual-reading projects in other venues. For example, in disciplines such as psychology or human growth and development, it can serve to compare and discuss the spectrum of sexual identity. For other education workers, this book may be an instructive tool not only for students who are questioning their sexual identities but for family and friends who are looking for examples of ways to cope with the news that a loved one is going through an often difficult time in his or her life.

According to the publishers of *Would You Mind?* the author attempted to meet the requirements of Icon Empire Press, the B.C. education system and his own desire to produce a meaningful story that explores a young man's first gay sexual experience. As promised by the publisher, anything sexual was chopped out of the book in an attempt to get it approved. This is unfortunate, and leaves the reader confused on more than one occasion, since the story seems to jump

“An instructive tool not only for students...but for family and friends who are [coping] with the news that a loved one is going through an often difficult time in his or her life.”



around and it is obvious where edits took place. That said, the book is realistic but simplified in terms of dealing with issues.

Overall, *Would You Mind?* provides options for dealing with coming out, which is a less solitary event than many imagine. Such a book and others of the genre can provide some measure of comfort, particularly for those who are alone in their journey, not yet ready or able to come out. Perhaps for a young LGBTQ person of 14 or 15, finding this novel could lead to a more positive high school experience, knowing that she or he is not the only one in the world going through such transformational change.

Icon Empire Press worked with Greene to create *Would You Mind?* after Greene's similarly themed novel, *This High School Has Closets*. The process also involved Greene creating a less sexually descriptive version of the book. The original of *This High School Has Closets* had a detailed chapter describing the protagonist's first gay experience, but the revamped text—one that perhaps could have been developed in a way to honour the experience—was reduced to one line that simply describes the experience as “mu-

tual masturbation.” The edit of *This High School Has Closets* also, according to the publisher, reduced the profanity to a minimum in an effort to qualify the work for school-approved reading lists. These combined edits, as with *Would You Mind?*, end up as choppy reads.

This High School Has Closets details Mark Thomas's experiences as he comes to question and then accept his own identity as a gay male. The sweet-yet-challenging romance between Mark and one of his basketball teammates suggests we need to look below the surface to find love. Also written as a low-vocabulary, high-interest story, the narrative takes Mark through his emotional ups and downs. However, the novel also falls into some unfortunate gay stereotypes (cleanliness, good organization, well-dressed), lags during glossed-over moments of political commentary and generally exhibits Harlequin Romance-esque moments of the boys giggling on the floor in tickle fights.

The political commentary comes in the form of brief references to the Marc Hall case: the gay teen in Oshawa who, in 2002, successfully challenged the Durham Catholic School Board to bring his male date to his prom. In *This High School Has*

Closets, Mark starts to identify with Marc Hall's story and works to find out everything he can about the case. However, Mark's interest in this important moment in Canadian gay history is mentioned only in passing, and Greene does not create a meaningful or engaging dialogue about the events. Nor does he create a parallel between Mark and Marc's experience in fighting to bring his date to the prom. This is a political moment and an opportunity missed. Students would be well served if they had a novel that introduces them to more of the details of the landmark court case in LGBTQ history.

The publisher's material does not suggest a grade level, but it would be a struggle to give this to anyone above 12 years of age unless she/he was a very reluctant reader. My 12-year-old daughter said it was “a really excellent topic but it's not engaging. Nothing really happens, so people my age aren't going to keep reading.” However, if someone is coming from a more closeted environment, the details of the story and its thematic development could warrant the inclusion of *This High School Has Closets* as a springboard into discussions of queer-friendly pedagogy or a sounding board for discussions of censorship and identity.

While the text falls short of really addressing or questioning the homophobia Mark experiences, it does provide readers with an early opportunity to discuss queer issues. The positive tone and the ease with which the character experiences his first love do help to normalize being gay, which provides positive role-modelling. *This High School Has Closets* acts as both a companion piece to *Would You Mind?* and a stand-alone novel that explores similar themes of coming out and self-identity.

Both *Would You Mind?* and *This High School Has Closets* work to create positive and accessible queer reads for today's youth. What they both lack is a depth of experience, an engaging storyline and a meaningful exploration of the nuances that so many queer youth experience. ☹

Peter Bates is a teacher in District 11, Thames Valley. **Tracey Hughes** is a teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.





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That's me in the corner

Brain plasticity and neuro-myths in modern education

By Rod Heikkila

"You would have loved the one we just went to!" exclaimed one voice from a small cluster of animated students as they piled back into our yellow bus, one of more than a dozen buses, at the end of a second day of lectures, seminars and activities.

"It was the one on brain plasticity," added another, removing her backpack and pulling out her cell phone. I had just audited a different, inspiring session about storytelling and myth-making conducted by a Native elder in and around a magnificent teepee set up on one of Western University's majestic lawns shaded by old hardwoods. The sunny days had been the sort that teachers long for, especially as the cool spring begins to merge into summer, a sentiment reflected in the scores of students, many prematurely donning shorts and T-shirts, defying a still-biting breeze. We were part of the SPARK Conference, a Thames Valley District School Board-Western University initiative that brought together students and teachers from gifted education classrooms from across the Board. It had been spectacular in its range of topics and we were all pretty excited and rejuvenated, in no small part to having escaped, albeit briefly, the sometimes constrictive world of bells and attendance sheets.

"Dr. Ansari told us about how plastic the human brain is, that it changes constantly, and we thought about you when he told us this." Our class had often chatted about the demands and assumptions surrounding formal education today, usually in the context of developing personally interesting areas of study to earn credits through mentor learning in our school's gifted program. Gifted kids have some interesting perspectives on learning and school. "He said that the latest brain research he is doing shows that we need to abandon immediately at least two myths in education today."

ILLUSTRATION: BYRON EGGENSCHWILER



The concrete and abstract learning environments we create have an enormous impact on our students; what we teach matters.



They had my attention.
“He said we have to stop believing in ‘hemispheric dominance’ and ‘learning styles.’”

They were right to assume I’d be impressed by their newly acquired big bang of insight. After nearly three decades in the classroom, I felt a little like some learned monks must have felt, long ago, when they realized the sun didn’t actually go around the Earth, that it never had, even though the geocentric universe seemed to explain so much that was demonstrably true. I thought of that guy “in the spotlight” in the old R.E.M. song.

Looking into the brain

Dr. Daniel Ansari is an Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience at Western University. His main interest lies in the behavioural and brain bases of children’s development of numerical and mathematical skills. He is one of a growing number of researchers who are exploring the extraordinary new possibilities afforded by recent technological advancements, especially in the area of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). Researchers are now able to conduct sophisticated studies of human subjects and witness some startling things as technology begins to “reveal the complex relationship between neural processes and environmental input as children develop into their socio-cultural environments.” In his paper, *The Brain Goes to School: Strengthening the*

Education-Neuroscience Connection, Dr. Ansari makes the case for increased co-operation between the too often isolated worlds of research and pedagogy. Each domain stands to gain a lot by working with the other, he believes, which explains his willingness to patiently and generously share his knowledge and explain his research to this chalk-covered, Smart Board-addled old teacher in Elgin County.

The plastic brain

It turns out our brains are much more plastic than we thought. In other words, a brain learns better than we might imagine as it continually responds to its environment in terms of function and structure. There are degrees of plasticity—young people seem to have slightly higher levels than older—but the living brain itself never stops learning and changing. It “adapts itself to the particular demands set by individuals’ environment.”

Dr. Ansari explains with an example: “Studies have shown that learning how to juggle leads to changes that are typically associated with processing of visual motion. Moreover, once individuals stop juggling, the increased brain volumes decreased back towards levels close to their pre-learning size. Similar changes in brain structure have been observed among medical students before and after an intense period of studying for a major examination.”

He points out that research surrounding brain plasticity has already had some exciting applications. A set of studies demonstrated that individuals with dyslexia physically changed their brains through structured reading-remediation programs that focused on certain brain regions and thus overcame their “aberrant brain activation.”

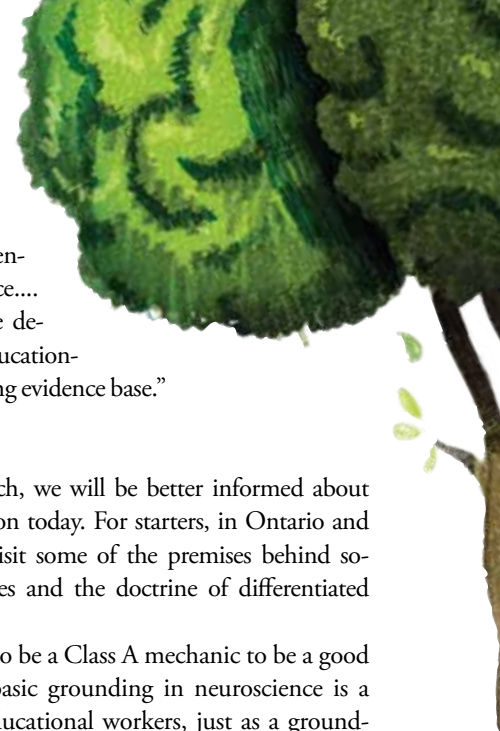
Other researchers (see Usha Goswami’s 2006 article “Neuroscience and education: from research to practice?” in the journal *Nature*, online at nature.com) have noticed subtle yet remarkable distinctions between dyslexia as it is seen (literally) in speakers/readers of the three different language types: transparent, non-transparent and symbolic. A transparent language uses letters to spell words that pretty much copy the actual sounds. English is a non-transparent language because it often uses letters that are not phonetically clear, like “bough” or “knight.” A symbolic, character-based language uses no alphabet. That’s why a Cantonese and a Mandarin Chinese speaker can’t talk to each other—the sounds of the languages are not alike—but can read and write in essentially the same way.

Interestingly, there is essentially no difference in what the brain looks like when a person is reading, regardless of language. Dr. Ansari says significant progress “is also being made in... mathematics, memory, language development and music, among others.”

So what about hemispheric dominance?

People interested in and informed about cognitive neuroscience frequently warn against giving in to what they see, at best, as well-intentioned fads and, at worst, a shameless commercializing of simplified versions of brain research. The latter, like





the long-ago medical practice of bloodletting, can even lead to harming people we set out to help. We need to be informed and prudent before we accept oversimplified, profitable and slickly packaged commercial efforts such as Brain Gym, Baby Einstein or Lumosity. So-called brain-based learning seems to be shaping up to be the next big push in books, conferences and even administrative initiatives. For obvious reasons, teachers, educational workers, parents and students want to know what works, but as in all medical research, the field of neuroscience does not lend itself to quick or simple applications.

As Dr. Ansari says, “I have heard from many teachers that they are being encouraged to do certain exercises to stimulate one of the two hemispheres—so-called ‘brain gyms.’” He points out that while there are two hemispheres and they differ in their functions, neuro-imaging shows there is enormously complex communication between the two hemispheres for most processes. Furthermore, he adds, “There is no evidence to support the claim that some individuals use their right hemisphere more than their left or the other way around.” Usha Goswami, of the Centre for Neuroscience in Education at Cambridge University, believes the efforts of many teachers to avoid a mismatch between learner preference and learning experience through maintaining a left and right brain balance are based on a “neuro-myth.” Such practice, says Goswami, probably stems from an over-literal interpretation of hemispheric specialization.

