

E D U C A T I O N

FORUM

Of
gardens
& ships

A tale of two metaphors in
public education

J.D.

LET THERE BE NO DOUBT.



In a time where conditions can change overnight, it's wise to benefit from a position of strength.

That's why you'll feel secure relying on the sound, stable protection of the one insurer that truly understands the world of education: Teachers Life.

As a member-based organization, we don't ship earnings off to Bay Street or flash our

logo across the skyline; we'd rather invest in programs that promote education. You'll also be reassured to know Teachers Life is federally regulated and governed by the Insurance Companies Act.

Solid, strong and supportive. It's been our dominant theme for 70 years.

Discover more at teacherslife.com or 1 866 620-LIFE (5433).

Optimum Insurance Protection at Affordable Prices

District Plans: Life • Disability • Health & Dental

Individual Plans: Life • Critical Illness



To receive your free copy of
"Solid. Strong. Supportive."
contact insuring@teacherslife.com



Contents

40



Columns

9 High-stakes testing

A cautionary tale from California
By Stephanie Silvester-Keating

11 "Be it resolved that..."

High school debating in Ontario
By George Pepall

Features

14 Looking back at the past/ Retour sur le passé

By/par Matt Gilbert

20 Of gardens & ships

By Rod Heikkilä

24 Creating positive space

By Nora Baboudjian, Susan Corrigan,
Natascha Grant, Jennifer Lavender
and Nancy Sullivan

28 Accountability on steroids

By Gordon Bambrick

34 Finding common ground

By Angie Dornai

Departments

4 Openers/Mot de l'éditrice

By/par Wendy Anes Hirschegger

8 Letters

38 Stills

By Bernd Krueger

40 Beyond the classroom

By Ronda Allan

42 Forum picks

45 Last word/Mot de la fin

By/par Ken Coran

Editor Wendy Anes Hirschegger **Managing Editor** Ronda Allan **Traffic Co-ordinator** Audrey Bourque **Copy Editor** Jocelyn Laurence **Translation** Diane Saint-Pierre; **Publicité Services** **Art Direction and Design** Fresh Art & Design Inc. **Cover** Jack Dylan **Editorial Submissions** Unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, artwork, and materials sent on speculation should include ample postage on a self-addressed, stamped envelope **Member** Canadian Educational Press Association; Education Forum (ISSN 0840-9269) is indexed in the Canadian Education Index and available online in the Canadian Business & Current Affairs Database from Micromedia Ltd., 20 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario M5C 2N8, Tel. 416-362-5211 **Publisher** Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation/Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario, www.osstf.on.ca. Published tri-annually. Advertising rates listed in CARD, on OSSTF/FEESO's website www.osstf.on.ca or available upon request **Business Manager** Pierre Côté **Sales Director** Renate M. Brandon **Advertising Office** Education Forum, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4A 2P3. Tel. 416-751-8300. Fax: 416-751-3394. GST 107800682. Although advertisements are screened as carefully as possible, acceptance of an advertisement does not imply OSSTF/FEESO endorsement of the product or service. Advertising contracts are subject to cancellation upon receipt of complaints from members **Subscription Rates** One school or calendar year (3 issues): \$15 + HST. Outside Canada: \$20. Single or back issues \$5 + HST. Outside Canada \$6. **Postmaster** Return undelivered copies to 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4A 2P3. Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40012523. **Submissions** Education Forum, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4A 2P3. Tel. 416-751-8300, Toll free 1-800-267-7867; allanr@osstf.on.ca



Printed in Canada by union labour.





The right to vote

Let's not squander it

IT has been a busy year for Ontarians. We had the municipal elections in November. As I write this, the federal election is in full swing. And on October 6, we will have the provincial election.

The right to vote is at the heart of every democracy, and yet all too often, it is something we take for granted. Voter turnout is distressingly poor. We have the opportunity to have a say in how we are governed; this is a right that is denied many people in other countries. As members of a free and democratic society, we have the responsibility not only to exercise our right to vote but also to become informed on the issues and then to vote wisely.

In addition, as educational workers in a public education system that is one of the best in the world, we also have the responsibility to make sure our students, as well as our family and friends, also understand the importance of this right. That is not to say, however, that we should tell them how to vote—far from it—but rather we must underline the need to make informed decisions based on what is best for society and the public good.

Because we live in a democracy that values public education and understands that the better educated all of the members of its society are, the better off all of society is, we also need to make sure the people we elect to govern us also value these things.

OSSTF/FEESO's education platform "Our Students. Our Future." is designed to encourage continued discussion of the key issues affecting the quality of public education in Ontario. Our goal is to ensure parents, government, schools, teachers and educational workers continue to work together to make positive changes so that public education works for Ontario. You will find a link

to this platform on the front page of our website, www.osstf.on.ca.

This issue of *Education Forum* also contains many articles to help you become informed about the challenges facing

in conflict, they don't necessarily need to be as long as what is best for students and for society is kept in mind.

Matt Gilbert was a Grade 10 student in 1997 when the Political Protest took place; he is now a certified teacher. His article "Looking back at the past: To make informed decisions about the future" reviews the recent book *Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education*, a collection of essays about the impact that the Harris/Eves years had on public education.

"Accountability on steroids" by Gordon Bambrick speaks of the various ways in which high-stakes testing feeds into the corporate agenda of privatizing public education, not for the public good but for the corporate bottom line.

Merit pay, or what is being termed Value Added Models (or VAM) of performance appraisal, is gaining more footholds in the United States. Stephanie Silvester-Keating taught under such a system for two years before returning to Ontario, and she recounts her experience of the devastating effects it had on both teaching practice and teacher morale in her article "High-stakes testing: A cautionary tale from California."

On a more positive note, the article "Creating positive space" highlights the launch of a new support network and a range of resources to help teachers and education workers build confidence and proficiency in anti-homophobia education. This initiative was funded by the Teaching Learning and Leadership Program, an excellent project-based professional learning opportunity, now in its fifth year, provided by the Ministry of Education.

All in all, we hope this issue of *Education Forum* will assist in informing your decision on how to vote, and that you will use your vote on October 6 to protect and enhance public education in Ontario. ☺

We hope this issue
of *Education Forum*

will assist in
informing your
decision on
how to vote,
and that you will
use your vote
on October 6 to
protect and enhance
public education
in Ontario.



public education and the consequences of ignoring them.

Rod Heikkilä's cover story "Of gardens and ships" contemplates two different metaphors of public education and argues that although they are sometimes





Branchless banking for life in education.

BECAUSE YOUR **PREP CLASS** IS FOR **CLASS PREP**.

As we all know, there's more to life in education than what happens between the bells.
That can make getting to your financial institution before closing a challenge.

Now, with DirecTCU, you can manage your day-to-day finances, build your savings or apply for credit,
all *exclusively* and *conveniently* online. Banking without a branch allows us to offer unique products
and savings exclusive to DirecTCU members – because when we save, you save.

PLUS, if you sign up to DirecTCU.ca between now and May 31st you'll receive
an introductory 3% interest rate* on your account.

Go to DirecTCUTM.ca today.

TEACHERS
CREDIT UNIONTM

Banking Excellence.

TM DirecTCU is a trademark of Credit Union Central of Canada and is used under licence.

*For new accounts opened by May 31, 2011. Interest will revert back to the regular rate on August 1, 2011. The current regular rate is 1.50% and is subject to change without notice. Visit our website for applicable service fees.

DirecTCUTM.ca



Le droit de vote

Ne le gâchons pas

L'année a été fort occupée pour les Ontariens. L'élection municipale s'est déroulée en novembre et, au moment où j'écris ces quelques lignes, l'élection fédérale bat son plein. De plus, le 6 octobre prochain aura lieu l'élection provinciale.

Le droit de vote est au cœur de toute démocratie mais, trop souvent, il est tenu pour acquis. Le taux de participation aux élections est désespérément bas. Nous avons la possibilité de donner notre avis sur la manière dont nous sommes gouvernés. C'est un droit dont de nombreux habitants d'autres pays sont privés. En tant que membres d'une société libre et démocratique, nous nous devons non seulement d'exercer notre droit de vote, mais aussi de nous tenir informés des questions du moment pour voter en toute connaissance de cause.