What about learning styles?

There seems to be no such thing. I confess this was perhaps the most challenging idea for me as a teacher, a parent and a learner myself as I researched this article. According to Dr. Ansari, educators are being exposed to “a gross oversimplification of neuroscience.... The whole notion of ‘learning styles’ tied to sensory modalities of the brain is a misrepresentation.” He says, “There is no evidence that people can be classified as auditory, visual or kinesthetic learners. These simplistic concepts are appealing, yet fundamentally inaccurate.” He says we should “stop the proliferation of neuro-myths” through better training in the basics of neuroscience.

The space allotted here requires three possible avenues at this point if, as I experienced, dismissing learning styles as a neuro-myth is a challenge. Take Dr. Ansari’s word for it (a worthy but limited choice); reject it outright (emotionally satisfying, perhaps, particularly if you are a believer); or go online and read “Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence” by Harold Pashler, Mark McDaniel, Doug Rohrer and Robert Bjork, published in the journal *Psychological Science in Public Interest*. It’s only 13 pages long and will help you decide for yourself. The article offers an overview of learning-styles doctrines and industry, explains how such an idea became so widespread and appealing, assesses the evidence around intervention based on learning styles, evaluates learning-styles literature, reaches conclusions and makes recommendations. There are also some fascinating ideas about the relationship between highly structured versus open lessons, particularly as they pertain to certain students and disciplines.

If you read the article you’ll understand why the authors assert,

“There is no adequate evidence base to justify incorporating learning-styles assessments into general educational practice.... Resources would better be devoted to adopting other educational practices that have a strong evidence base.”

Conclusion

Thanks to this new research, we will be better informed about prevailing ideas in education today. For starters, in Ontario and elsewhere, we need to revisit some of the premises behind so-called multiple intelligences and the doctrine of differentiated instruction (DI).

While it isn’t necessary to be a Class A mechanic to be a good driver (or vice versa), a basic grounding in neuroscience is a worthwhile goal for all educational workers, just as a grounding in basic pedagogy can only help neuroscientists. At the very least, educators would be better equipped to distinguish between what is sound and what might be harmful to our students as trends come and go in education. Neuroscientists might make otherwise unanticipated and worthwhile connections as well. Look online, for example, for “Neuroscience and Education: An ideal partnership for producing evidence-based solutions to guide 21st-century learning” for remarkable information on the effects of testing, music, sleep and exercise.

Brain plasticity demonstrates what good educators have always known intuitively. The concrete and abstract learning environments we create have an enormous impact on our students; what we teach matters; education is literally transformative; and we do make a difference. It’s important to be discerning and patient if we are to make the best of the new worlds opened to us through technology such as fMRI, and there is every reason to be optimistic.

Already researchers such as Stanford University’s Carol Dweck are tilling new ground with ideas that reject the “fixed mindset” that occurs when people see their own brains and talent as immutable (just one of the possible pitfalls of the hemispheric dominance and learning-styles ideas) and are exploring demonstrable improvements in students who adopt what Dweck calls a “growth mindset,” based on the idea that a person’s “brains and talent are just a starting point,” as neuroscience demonstrates. One school in the U.K. recently removed the V (for visual), A (auditory) and K (kinesthetic) buttons it had placed on children. With the best of intentions the staff had been seeking to identify at a glance what type of learner each child was. Furthermore, Dweck’s research and that of others “has shown that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life.” She adds, “It’s impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil and training.”

Now *that* I can believe. ☺

Rod Heikkila is a teacher at Parkside Collegiate Institute in District 11, Thames Valley.



ANXIETY GOES TO SCHOOL

Practical help for anxious students

By Patricia Morneau and Madeline Jobin

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in school-aged children and adolescents. Current prevalence rates range from four to 25 per cent with an average rate of eight per cent. Left untreated, a child's anxiety issues will intensify over time. These issues will gradually interfere with developmentally appropriate activities, relationships and achievements. In the school system, anxiety issues may have a significant impact on a child's academic and social functioning, but there are a number of strategies that the educational team can use to lessen or prevent such negative effects.

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L'ANXIÉTÉ À L'ÉCOLE

Aide pratique pour les élèves anxieux
par Patricia Morneau et Madeline Jobin

L'anxiété est l'un des troubles psychologiques les plus communs chez les enfants et les adolescents d'âge scolaire. Les taux actuels de prévalence varient de quatre à 25 pour cent, avec une moyenne de huit pour cent. S'ils ne sont pas traités, les problèmes d'anxiété d'un enfant s'intensifieront avec le temps. Ils perturberont peu à peu les activités, les relations et les réalisations sur le plan du développement. Dans le système scolaire, les problèmes d'anxiété peuvent avoir une incidence importante sur le fonctionnement social et scolaire d'un enfant, mais l'équipe scolaire dispose de plusieurs stratégies visant à atténuer ou empêcher de tels effets négatifs.

ILLUSTRATION: LINO

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Anxiety can be an appropriate response to danger, motivating the body to protect itself from potential harm. In some youth, however, the anxiety response goes awry, resulting in behaviours that appear extreme or inappropriate to the situation. Problematic anxiety does not respond to reassurance and begins to interfere with daily functioning. These children worry about matters that would not normally concern a typical child. An anxious response may result in a reluctance to attend school, refusal to speak in class, avoidance of interactions with peers (particularly activities in large groups) or a change in school routines. Children with anxiety worry more than the average student about tests, social interactions and performance evaluation, and often have difficulty identifying their fears, which may include embarrassment, the unknown and possible rejection. Each child's response style is unique and may present as agitated, angry, quiet, inattentive or compliant. To the world, a child may appear calm and in control while struggling internally to manage turmoil.

Two significant components of school life—peer interactions and developing relationships—can be particularly challenging for the anxious child. These components become even more important as the youth moves through adolescence due to the increased demands to interact with peers in a developmentally appropriate manner. “The Impact Of Anxiety Disorders on Educational Achievement,” a research study by Van Ameringen, Mancini, Farvolden et al., indicates that “48.8 per cent of the anxiety-disordered participants reported leaving school prematurely, 25.9 per cent did not complete high school and 61.2 per cent of the 98 participants who reported that they left school prematurely had a current or lifetime diagnosis of social phobia.” The research consistently indicates that although anxious children want to achieve, the stress overload in a school environment may result in them not completing their education.

Because these children often have difficulty talking about their concerns, adults may misinterpret the anxious child's behaviour and strong emotions may be expressed through tantrums, irritability, moodiness,

withdrawal and low tolerance for frustration. They may respond poorly to efforts to manage their behaviour or console them.

Teachers and educational workers can help children learn to manage their anxiety. Tracking specific times or situations that appear to trigger the child's anxiety provides valuable information in developing

student will become more aware of the child's personal triggers. All of this information will assist the educational team in developing an effective plan for support.

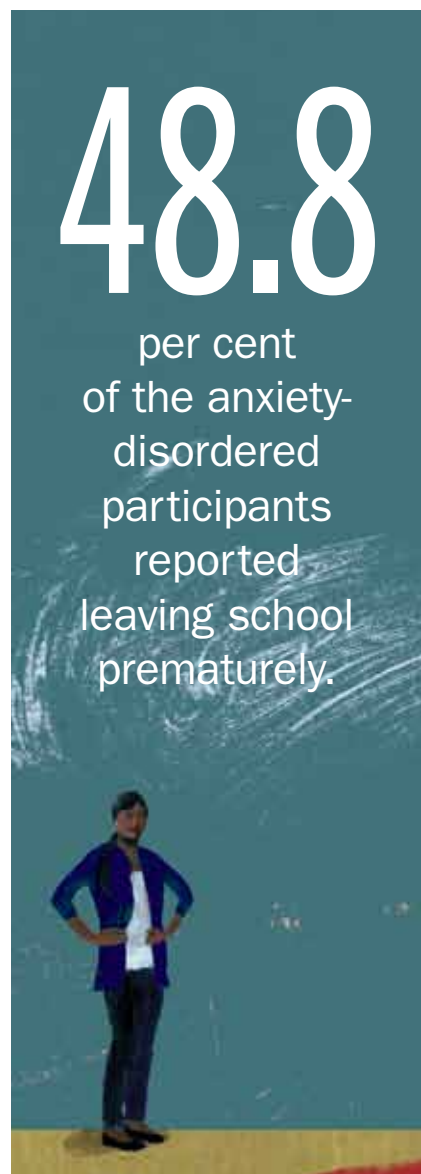
Effective strategies to assist the anxious child cover two broad areas: developing the child's self-help skills and developing teaching strategies that support his or her ability to manage stressful situations more effectively.

Self-help skills that enhance a child's self-regulation include breathing techniques, muscle-stretching and learning to reframe negative thinking. These skills support the child in being more aware of physical symptoms, e.g. rapid heartbeat, change in breathing pattern etc. Being more in tune with these warning signs will allow students to manage increased anxiety more effectively at an early stage. Regular opportunities to discuss their worries will help students develop a problem-solving approach to manage their anxious responses in the classroom.

Teaching strategies that have been effective include modeling imperfection, setting limits on checking and revising, assigning a helping buddy who can review expectations, visual aids and adjusting time allotments for tasks, oral testing and alternative test-taking strategies. Changes to homework expectations may be helpful in reducing some of the stress experienced by child and parent. A teacher/parent communication book may be used to inform the parent of schedule changes and assignments and to share the child's successes during the day.

Helping a child deal with anxiety is an ongoing process and the need for support may be required throughout the student's school life. Typically, anxious children tend to be more sensitive and therefore may continue to have some social and academic performance issues even if the anxiety is managed. It is important to be realistic and understand that symptom relief does not necessarily indicate that the anxious response will not reoccur. If anxious symptoms resurface or intensify—for example, school refusal or attendance issues—a re-evaluation of the intervention plan and strategies will be required. School refusal or avoidance at any point during a

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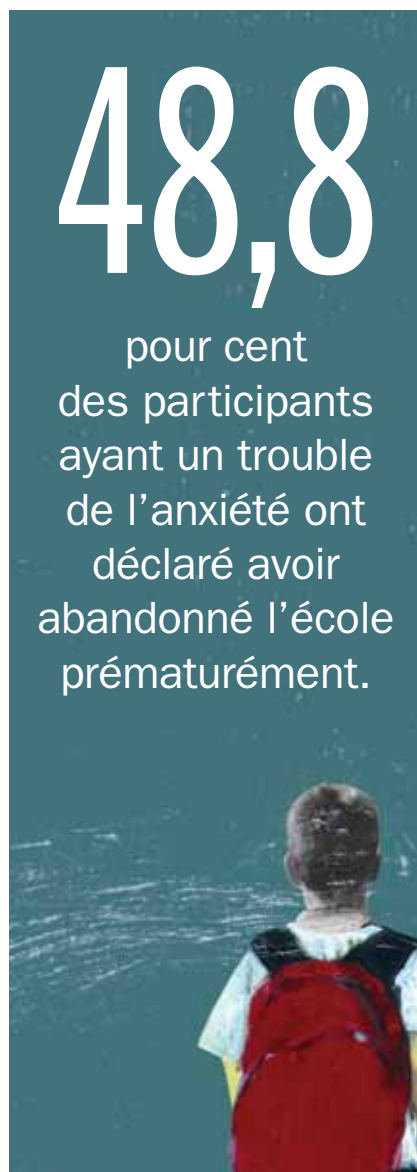
a plan. Consultation with the parent will enhance the educational team's understanding of how the child's anxiety is presented in other environments. Having a conversation with the child, particularly secondary students, will help to determine what they think is happening and will begin to engage them in developing a plan to manage their concerns. Over time, teachers and support staff working with the

L'anxiété peut être la réaction appropriée à un danger incitant le corps à se protéger contre des préjudices potentiels. Cependant, chez certains jeunes, la réaction à l'anxiété tourne mal, entraînant des comportements qui semblent ne pas convenir à la situation ou qui sont exagérés. Le réconfort des enfants souffrant d'anxiété grave n'est pas la solution et cette anxiété commence à perturber le fonctionnement quotidien. Ces enfants s'inquiètent de choses qui habituellement ne seraient pas la préoccupation d'un enfant type. Une réaction d'angoisse peut engendrer une réticence à fréquenter l'école, le refus de parler en classe, l'évitement des interactions avec ses pairs (particulièrement lors d'activités en grands groupes) ou un changement des habitudes scolaires. Les enfants atteints d'anxiété s'en font plus que la moyenne des élèves par rapport aux examens, aux interactions sociales, aux évaluations de rendement et ont souvent de la difficulté à identifier leurs peurs qui peuvent comprendre la gêne, l'inconnu et l'éventuel rejet. Chaque enfant réagit de sa propre manière et peut être agité, en colère, silencieux, distrait ou docile. De l'extérieur, un enfant peut sembler calme et maître de lui-même tout en luttant intérieurement pour gérer sa crise.

Deux facteurs importants de la vie scolaire, soit l'interaction avec les pairs et le développement de relations, peuvent constituer un défi pour les enfants anxieux. Ces facteurs deviennent d'autant plus importants à mesure que le jeune traverse l'adolescence en raison des pressions croissantes d'interagir avec les pairs selon la phase du développement. L'étude technique menée par Van Ameringen, Mancini, Farvolden et coll. intitulée « *The Impact Of Anxiety Disorders On Educational Achievement* » indique que « 48,8 pour cent des participants ayant un trouble de l'anxiété ont déclaré avoir abandonné l'école prématurément, 29,9 pour cent n'ont pas terminé leur secondaire et 61,2 pour cent des 98 participants ayant quitté l'école de façon prématurée avaient reçu un diagnostic actuel ou permanent de phobie sociale. » L'étude indique invariablement que bien

que les enfants anxieux veulent réussir, la surdose de stress créée par le milieu scolaire peut les mener à ne pas terminer leurs études.

Puisque ces enfants éprouvent souvent de la difficulté à parler de leurs préoccupations, il se peut que les adultes comprennent mal le comportement de



l'enfant anxieux et les émotions fortes peuvent être exprimées par des excès de colère, d'irritabilité, d'humeur changeante, de repli et une faible tolérance à la frustration. Ils peuvent mal réagir aux efforts visant à gérer leur comportement ou à les consoler.

Le personnel enseignant de même que les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation peuvent aider les enfants à

maîtriser leur anxiété. La prise en note des moments ou des situations qui semblent déclencher l'anxiété de l'enfant constituera des renseignements précieux dans l'élaboration d'un plan. Une consultation des parents permettra à l'équipe scolaire de comprendre la manifestation de l'anxiété de l'enfant dans d'autres milieux. Une conversation avec l'enfant, en particulier au secondaire, aidera à déterminer ce qui lui arrive, selon lui, et l'incitera à participer à l'élaboration d'un plan pour gérer ses problèmes. Avec le temps, le personnel enseignant et le personnel de soutien travaillant avec l'élève seront plus conscients des facteurs déclenchants chez l'enfant. Toutes ces données contribueront à aider l'équipe scolaire à mettre en place un plan efficace en matière de soutien.

Les stratégies efficaces pour aider l'enfant anxieux sont réparties en deux grandes catégories : le développement de l'aptitude à l'autonomie de l'enfant et l'élaboration de stratégies d'enseignement qui appuient sa capacité à dominer plus efficacement les situations stressantes.

Les aptitudes à l'autonomie qui favorisent la maîtrise de soi de l'enfant comprennent des techniques de respiration, l'étirement des muscles et apprendre à recentrer les pensées négatives. Grâce à ces aptitudes, l'enfant reconnaît mieux les symptômes physiques, p. ex., l'accélération du rythme cardiaque, les changements au niveau de la respiration, etc. Le fait d'être à l'écoute de ces signes avant-coureurs permettra aux élèves de gérer plus efficacement le surcroît d'anxiété à la phase initiale. Les occasions de discussion de leurs inquiétudes aident les élèves à concevoir des démarches de résolutions de problème en vue de maîtriser leurs réactions anxieuses en salle de classe.

Les stratégies d'enseignement qui se sont avérées efficaces comprennent : démontrer les imperfections, établir des limites quant à la vérification et à la révision, affecter un camarade qui peut revoir les attentes, les supports visuels et rajuster le temps de travail et les stratégies d'examen oral et les autres

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Teachers and educational workers can help children learn to manage their anxiety.

Le personnel enseignant de même que les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation peuvent aider les enfants à maîtriser leur anxiété.

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child's school career is a concern and indicates a need for further evaluation.

Early intervention is important. Research indicates that anxiety issues may result in further problems as a child moves through the school system and the challenges increase. According to Van Ameringen, Mancini and Farvolden, almost half of the children identified with Generalized Anxiety Disorder failed to complete school. Home and school collaboration in dealing with anxious symptoms will help minimize the potential long-term negative impact. A plan based on positivism rather than negativity will promote the development of self-reliance. As Aureen Pinto Wagner stated in *Worried No More: Help and Hope for Anxious Children*, "the most valuable help a parent can give an anxious child is not to help him through the anxiety but to teach him to help himself." There are numerous resources available to assist parents and school personnel in their support of children struggling with anxiety.

Anxiety issues are challenging for children, particularly in the school environment. Their issues with anxiety are most effectively managed through a plan developed jointly by the teacher and parent with special education support. ☺

Patricia Morneau is Social Worker/Attendance Counselor working in District 9, Greater Essex. **Madeline Jobin** has recently retired as a Social Worker from District 9, Greater Essex.

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méthodes de test. Modifier les attentes par rapport aux devoirs pourrait réduire le stress que vivent l'enfant et les parents. On peut aussi utiliser un cahier de communication enseignant/parent en vue d'informer le parent des modifications d'horaire et des devoirs et de partager les réussites de l'enfant durant la journée.

Aider un enfant à surmonter l'anxiété est un processus assidu et on peut devoir l'appuyer tout au long de sa vie scolaire. D'habitude, les enfants anxieux ont tendance à être plus sensibles et, par conséquent, peuvent continuer d'avoir des problèmes sociaux et de rendement scolaire même si l'anxiété est maîtrisée. Il importe d'être réaliste et de comprendre que le soulagement des symptômes n'indique pas nécessairement que la réaction d'anxiété ne se reproduira pas. Si les symptômes d'anxiété refont surface ou s'aggravent, par exemple, par le refus d'aller à l'école ou des problèmes d'assiduité, on devra procéder à une nouvelle évaluation du plan d'intervention des stratégies. Le refus d'aller à l'école ou l'évitement à tout moment de la scolarité de l'enfant est problématique et indique la nécessité d'une évaluation plus poussée.

Une intervention précoce est importante. L'étude indique que les problèmes d'anxiété peuvent entraîner d'autres au fur et à mesure de la progression de l'enfant à l'école et que les défis s'accumulent. Selon Van Ameringen,

Mancini et Farvolden, près de la moitié des enfants identifiés comme ayant un trouble d'anxiété généralisé n'ont pas terminé leurs études. La collaboration du foyer et de l'école en vue de traiter les symptômes anxieux contribuera à diminuer l'impact négatif potentiel à long terme. Un plan basé sur le positivisme plutôt que la négativité favorisera le développement de l'autonomie. Comme le déclare Aureen Pino Wagner dans *Worried No More: Help and Hope for Anxious Children*, « l'aide la plus précieuse qu'un parent peut apporter à un enfant anxieux est de ne pas l'aider à traverser les périodes d'anxiété, mais de lui enseigner à s'aider lui-même. » De nombreuses ressources sont offertes pour aider les parents et le personnel de l'école à soutenir les enfants aux prises avec un trouble anxieux.

Les problèmes d'anxiété sont traumatisants pour les enfants, notamment en milieu scolaire. Leurs troubles d'anxiété sont maîtrisés plus efficacement par l'intermédiaire d'un plan élaboré conjointement par l'enseignant et le parent et un soutien en éducation de l'enfance en difficulté. ☺

Patricia Morneau est travailleuse sociale/conseillère en assiduité œuvrant au District 9, Greater Essex. **Madeline Jobin** a récemment pris sa retraite après avoir été travailleuse sociale au District 9, Greater Essex.



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OUR PASSION, THEIR VOICE

An iPad app leads to
success for autistic students

By Muna Kadri and Tim Wesson

The ability to communicate effectively is perhaps the largest barrier to inclusion and independence that students with Autism Spectrum Disorders face. Tim Wesson has been teaching autistic students for four years and faces a recurring struggle to assist them in developing their communication skills. One night, while watching *60 Minutes*, Tim saw a segment featuring an iPad application (app) called Proloquo2go (P2G) that assists nonverbal autistic students to communicate. P2G is an iPad, iPhone or iPod app that is set up like a communication board: the user touches a preprogrammed word, phrase or picture and the program speaks it.

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NOTRE PASSION, LEURS VOIX

Une application pour iPad,
gage de succès pour les
élèves autistes

par Muna Kadri et Tim Wesson

La capacité à communiquer efficacement est probablement l'obstacle le plus important à l'inclusion et à l'indépendance des élèves ayant un trouble du spectre de l'autisme. Depuis quatre ans, Tim Wesson enseigne à des élèves autistes et est confronté à une difficulté récurrente pour les aider à développer leurs aptitudes à la communication. Un soir, alors qu'il regardait *60 Minutes*, il a vu un volet de l'émission présentant une application iPad appelée Proloquo2go (P2G) qui aide les élèves autistes ne pouvant s'exprimer par la parole à communiquer. P2G est une application pour iPad, iPhone ou iPod qui est structurée comme un tableau de communication. L'utilisateur touche un mot, une expression ou une image préprogrammés et le programme prononce l'élément sélectionné.

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Tim was confident that this application could help his students, but the high cost of both the iPads and the app would be a challenge. Tim consulted with me, the school's literacy teacher, and together we applied for and received funding from Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) for this project. The TLLP (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/tllp.html) provides funding for "experienced teachers to enhance their professionalism and skills, extend their learning and share their expertise with others for the broad benefit of Ontario's students."

Once we had the iPads and the app, we still needed to learn about how to use P2G and so we invited a Speech and Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Communicative Disorders Assistant from Children's Treatment Network (CTN) to guide our learning. They provided us with profiles that we customized to our students' needs. Using a huge library of online learning tools from P2G and our CTN coaches, we worked to learn as much as we could about the application.

Before starting the project we took baseline data of the students' communication skills. Each student already had an Individual Education Plan, so we built on the established goals. By starting with a goal that would engage our students, we hoped that any success would motivate them to persevere. Our most common goal was to "independently initiate a request three times daily using the P2G app on an iPad."

We have a group of kids who, like all high school students, are highly motivated by lunch. Using fading prompting, students would press the "I want" button and then select a food item. Staff would then give them the food item. We were able to fade prompting levels quickly because those kids wanted their lunch.

It quickly became apparent that the organization and layout of the buttons in the app would need to be specific to each student. We began by borrowing a template that was used by another student in the board. We modified it to suit our class and began the trial. Over the first few months we made near daily

revisions to the layout to better suit the needs of each student. For instance, reading comprehension was a strength for one student and as such we needed to remove distracting pictures. For another, all of the choices on a particular screen were overwhelming, so we colour-coded the buttons and organized them in rows by subject. These revisions also allowed us to become more familiar with the program and its features.

While we certainly hoped for some spontaneous use of P2G, we did need to use verbal prompts to get students to use the app. As much as possible we tried to use prompts that are naturally part of language and conversation. One of our students would sit quietly at the lunch table until asked, "What would you like to eat today?" He would then make his request. We also asked the entire school staff to prompt the students to use their iPads to communicate but rather than have support staff gesture to the iPad or tap the back of an elbow, the conversation partners would use common language like "Pardon me? I don't understand" or something similar.

Another powerful teaching tool we employed was modeling. To convince our students that P2G was an effective communication tool, we had to prove it by using it ourselves. When introducing our students to a new classroom goal, we did it using P2G. It helped our students see the placement of the buttons in the app. Modeling also gave us a greater appreciation for how difficult it is for our students to adopt a new communication method; it truly felt like we were all learning a new language.

After embedding the iPad in our classroom learning, the opportunity to continue using the iPad at home was offered to parents. Here CTN's support was particularly valuable in that they were able to provide direct support at home. Their mandate allows them to go directly into the home to work with the family. They were able to teach the families how to use the app. They made changes to the app based on the student's life at home. We found that having the app used at home increased the student's success. When our students used the iPad to communicate

every day both at school and at home, they became the most successful. It becomes a much more powerful tool when it is always available to the student.

As our school year wound up, we looked back at our successes. We were able to meet many goals. Some students learned to use their iPad without



prompting during some activities. In other cases, goals needed to be adjusted so that they became more attainable, but that is just good special education practice. As a school community, we were very encouraged by the progress made this year, and this progress helps us to look forward to continuing their successes in the future. With that in mind, it is very important to use the app as much as possible since the greater the consistency of use, the more likely the continued success. ☺

Muna Kadri is the head of alternative education and lead literacy teacher and **Tim Wes-son** is the assistant head of special education at Vaughan Secondary School in D16, York Region.

Tim Wesson était persuadé que cette application pourrait aider ses élèves, mais le coût élevé des iPad et des applications constituerait un défi. Enseignante en littératie à l'école, il est venu me voir et, ensemble, nous avons fait une demande de financement pour ce projet, que d'ailleurs

d'apprentissage en ligne de P2G et grâce à l'assistance des spécialistes du CTN, nous avons entrepris d'en connaître le plus possible sur cette application.

Avant de démarrer le projet, nous avons pris les données de base des aptitudes de communication des élèves. Comme chaque élève avait déjà son propre Plan

fants voulaient leur repas.

On s'est rapidement aperçu que l'organisation et la disposition des boutons de l'application devraient être adaptées à chaque élève. Nous avons commencé par emprunter un modèle utilisé par un autre élève du conseil. Nous l'avons adapté à notre classe et avons commencé l'essai. Au cours des premiers mois, nous avons révisé la configuration pratiquement tous les jours afin de mieux répondre aux besoins de chaque élève. Par exemple, un élève était fort en compréhension de la lecture et, de ce fait, nous avons dû retirer les images qui le distraient. Pour un autre élève, l'abondance de choix sur un écran en particulier le dérangeait, alors nous avons codifié les boutons par couleur et les avons organisés en rangs par sujet. Ces révisions nous ont également permis de nous familiariser davantage avec le programme et ses fonctions.

Bien que nous souhaitions que l'utilisation de P2G se fasse à l'occasion spontanément, nous avons eu besoin d'utiliser des signaux verbaux pour que les élèves utilisent l'application. Nous avons essayé autant que possible d'utiliser des signaux qui font partie des conversations et du langage courants. L'un de nos élèves attendait tranquillement assis à la table jusqu'à ce qu'on lui demande « Qu'est-ce que tu aimerais manger aujourd'hui? » Par la suite, il faisait sa demande. Nous avons également demandé à tout le personnel de l'école d'inciter les élèves à utiliser leur iPad pour communiquer, mais plutôt que le personnel de soutien fasse signe à l'iPad ou qu'ils tapent doucement à l'arrière du coude, les partenaires de la conversation se servaient de langage courant comme « Excuse-moi! Je ne comprends pas. » ou d'une expression équivalente.

L'apprentissage imitatif est un autre puissant outil d'enseignement dont nous sommes servi. Nous avons dû utiliser nous-mêmes P2G afin de convaincre nos élèves et de leur démontrer que c'était un moyen de communication efficace. Quand nous présentions un nouvel objectif à notre classe, nous le faisions en utilisant P2G. Ceci a permis à nos élèves de voir l'emplacement des boutons de l'application. Le recours à l'apprentissage imitatif nous a également permis de reconnaître

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Our most common goal was to “independently initiate a request three times daily using the P2G app on an iPad.”

Notre but le plus commun était « d'effectuer une demande de façon indépendante, trois fois par jour, à l'aide de l'application P2G d'un iPad. »

nous avons obtenu, auprès du Programme d'apprentissage et de leadership du personnel enseignant (PALPE). Le PALPE (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/teacher/tllp.html>) fournit un financement qui permet aux « enseignantes et enseignants de poursuivre leur apprentissage et de partager leur expertise afin qu'elles profitent à l'ensemble des élèves en Ontario. »

Après nous être procuré les iPad et les applications, il nous restait à apprendre le fonctionnement du P2G et, pour orienter notre apprentissage, nous avons invité une orthophoniste, un ergothérapeute et un assistant en troubles de communication du *Children's Treatment Network* (CTN). Ils nous ont munis de profils que nous avons adaptés aux besoins de nos élèves. À l'aide d'une gigantesque bibliothèque d'outils

d'enseignement individualisé, nous avons tiré parti des objectifs stipulés. En commençant par un objectif qui susciterait l'intérêt de nos élèves, nous espérions que le minimum de réussite les motiverait à persévérer. Notre but le plus commun était « d'effectuer une demande de façon indépendante, trois fois par jour, à l'aide de l'application P2G d'un iPad. »

Comme pour tous les élèves des écoles secondaires, nous avons un groupe d'enfants pour qui l'heure du repas suscite beaucoup d'intérêt. En utilisant un estompage des incitations, les élèves appuyaient sur le bouton « I want » (Je veux), puis choisissaient un aliment. Le personnel leur donnait ensuite l'aliment en question. Cette technique nous a permis d'éliminer rapidement les signaux, parce que les en-



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combien il est difficile pour nos élèves d'adopter un nouveau mode de communication. Nous avons tous eu l'impression que nous étions en train d'apprendre une nouvelle langue.

Après l'intégration de l'iPad dans l'apprentissage de notre classe, l'occasion de poursuivre son utilisation à la maison a été proposée aux parents. Le soutien des spécialistes du CTN a été extrêmement précieux ici, car ils ont été capables de fournir un soutien personnalisé à la maison. En fait, ils sont mandatés pour proposer leurs services aux familles au domicile de celles-ci. Ils ont pu ainsi enseigner aux familles l'utilisation de l'application. Ils ont apporté des modifications à l'application pour l'adapter à la vie de l'élève à son domicile. Nous avons trouvé que le fait d'utiliser l'application à la maison améliorait la réussite des élèves. En se servant tous les jours de l'iPad à l'école comme à la maison pour communiquer, nos élèves étaient désormais les plus productifs. L'outil est bien plus efficace quand il est mis à la disposition des élèves en permanence.

Alors que notre année scolaire touchait à sa fin, nous avons analysé le succès énorme que nous avons accompli. Nous avons été capables de réaliser de nombreux objectifs. Certains élèves ont même appris à utiliser leur iPad dans le cadre de certaines activités, sans que nous ayons à les y inciter. Dans d'autres cas, les objectifs ont dû être ajustés pour qu'ils soient plus faciles à réaliser, mais cela est exactement le reflet de ce que sont de bonnes pratiques d'éducation spécialisée. Le progrès que nous avons pu accomplir cette année, en tant que communauté scolaire, a été véritablement encourageant et ce progrès nous permet de nous réjouir des succès que nos élèves remporteront à l'avenir. Dans cet esprit, rappelons qu'il est essentiel d'utiliser cette application le plus souvent possible puisque plus on l'utilise, plus il est probable que le succès perdure. ☺

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Muna Kadri est chef de l'éducation alternative et enseignante en chef de la littérature et **Tim Wesson** est chef adjoint de l'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté à Vaughan Secondary School du D16, York Region.





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PhD

as professional development?

Some insights from the trenches

I am a classroom teacher, with close to 30 years experience, who returned to school recently in an attempt to continue my professional development through a PhD program. In trying to share some potential light at the end of the tunnel, I hope this article will try to give a little perspective on the enduring gap between educational research and classroom practice.

Applying for a place in the doctoral program is a bit daunting, especially when it's been so long since completing a B.Ed. and M.Ed. that anyone who might supply a reference letter is likely to be dead, or at least retired. But the online paperwork turned out to be manageable, and resulted in an offer of acceptance to a program at a university relatively close to home. As is usual in the first year of most educational programs, course choices are restricted by the need for candidates to lay the foundation for all that is to follow. I'm not a psychologist, or an administrator, or a special education specialist, so curriculum is my area. I had already decided on teacher professional development as my specific research interest, having become frustrated with the usual flavour of the month opportunities on offer.

ILLUSTRATION: DEVON BOWMAN

By Anne Newington

The

first year workload was heavy: a total of three courses, a wide assortment of workshops and seminar presentations, plus the obligation to work 10 hours per week as a research assistant requires hours of reading and writing every week. The opportunity, or need, to do some course work online allows many of these hours to be spent at home, lessening the costs of commuting. The downside of working at home is that it is more difficult to develop relationships with fellow students, but my colleagues assured me that even if I did spend more time in the faculty building, there was very little time available for anyone to socialize.

A little more than two months into the experience, I could already say that a tiny slice of the PhD experience would go a long way in helping classroom teachers understand, as well as start to close, that baffling gap that has mystified educators forever. Studying and battling with the language, mechanics and philosophies of research methods, educational policy-making and the world of grant applications in the first year course work made full nights of sleep difficult, as ideas, arguments and computer glitches would not allow my brain to settle. Nevertheless, the first semester was a terrific experience. Seeing certain aspects of education from perspectives not in the normal bailiwick of a teacher's work was a refreshing break from the often frustrating conversations with fellow teachers in staff rooms and school hallways. Challenging reading and writing assignments renewed my linguistic skills and my experience as a teacher was useful in course discussions, as some of my colleagues had very little background in classroom work.

After seven months, however, I withdrew from the program. As second semester unfolded, I began to see what was ahead in the remaining three years of the program. It is a textbook case of "the more you know, the less you understand." Had I continued in the program, the next three years would have been spent largely on researching and writing a dissertation that would be read by very few people, and acted on by fewer. The dissertation would have shown that there are better and worse ways of providing professional development for teachers during their careers, and

that it could definitely be done better than it usually has been. The problem with this is that we already know this to be true. What I don't understand is, knowing this, why isn't professional development provided as well as it could be?

A few ideas occur to me in answer to this question. One is that teaching, as work, has entered into a period in which it is not perceived as a profession, but as a government job—"nice work if you can get it." Perhaps we have even moved past the usefulness of the word "profession" itself, if it ever was useful. Given that new teachers are generally expected to accomplish the same thing as experienced teachers, there is very little reason for any teacher to develop in any way other than making their work life more manageable, or their salary higher. A few people will embark on programs of accreditation in order to become an administrator, but for most teachers there is no professional ladder to climb if one simply wants to become a better teacher.

Another possible part of the answer is that the daily work of a teacher is already so full that there is no time or energy left for developing into a more effective teacher. The biggest problem with this answer is that the daily work of teachers is obviously where most of their development occurs, as they learn from their experiences in the classroom and in the schools where they work. It is now well known that there are public education systems, most notably in Finland, in which teachers spend significantly less time in front of students and more time in collaborative learning and planning with other teachers as a regular part of their jobs than is the

case here in Ontario. Since this arrangement would significantly increase our costs of education it will probably not be adopted in the foreseeable future.

Another part of the answer may be in the isolation of the teacher in the classroom. This feature of the work is bound up with the time issue, but it is definitely a factor in the equation I am considering. It is possible for a teacher to carry out the job without ever consulting others, but I believe most teachers would welcome more opportunities to collaborate with others in planning and carrying out their work than are regularly available.

I think another part of the reason for professional development not occurring more effectively is that so much of what

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teachers are exposed to in professional development sessions, especially those provided by employers, is so disappointing. And that's putting it mildly. In my experience, many of the mandatory "professional activity" day programs offered to teachers are so poorly delivered that professional development is now often perceived as an unproductive waste of time. Who would go searching for more of that?

So now, several months after I stepped out of the PhD program, what have I learned? I've learned that academe prioritizes theory whereas the classroom requires, above all else, practicality. There's nothing inherently wrong with theory; it just can't be the priority in the classroom. Academic study is based on principles, whereas the classroom demands attention to specifics, and those specifics are the individual students in a particular classroom. Academic research and writing, for the most part, will never translate directly into practice, especially when so much of it is being produced for purposes other than its direct and practical application to the learners in the classroom (read "publish or perish" and other vocational necessities).

But academics in education do know something: the policy-makers who produce the directives that teachers are instructed to apply, consult with the academics far more than they ever consult with teachers. In my opinion, that's how we get ourselves into the messes we seem always to be trying to find our way out of—in education as well as in economics, health care, transportation, the legal system, environmental conditions, and many other areas of social life. What we need in order for things to change in any area of social concern is academics who will tell the policy-makers different stories. That's why I was so glad to have found John T. Tierney's April 25, 2013 article in *The Atlantic*, "The Coming Revolution in Public Education." Tierney, now retired, spent his working life as an academic and a high school teacher (in that order) in the U.S. He writes about the U.S. education system, but Canada often follows the U.S. lead, whether or not the direction makes sense, so I recommend this article to Ontario teachers.

The theme in Tierney's article that strikes me as most useful to teachers in Ontario is how society views teachers: "In this country, we lurch back and forth between efforts to professionalize and

efforts to infantilize public-school teachers, and have been doing so since the beginning of public schools in America. Neither kind of effort accords teachers much respect." Strike a chord? The sad thing for me is the continuous decline in the level of respect that teachers receive from the Ontario public, notwithstanding the results from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) studies on public attitudes towards education. Sadder still is that I suspect that we teachers have internalized this deteriorating vision of our work, and have lost respect for ourselves. I understand why that may have happened. To do good work in the classroom is tough, tiring and never good enough—for anybody it often seems. It is doubly frustrating when other people's policy notions require us to act against our best instincts. Nevertheless, what we aim to do in our daily work is important, and it counts, whether or not it can be measured in numbers.

The PhD in education was not the right route for me, but I do not regret taking the opportunity to experience what that world offers and values. I learned a tremendous amount, and was able to access enough new resources to keep me studying throughout the remainder of my year's leave and beyond. I returned to the classroom in September, understanding more than I have ever before known about why teachers are directed to implement certain policies, and with more confidence in my own ability to use the professional judgment often referred to lately by education officials as I carry out my work. Teachers can never stop learning, and should never forget how valuable their work is,

when done in an informed and thoughtful way. We need to make the work of teaching more meaningful and respected by our society and ourselves, and ensure that opportunities for professional development provide practical and accessible experiences and resources to classroom teachers. I know these resources exist, but navigating the gap between theory and practice remains a more tortuous terrain than it should be. Those on both sides of that gap would do well to reach out to the other. ☺

Anne Newington is a teacher at Central Huron Secondary School in District 8, Avon Maitland.

Teachers can never
stop learning,
and should
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how valuable
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informed and
thoughtful way.

Art as catharsis

James Matheson has been teaching art for 22 years. He currently teaches Visual Art and the International Baccalaureate Theory of Knowledge course at Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East in the Kawartha Pine Ridge Board. Worried that his day job had killed off his ability to make art, in 2001 he began a series of drawings, forcing himself to do at least one a day for a year. Out of these hundreds of cathartic little studies emerged larger paintings. He calls the series “Incidents and their Inadequate Explanations.” His paintings are mostly on plywood—a homage to his student days when he worked in a lumber yard. He still does odd jobs during the summer, including this year’s task: restoring a two-metre-tall wooden Buddha for a wealthy art collector. Some of the larger cracks were filled with latex caulking, causing the Buddha Restorer to worry that this will bring him bad karma. ☹



Left page, top: “inadequate explanation #14.” Left page, bottom: “earlier occurrence.” Right page: “initial impression.”





Between the rivers

Mesopotamia and its influence on the modern world

When planning a trip to visit *Mesopotamia: Inventing Our World*, currently at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), make sure the first thing on your checklist is time—a lot of time. This fascinating exhibit, running until January 5, 2014, provides so much intriguing information and aesthetic pleasure that a quick run through just won't do it justice.

There are over 170 Mesopotamian artifacts on loan from the British Museum, and they have never been seen in Canada. The focus is on the emergence of cities and states in ancient Sumer (4000–2000 BCE), the Assyrian World Empire (1000–600 BCE), and the rise and fall of Babylon (600–540 BCE).

Mesopotamia, the Ancient Greek name for “land between rivers,” was located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, a region that encompasses present-day Iraq. It was here, over 6,000 years ago, that the people of Mesopotamia developed visionary ideas—including writing, city structures and agricultural techniques—that would influence the modern world.

Who would have thought, for example, that one of the first displays in the exhibit includes an iPad? That's right, there is a comparison between a Sumerian clay tablet from 2033 BCE and iPad from 2013 CE. Although obviously very different, the idea of a rectangular object, full of information and fitting into the palm of a hand, is just one example of the thread that runs between Mesopotamia and today's world.

The dots and curves carved on a clay tablet with a blunt reed are what we now call cuneiform. The word derives from the Latin *cuneus* (wedge) and *forma* (shape) and is the first record of writing. It was originally used for official temple bookkeeping, and scribes also wrote down legal agreements. The pieces on display appear as intricate designs made of marks and grooves.

The artifacts become more sophisticated with the introduction of cylindrical seals, also used for record-keeping. The little cylinders, made of material such as serpentine, were decorated with

scenes like important banquets. If you rolled the cylinder onto a piece of damp clay, the scene appeared on the flattened slab.

One of the exhibition's highlights is *Ram in a Thicket*, a figure of a rearing goat made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli and shell from c. 2500 BCE. It is the twin of a figure uncovered during an excavation in 1928–29. The piece will only be shown in the first half of the exhibit's run. It will be substituted in the second half by a lyre dating from 2650–2550 BCE, made of gold, lapis and

shell, and adorned with a bull's head and mythical scenes.

After the 14th century BCE Assyria emerged as a major political and military power and grew to control an area covering Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, parts of Iran and Turkey by around 660 BCE. The exhibit has an area showcasing video footage of the 19th-century archeological dig that uncovered the Assyrian empire, including the ancient cities of Nimrud, Khorsabad and Nineveh.

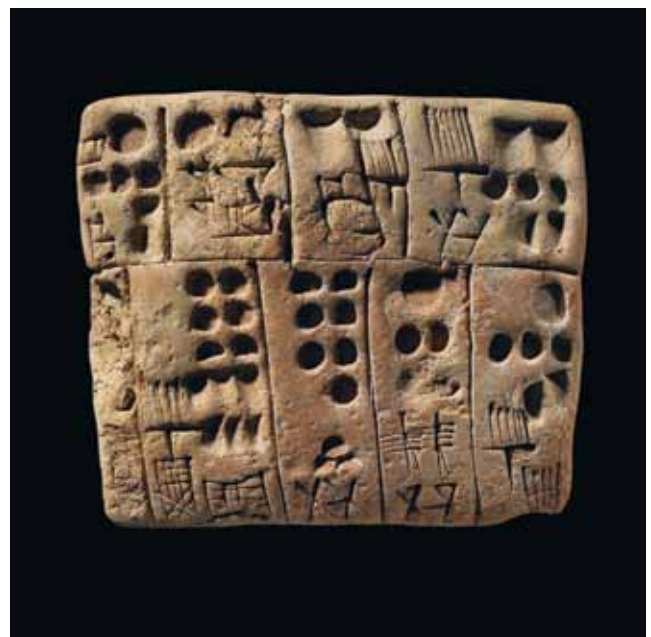
A fabulous part of the exhibit is the way in which it displays the Assyrian carved stone reliefs, most of which are from Nimrud and Nineveh. Assyrian cities were full of large palaces enhanced by these reliefs. Formed of gypsum, the intricate carvings tell stories that highlight the kings' achievements. Visitors can watch colour vignettes that depict the imagined scene prior to the final product carved in

stone. These animations, with accompanying sound effects, are beautifully and creatively composed, and greatly add to the experience when looking at the actual reliefs.

With a curricular link to Grade 11: World History before 1600 (CHW3M), teachers can arrange for students to be led through the exhibit by ROM facilitators, who will take them on a journey through 3,000 years of human history and show how the innovations of Mesopotamia continue to impact our lives. One-hour tours for secondary students are held on weekdays from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and 12:30 p.m.–2:00 p.m. For more information call 416.586.5801 x 1.

For hours and more information, please visit rom.on.ca. 🐾





PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Left page: On display for the first half of the engagement of *Mesopotamia* at the ROM, Ram in a Thicket (side view), gold, silver, lapis lazuli, copper, shell, red limestone, bitumen, c. 2650-2550 BCE, Iraq, Ur, h: 42.5 cm; w: 28 cm, Sumer, Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, P.A.

Right page, clockwise from the top: Dying Lion wall-panel relief, gypsum, 645-640 BCE, Nineveh, North Palace, H: 16.5 cm, w: 30.6 cm,

d: 2.5 cm, BM 1992, 0404.1, Assyria, © The Trustees of the British Museum • Early administrative tablet, clay, 3300-3000 BCE, Uruk, h: 8.5 cm, w: 7 cm, d: 2 cm, BM 140854, Sumer, © The Trustees of the British Museum • Head of a woman with full Egyptian hairstyle, ivory, 9th-8th century BCE, Nimrud (Kalhu), Burnt Palace, h: 6.1 cm, w: 6 cm, d: 6.1 cm, BM 118186, Assyria, © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Keeping you in the loop

Reviews, conferences, PD opportunities and other items of interest

BOOK REVIEW

Becoming and Being a Teacher: Confronting Traditional Norms to Create New Democratic Realities

Edited by P.L. Thomas

Peter Lang Publishing, 2013

295 pages, \$41.78

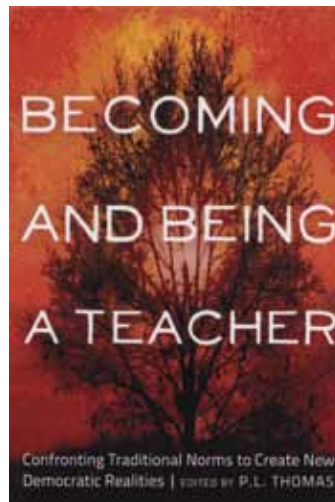
Reviewed by Lauren Simmons

The process of becoming and being a teacher is an experience that, while widely varied in circumstance and context, has some overarching features and challenges. In the book *Becoming and Being a Teacher: Confronting Traditional Norms to Create New Democratic Realities*, editor P.L. Thomas compiles “a diverse collection of voices,” pieces based in both research and personal narratives, with a particular focus on the importance of what he calls “Social Context Reform”—education that “re-imagines teacher and student accountability, teacher autonomy and the democratic purposes of universal public education.” The volume stands as a critical attack on major American education policies of the last 20 years, with the ultimate message being one of empowerment for the individual, democratically minded teacher.

There is much to glean for education workers at any stage in their own evolution from the writers Thomas has collected in *Becoming and Being a Teacher*, though it should be noted the context is American. That said, many of the policies attacked and unpacked in the chapters are echoed in our own evolving frameworks in Canada and Ontario, and pieces by John L. Hoben and Gordon D. Bambrick (an

OSSTF/FEESO teacher in District 17, Simcoe) do reflect Canadian and Ontarian views. This book would be well served as an alternative text in a teacher preparation program at the undergraduate or post-graduate level, particularly for the dialogue it would undoubtedly encourage. The research is new and relevant, the spirit is critical but constructive and would be an excellent backbone for a progressive teachers’ college program.

Despite the scholarly, analytic tone taken in many of the pieces, there are also non-conventional explorations of the



themes that I found more engaging. Pieces like Lisa William-White’s “A Poetic Interpretation” and Lawrence Baines’ “Teaching in the Shadow of Big Brother” are good reflections of the variety of storytelling lenses through which the themes are viewed. Ultimately, in both the analytic research and from the personal interpretations, the “dominant myths” of austerity and education reform are critically confronted. Despite the grim realities of how these myths affect our classroom, the agency for change is provided by Thomas in his conclusion: “Education grounded in democratic principles must honour the political literacy of the teachers and students collaborating in the pursuit of human autonomy and agency.” While heavy-handed at times, this book speaks to our common experiences and

empowers the individual teacher by speaking to our own democratic commitment.

Lauren Simmons is a teacher at Leaside High School in District 12, Toronto, and a member of the Communications/Political Action Committee.

The Great Revenue Robbery: How to Stop the Tax Cut Scam and Save Canada

Edited by Richard Swift

Between the Lines, 2013

176 pages, \$19.95

Reviewed by Ryan Kelly

Dubbed in the prologue as “...a playbook for taking back our country,” *The Great Revenue Robbery* starts with an apocalyptic assessment of the state of our Canadian affairs. Unsettlingly, this examination of unacceptable levels of poverty, funding slashes to necessary public services and global environmental degradation is an honest and accurate portrayal of the direction in which Canada is heading. With articles from socialist heavyweights like Jim Stanford, Trish Hennessey and Richard Swift, this book is essentially a comprehensive road map for systematically mending Canada’s taxation problems and righting our course towards a thriving and healthy democracy. This is articulated as a three-pronged approach, beginning with a factual and logical analysis of specific tax issues, followed by developing and installing a compelling narrative encompassing healthy values, and finally inspiring a vision of progressive taxation.

In the 2011 Ontario provincial election, the Progressive Conservative Party dubbed Dalton McGuinty the “Taxman.” This is not a misnomer, rather a perverse snapshot of how neo-liberal, ideology-driven politics in North America have framed taxation as entirely illegitimate. In fact, governments throughout Canada have created tax systems for corporate and private wealth that allow for evasion of public funds that, incidentally, weaken the very forces that are installed to regulate them.

This path is certainly one that benefits very few while work in Canada becomes more and more precarious. Of the many gems a reader can take away with them from reading this book, this last point is the one that resonated with me the most. The authors explain, clearly and simply, modern, legislated tax evasion and the results this has had on all areas of our society.

This book is as much an information guide to policy ideas and communications advice as it is a rallying cry. Envisioning greater tax fairness as a battle similar to those that won the likes of universal health care, public pensions, the minimum wage and civil rights, readers are inspired to take action and invigorate Canada's collective conscience. Therein lies the challenge of *The Great Revenue Robbery*. Read, become informed (and infuriated!), organize, spread the word and work to create a better Canada for all of Canada!

Ryan Kelly is a teacher in District 13, Durham, and a member of the Communications/Political Action Committee.

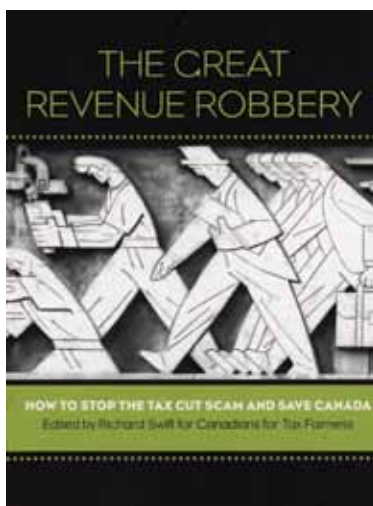
**The Great Revenue Robbery:
How to Stop the Tax Cut Scam
and Save Canada**

Révisé par Richard Swift
Between the Lines, 2013
176 pages, 19,95 \$
Critique de Ryan Kelly

Surnommé dans le prologue comme « ... stratégies en vue de se réapproprier notre pays, » *The Great Revenue Robbery* débute par un aperçu apocalyptique de la situation de nos affaires canadiennes. De manière déconcertante, cet examen du taux inacceptable de pauvreté, des réductions considérables au financement des services publics essentiels et une dégradation générale de l'environnement sont une évocation honnête et précise de l'orientation prise par le Canada. Contenant des articles d'éminents socialistes comme Jim Stanford, Trish Hennessey et Richard Swift, ce livre est essentiellement une feuille de route détaillée en vue de rectifier de manière systéma-

tique les problèmes de taxation du Canada et de redresser notre trajectoire en vue d'atteindre une démocratie saine et prospère. Elle est exprimée selon une approche à trois volets, commençant par une analyse logique et factuelle des aspects fiscaux spécifiques, suivie de l'élaboration et de la mise en œuvre d'un récit saisissant englobant des valeurs saines, et enfin une vision édifiante de l'imposition fiscale progressive.

Lors de l'élection provinciale de 2011 en Ontario, le Parti progressiste-conservateur avait surnommé Dalton McGuinty le « percepateur ». Il ne s'agit



pas d'un nom inapproprié, mais plutôt un aperçu pervers de la manière dont la politique néo-libérale idéologique de l'Amérique du Nord, a défini la taxation comme totalement illégitime. En fait, les gouvernements dans tout le Canada ont créé des systèmes fiscaux pour les riches et les entreprises conduisant à l'évasion de fonds publics et qui, incidemment, affaiblissent les forces mêmes en place pour les réglementer. Cette voie en est certainement une qui profite à une minorité, alors que pendant ce temps-là, le travail devient de plus en plus précaire au Canada. Des merveilles que le lecteur peut retirer de la lecture de cet ouvrage, ce dernier point est celui qui m'a le plus marqué. Les auteurs expliquent, clairement et simplement, l'évasion fiscale moderne soutenue par la législation et

les résultats qu'elle engendre sur tous les secteurs de notre société.

Ce livre est autant un guide d'information sur des idées politiques et des conseils en matière de communication qu'il est un cri de ralliement. Concevoir un régime fiscal plus équitable comme une lutte similaire à celles qui ont permis l'instauration d'un régime de soins de santé universels, de pensions de l'État, du salaire minimum et des droits civils inspire les lecteurs à agir et à vivifier la conscience collective canadienne. C'est là que réside le défi de *The Great Revenue Robbery*. Lisez, informez-vous (et déclenchez les foudres!), rassemblez-vous, faites passer le message et efforcez-vous de créer un Canada qui soit meilleur pour nous tous!

Ryan Kelly est enseignant au District 13, Durham, et est membre du Comité des communications/action politique.

**The Inconvenient Indian:
A Curious Account of Native People
in North America**

By Thomas King
Doubleday Canada, 2012
304 pages; \$34.95
Reviewed by Vicki Lucier

The Inconvenient Indian is indeed "a curious account of Native People." Professor Thomas King's humorous satire sweetens the sour truths in this historical narrative spanning pre-contact to present-day North America, the borders of which do not in fact exist for most Aboriginal people, whose families span all of Turtle Island (the term used by the Haudenosaunee to refer to North America). King uses 10 chapters to tell stories that still rarely appear in U.S. or Canadian textbooks. He omits historical footnotes for this narrative, but the rich detail in the text and index provide a sound basis for further research.

"[H]istory is the *stories* we tell about the past." However, art, poetry and movies are *not* history and historians are often



resented, since research tends to destroy myths. The first three chapters begin to set the record straight, encouraging readers to question vigorously what they think they know about Native People. For example, King shows that Captain Smith likely fabricated assistance from nine-year-old Pocahontas. Exploring these discrepancies can prompt rich classroom activities. Six Nations member John Macdonald, who teaches in the Grand Erie District School Board, used King's definitions in Chapter 3 to research, with his students, photo-biographies of beloved, iconic Dead Indians, everyday, unruly Live Indians and the hated Legal Status Indian. It was an empowering exercise for Macdonald's students and started important conversations.

Chapters 4 through 9 discuss such historical issues as treaties, Indian relocation, residential schools and current issues such as sovereignty and resource development. They also explore legislation and activism that are beginning to address both past mishandling of issues and what to do going forward in order to foster a greater understanding of identity issues. Chapter 10 describes successful renegotiations between Canada and the B.C. Haida nation in Gwaii Haanas, and with the Inuit nation in the 1999 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. King offers proof that peaceful settlement is possible.

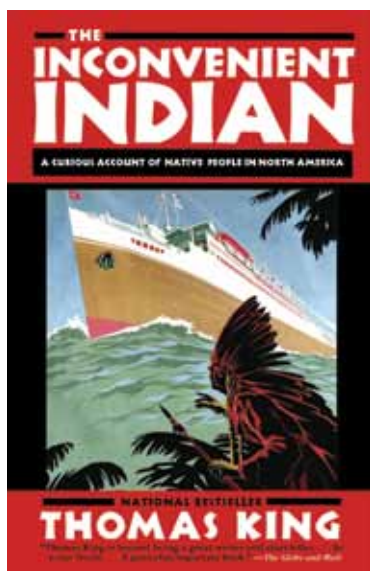
King's funny anecdotes, factual research and out-loud readability make this book an excellent resource for history, civics, law and Native Studies courses, as well as for social-justice clubs. Budding activists will appreciate the "Occupation supplies" list on page 144. I highly recommend purchasing several copies of *The Inconvenient Indian* for your school library, and a class set for the school for use in the curriculum alongside such other resources as National Film Board documentaries *Reel Injun* and *Club Native*.

Vicki Lucier is a teacher-librarian in District 17, Simcoe, and a member of the OSSTF/FEESO First Nations, Inuit, Métis Advisory Work Group.

**The Inconvenient Indian:
A Curious Account of Native People
in North America**

par Thomas King
Doubleday Canada, 2012
304 pages; 34,95 \$
Critique de Vicki Lucier

The Inconvenient Indian est effectivement « un récit curieux du peuple autochtone ». La satire humoristique du professeur Thomas King adoucit les vérités dérangeantes, à travers ce récit historique s'étendant de



la période préeuropéenne à celle de l'Amérique du Nord d'aujourd'hui, dont les frontières n'existent pas pour la majorité des Autochtones dont les familles couvrent la totalité de Turtle Island (terme utilisé par les Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) pour l'Amérique du Nord). M. King consacre dix chapitres pour conter des histoires qui, encore de nos jours, se retrouvent rarement dans les manuels scolaires aux É.-U. ou au Canada. Dans ce récit, il oublie des considérations historiques, mais les détails précieux qu'il ajoute dans le texte et l'index constituent une base solide pour une recherche plus poussée.

« L'[H]istoire se crée par les *histoires* que nous transmettons sur le passé. » Cependant, l'art, la poésie et les films ne constituent *pas* l'histoire et les historiens sont

souvent mal vus, car les recherches ont tendance à mettre fin aux mythes. Dès les trois premiers chapitres, on rétablit les faits, incitant les lecteurs à s'interroger vigoureusement sur ce qu'ils pensent connaître des peuples autochtones. Par exemple, M. King montre que le capitaine Smith a probablement fabriqué de toutes pièces l'aide d'une fillette de neuf ans, Pocahontas. Une étude de ces divergences peut conduire à des activités scolaires enrichissantes. John Macdonald, membre des Six Nations qui enseigne au *Grand Erie District School Board*, s'est inspiré avec ses élèves des définitions que Thomas King cite au chapitre 3 pour entreprendre une recherche photo-biographique d'ancêtres Amérindiens célèbres bien-aimés, d'Amérindiens indisciplinés et sur le statut juridique d'Indiens détestés. Ce type d'expérience a été un exercice stimulant pour les élèves de M. Macdonald et a déclenché d'importantes conversations.

Les chapitres de 4 à 9 parlent d'enjeux historiques comme les traités, la relocation des Indiens, les pensionnats indiens et d'actualités telles que la souveraineté et la mise en valeur des ressources. Ils examinent également la loi et l'activisme qui commencent à remédier à la mauvaise gestion du passé et ce qui doit être fait à l'avenir pour mieux faire comprendre les problèmes d'identité. Le chapitre 10 décrit les renégociations fructueuses entre le Canada et la Nation haïda de Gwaii Haanas, en C.-B., et avec la nation inuit dans le cadre de l'Accord sur les revendications territoriales du Nunavut de 1999. Thomas King donne la preuve qu'un règlement pacifique est possible.

Les anecdotes amusantes de Thomas King, la recherche factuelle et la capacité d'être lu à haute voix font de ce livre une excellente ressource pour les cours d'histoire, d'éducation civique, de droit et d'études sur les Autochtones, ainsi que pour les clubs de justice sociale. Les activistes en herbe apprécieront la liste d'« *Occupation Supplies* » (fournitures pour tenir un siège), de la page 144. Je recommande vivement l'achat de plusieurs

exemplaires de *The Inconvenient Indian* pour la bibliothèque de votre école et d'une collection suffisante pour les élèves dont le curriculum touche à ce sujet, en plus des documentaires de l'Office national du film : *Reel Injun* et *Club Native*.

Vicki Lucier est enseignante-bibliothécaire, district 17, Simcoe, et est membre du Groupe de travail consultatif des Premières Nations, Inuits et Métis d'OSSTF/FEESO.

CONFERENCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

November 7–9, 2013

Momentum 2013
Scotiabank Convention Centre,
Niagara Falls, ON

The Ontario Music Educators' Association (OMEA) and the Canadian Music Industry Education Committee's annual conference will feature keynote speaker Jim Papoulis, who has made significant contributions to choral music by revitalizing choral repertoire with songs that have roots in classical and world genres. Featured performances will include the Ontario Provincial Honour Band, under guest conductor Robert Sheldon, and the Ontario String Association Youth Orchestra with Mark Skazinetsky. Register online at www.omea.on.ca.

November 10–12, 2013

OSCA 2013 Diversity:
Vive la différence!
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel,
Toronto, ON

The 2013 OSCA conference will recognize and celebrate the diversity found in schools across the province that serve a variety of students and parents from diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. Diversity: *Vive la différence* recognizes the role not only of the guidance teacher-counsellor but also the role of all school staff and community partners in ensuring the diverse needs of our students are met and celebrated. Sessions will be available in

four conference themes: Community & Caring; Personal & Public; Pathways & Possibilities; A Plethora of Promising Practices. For more information, visit www.oscaconference.ca.

November 14–16, 2013

STAO/APSO 2013: Igniting Curiosity
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Toronto, ON
The conference this year will offer sessions for teachers by teachers on assessment, curriculum, literacy, technology, safety, environment and critical thinking through inquiry-based learning. Emmy Award-winner Steve Spangler of *Ellen* fame is the speaker for the plenary presentation each day. As always, there will be plenty of networking for teachers with an emphasis on elementary and pre-service teacher sessions on Saturday. The exhibit hall will have the latest resources and classroom-ready materials on display. This is the largest conference for science and technology in the province so come and see what's new! For more information visit stao.ca.

November 17–18, 2013

Higher Education Summit
Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto, ON
The Higher Education Summit is an annual conference that explores issues in post-secondary education and the steps that must be taken to produce the leading-edge workforce of tomorrow. This year's conference guest speakers include Sir Ken Robinson, Bob Rae, Alan Alda and Chantal Hébert. The conference wraps up with the presentation of the Premier's Awards for outstanding college graduates. For more information or to register, visit www.highereducationsummit.ca.

November 21–24, 2013

CADDAC 5th Annual ADHD Conference
Holiday Inn Yorkdale, Toronto, ON
The Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) conference will take place over three days, with each day focusing on a different audience. The Thursday evening session will be a dinner and evening

presentation for educators. Friday will be for social workers, nurses, child and youth workers, therapists and any other professionals who may come across ADHD in their field of practice, as well as human resources staff. This year we are providing a full day of information for parents on Saturday, and Sunday remains the same, with a full day of information for adults with ADHD. For more information contact Erin Bernhardt, Event Coordinator, at erin.bernhardt@caddac.ca or 416-637-8584.

November 22–23, 2013

CEC 57th Annual Provincial Special Education Conference
Marriott Gateway Hotel,
Niagara Falls, ON
The Ontario Council for Exceptional Children's 2013 conference will focus on evidence-based practices, instructional strategies and technology to support the

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learning and achievement of students with special needs. The conference program features more than 60 lecture and poster presentations in numerous topical areas, including mental health, autism spectrum disorder, assistive technology (20+ sessions on whiteboards, iPads and more), behavioural disorders, learning disabilities, low-incidence exceptionalities, differentiated instruction and transition planning. Please visit www.cecontario.ca/conferences for more information.

April 3, 2014

[Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health](#)

[Allstream Centre—CNE Grounds, Toronto, ON](#)

This event is hosted by the Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health, a multi-sectoral group committed to urgent and positive change for children and youth

mental-health services in Ontario. The Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health is a unique event that unites the voices of educators, professional student-services personnel, mental health and health professionals, children service agencies, children service advocates, families and students. This Summit is designed to inspire and to demonstrate how the power of our collective voices, commitment and efforts can bring a sense of urgency and action to the vital issue of mental health. The focus of the 2014 Summit is Whole Community Approaches and how working together we can make a difference in the lives of children, youth and their families. International and national speakers offer evidence-informed practices, programs and resources that have been shown to work and can make a real difference in the lives of children, youth and their families. Details will be posted at www.opsba.org when available.

April 9–10, 2014

[National Healthy Schools Conference 2014: Coming Together: Supporting the Whole Child](#)

[Hilton Hotel, London, ON](#)

The Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition is a dynamic and innovative coalition supporting healthy schools for the optimal health and learning of Ontario's children and youth. It is an Ontario-wide, broad-based coalition, with members from public-health units, school boards, hospitals, mental-health agencies, universities, health-related organizations, education-related organizations, and parent and student organizations. The focus for the conference is to provide professional learning and sharing strategies related to the healthy-schools framework, with an emphasis on quality instruction and programs, community partnerships, healthy physical environments and supportive social environments. For more information visit ontariohealthyschools.com.

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KHALIL MAIR FROM TORONTO
FRENCH SCHOOL RECITES "WOLF LAKE"
BY ELIZABETH BACHINSKY

OTHER PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

November 4–8, 2013

[Media Literacy Week 2013](#)

MediaSmarts and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) are pleased to announce that marketing and consumerism will be the focus of Canada's eighth annual Media Literacy Week. The official theme of the week—What's Being Sold: Helping Kids Make Sense of Marketing Messages—will encourage educators and parents to talk to children and teens about the marketing they encounter on a daily basis. During the week a variety of activities will take place across the country to raise awareness of marketing issues that affect children and teens, including body image, online marketing, food advertising, and tobacco and alcohol marketing. The goal of Media Literacy Week is to promote the importance of digital and media literacy education in Canadian homes, schools and communities. To find out how to get involved, visit www.medialiteracyweek.ca. 

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BRIEFING NOTE/NOTE D'INFORMATION

Survey on Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Enquête sur les effets de la violence familiale en milieu de travail

BACKGROUND

When workers experience domestic violence at home, the impacts are felt in the workplace. A recent study by Justice Canada highlights this fact by estimating that employers lose \$77.9 million annually as a result of domestic violence. But the costs, both financial and personal go far beyond that.

Unions and anti-violence advocates in Canada have worked hard to pressure governments to pass workplace violence legislation that offers some protection for workers. We need to hold employers to account for their obligations, and to build support for collective bargaining and legislative efforts.

Surveys to gather data about the prevalence and the impact of domestic violence in the workplace have been conducted in other countries. The surveys opened the dialogue on domestic violence in the workplace and encouraged the corporate world to pay attention to the issue.

THE NEED FOR MADE-IN-CANADA RESEARCH

No research has been conducted in Canadian workplaces to learn about the prevalence and the impact of domestic violence. When advocating with governments or with employers we rely on American and Australian research.

OBJECTIVE: To survey Canadian workers regarding their experiences with domestic violence in the workplace.

TARGET RESPONDENTS: Union members and other workers age 15 and up, in all regions of Canada. Men and women will be encouraged to fill out the survey.

WATCH FOR THE DEC. 6TH LAUNCH

CONTEXTE

Lorsque des travailleurs et des travailleuses subissent la violence familiale au foyer, les impacts se font sentir sur le lieu de travail. Une récente étude de Justice Canada met en évidence ce fait en estimant la violence familiale coûte aux employeurs 77,9 millions \$ par an. Mais cela va bien au-delà des coûts financiers et personnels.

Les syndicats et les défenseurs de la lutte contre la violence au Canada ont exercé de fortes pressions sur les gouvernements pour qu'ils adoptent une législation sur la violence au travail qui protège les travailleurs et travailleuses. Il faut responsabiliser les employeurs face à leurs obligations et mobiliser le soutien en faveur des négociations collectives et des initiatives en matière de législation.

Des enquêtes visant à recueillir des données sur la prévalence et les effets de la violence familiale sur le milieu de travail ont été menées dans d'autres pays. Les enquêtes ont lancé le dialogue sur les effets de la violence sur le milieu de travail et encouragé les entreprises à prêter attention au problème.

LA NÉCESSITÉ DE MENER DES RECHERCHES AU CANADA

Aucune recherche n'a été menée dans les milieux de travail canadiens pour mieux connaître la prévalence et les effets de la violence familiale. Lorsque nous revendiquons auprès des gouvernements ou des employeurs, nous nous appuyons sur la recherche américaine et australienne.

OBJECTIF : enquêter auprès des travailleuses et des travailleurs canadiens sur leur expérience en matière de violence familiale en milieu de travail.

PUBLIC CIBLE : personnel syndiqué et autres travailleuses et travailleurs de 15 ans et plus, dans toutes les régions du Canada. Tant les hommes que les femmes seront encouragés à répondre au questionnaire.

SURVEILLEZ LE LANCEMENT LE 6 DÉCEMBRE





Last word

by Paul Elliott, President

Mot de la fin

par Paul Elliott, président

My union cares

Working together to make our society a better place

ON Sunday September 22, 2013, I attended the Canadian Labour Congress' (CLC) Leaders' Seminar in Ottawa dedicated to the Together Fairness Works campaign. The campaign has been initiated because of the continued attack on unions, the middle class, the poor, the unemployed and any other group of individuals who does not agree with a neo-liberal agenda that continues to create advantages for those who are already advantaged.

The CLC campaign has a twofold purpose. One is to remind the public of the importance of a unionized workforce and the ongoing contributions, which include financial contributions to the economy from a workforce that has a fair and reasonable compensation package. This initial phase of the campaign will focus on the values the labour movement shares with all Ontarians and Canadians. The second purpose is focused on union members themselves and is intended to shift the conversation away from a dialogue that uses the phrase "the union" to one that refers to "my union." The aim is to initiate conversations across the country, in every worksite, so that those unionized workers grow to understand the value of belonging to a union, the protection a unionized work force offers and the way in which a union functions. The most important plank of this campaign is for members to have a growing awareness that no member is outside of the union, that the union is within their realm of influence and that *we are the union*. A union is not created by a letters patent but rather by a group of workers who share the same ideals and issues, as well as the benefits of membership. In short, a union is defined by those who belong to it. The members govern the operation, and every dues-paying member has right to say "my union."

At the core of this campaign is the slogan "3 million voices" which reflects the 3.3 million members of the CLC. The focus is on engagement. Engagement not from the top down, from leadership to members, but rather union engagement where

Mon syndicat se sent concerné

Collaborer pour rendre notre société meilleure

LE dimanche 22 septembre 2013, j'ai assisté à Ottawa à un colloque à l'intention des dirigeants organisé par le Congrès du travail du Canada (CTC) et consacré à la campagne « *ensemble POUR UN MONDE PLUS JUSTE* ». La campagne a été lancée en raison des attaques continues contre les syndicats, la classe moyenne, les pauvres, les chômeurs et les autres groupes de personnes qui ne souscrivent pas au programme néo-libéral qui continue de profiter à ceux sont déjà favorisés.

La campagne du CTC vise un double objectif. Le premier est de rappeler au public l'importance d'une main-d'œuvre syndiquée et les contributions soutenues qui comprennent les contributions financières à l'économie faites par une main-d'œuvre qui jouit d'une rémunération juste et raisonnable. Cette phase initiale de la campagne sera axée sur les valeurs que le mouvement syndical partage avec tous les Ontariens et Canadiens. Le deuxième objectif se concentre sur les membres syndiqués eux-mêmes et a pour but de détourner la conversation d'un dialogue qui utilise la phrase « *le syndicat* » à un dialogue qui fait référence à « *mon syndicat* ». Le but est d'engager des conversations à travers le pays, dans chaque lieu de travail, afin que ces travailleurs syndiqués comprennent de plus en plus l'importance d'appartenir à un syndicat, la protection qu'offre une main-d'œuvre syndiquée et le fonctionnement d'un syndicat. L'élément le plus important de cette campagne est de renforcer la prise de conscience des membres qu'aucun membre n'est hors du syndicat, que le syndicat se situe dans leur sphère d'influence et que *nous sommes le syndicat*. Un syndicat n'est pas créé par une « lettre patente », mais plutôt par un groupe de travailleurs qui partagent les mêmes idéaux et préoccupations ainsi que les avantages de l'adhésion syndicale. En un mot, un syndicat se définit par ceux qui le composent. Les membres régissent le fonctionnement et chaque membre cotisant a le droit de dire « *mon syndicat* ».



it means the most: on the shop floor, in the staff room and at the worksite; from member to member, and member to leader. Engagement that is defined not by telling the members how a union functions and the benefits of belonging but by listening

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to members' issues, and entering into a dialogue that forms a connection between our members' issues and the protection that a unionized worksite can provide.

In 2009, OSSTF/FEESO initiated a membership-engagement strategy that was aimed at creating an inviting atmosphere so our membership would have the opportunity to speak with local leaders and see where they fit within OSSTF/FEESO. The CLC Together Fairness Works campaign shifts the OSSTF/FEESO campaign to the next level and brings the focus back to engaging our members and creating a dialogue that is focused more on listening than telling. It is our principles that move us forward, and the only way we can move forward is to ensure our members understand the principles and foundations of unionism and our leaders understand the issues of the members. It is through this dialogue that we can shift the conversation from "the union" to "my union."

There are principles that bond our social fabric in each province. Among these is the union principle that what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. Achieving this is no easy task and the opportunity to work towards this goal cannot be taken for granted. As we look ahead to the ever-increasing threats on the horizon to every working person in Canada, it becomes clearer that the neo-liberal corporate agenda is intended to remove the opportunity to work towards fairness for all. Once the opportunity to fight for fair wages and safe worksites is gone, we all will lose.

The dialogue must begin now, and I invite you to participate in the conversation. ☺

Le slogan « la voix de 3 millions » est au cœur de cette campagne, ce qui représente les 3,3 millions de membres du CTC. L'accent est mis sur l'engagement. Non pas un engagement partant du sommet, des dirigeants jusqu'aux membres, mais plutôt un engagement syndical, là où c'est le plus important : dans l'atelier, dans le salon du personnel et en milieu de travail, d'un membre à l'autre, et d'un membre au dirigeant. Un engagement qui se définit non pas en disant aux membres comment fonctionne un syndicat et les avantages d'y adhérer, mais en écoutant les préoccupations des membres, en entamant un dialogue qui relie les préoccupations de nos membres à la protection que peut offrir un milieu de travail syndiqué.

En 2009, OSSTF/FEESO s'est doté d'une stratégie d'engagement qui visait à créer une atmosphère accueillante pour que nos membres aient l'occasion de s'adresser à leurs dirigeants locaux et de voir leur place au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO. La campagne « *ensemble POUR UN MONDE PLUS JUSTE* » du CTC fait passer la campagne d'OSSTF/FEESO à un niveau supérieur et attire de nouveau l'attention sur l'engagement de nos membres et la création de dialogue qui porte plus sur l'écoute que sur la communication. Ce sont nos principes qui nous font progresser et le seul moyen d'avancer est de s'assu-

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rer que nos membres comprennent les principes et les bases du syndicalisme et que nos dirigeants saisissent les préoccupations des membres. C'est grâce à ce dialogue que nous pourrions faire passer la conversation de « *le syndicat* » à « *mon syndicat* ».

Il existe des principes qui unissent notre patrimoine social dans chaque province. Parmi ceux-ci, on retrouve le principe syndical à savoir que ce que nous désirons pour nous-mêmes, nous le souhaitons pour tous. L'atteinte de cet objectif n'est pas sans difficulté et l'occasion de travailler en ce sens ne va pas de soi. Alors que nous considérons les menaces de plus en plus nombreuses qui planent à l'horizon de chaque travailleur au Canada, il est devenu de plus en plus évident que le programme des entreprises néo-libérales vise à éliminer la possibilité d'atteindre l'équité pour tous. Une fois que la possibilité de lutter pour des salaires équitables et des lieux de travail sécuritaires est perdue, nous serons tous perdants.

Nous devons entamer le dialogue maintenant et je vous invite à prendre part à la conversation. ☺



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