En outre, en tant que travailleurs et travailleuses de l'éducation faisant partie d'un système d'éducation publique qui se classe parmi les meilleurs au monde, nous devons faire en sorte que nos élèves, ainsi que les membres de nos familles et nos amis, comprennent eux aussi l'importance de ce droit. Cela ne veut pas dire pour autant que nous devons leur dire comment voter, bien loin de là, mais plutôt que nous devons insister sur la nécessité de prendre des décisions éclairées fondées sur ce qui convient le mieux à la société et pour soutenir le bien public.

Puisque nous vivons dans une démocratie qui accorde de l'importance à l'éducation publique et qui comprend que mieux les membres de la société sont éduqués, mieux va la société tout entière, nous devons aussi faire en sorte que les personnes que nous élisons accordent elles aussi de l'importance à ces idées.

Le programme en matière d'éducation d'OSSTF/FEESO, intitulé « Nos élèves. Notre avenir. », est conçu pour susciter une discussion continue sur les sujets clés

qui ont trait à la qualité de l'éducation en Ontario. Notre but est de faire en sorte que les parents, le gouvernement, les écoles, les enseignants et les travailleurs de l'éducation continuent de collaborer pour apporter des changements positifs afin que l'éducation publique fonctionne pour l'Ontario. Vous trouverez un lien vers ce programme à la page d'accueil de notre site : www.osstf.on.ca.

Nous espérons que ce
numéro de *FORUM* vous
aidera à prendre une
décision éclairée lors de
l'élection et que votre
vote du 6 octobre servira
à protéger et à améliorer
l'éducation publique
en Ontario.

Le présent numéro de *FORUM* contient également de nombreux articles qui vous tiendront au courant des défis que l'éducation publique doit relever et des conséquences que l'on encourt en les ignorant.

L'article-vedette de Rod Heikkilä, intitulé « *Of gardens and ships* » se penche sur deux métaphores différentes de l'éducation publique et explique que bien qu'elles s'opposent parfois, il n'est pas nécessaire que cela soit le cas tant que le bien des élèves et de la société est pris en compte.

Matt Gilbert était un élève de 10^e année en 1997 lorsque les manifestations antigouvernement ont eu lieu. Il est depuis devenu un enseignant certifié. Son article, intitulé « *Retour sur le passé – Pour prendre des*

décisions éclairées sur l'avenir », analyse l'ouvrage « *Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education* », un recueil d'essais récemment publié sur les effets qu'ont eu les années Harris/Eves sur l'éducation publique.

L'article intitulé « *Accountability on steroids* », signé Gord Bambrick, porte sur les divers moyens dont les tests entrent dans l'optique corporatiste de privatiser l'éducation publique et va à l'encontre du bien public dans le seul but d'augmenter le chiffre d'affaires des entreprises.

La rémunération au mérite, que l'on appelle aussi les modèles à valeur ajoutée d'évaluations de rendement, obtient de plus en plus d'adhésions aux États-Unis. Stephanie Silvester-Keating a enseigné pendant deux années dans le cadre de ce système avant de revenir en Ontario. Elle rappelle son expérience des effets dévastateurs que ces modèles ont eu sur la pratique de l'enseignement et sur le moral des enseignants dans son article intitulé : « *High-stakes testing: A cautionary tale from California.* »

Sur un plan plus positif, l'article intitulé « *Creating Positive Space* » porte sur le lancement d'un nouveau réseau de soutien et d'une série de ressources qui aident le personnel enseignant et les travailleurs de l'éducation à instiller la confiance dans l'éducation anti-homophobe et à développer les compétences à ce niveau. Cette initiative est financée par le Programme d'apprentissage et de leadership du personnel enseignant, une excellente occasion d'apprentissage professionnel fondée sur les projets, qui, sous la houlette du ministère de l'Éducation, se déroule maintenant depuis cinq ans.

Somme toute, nous espérons que ce numéro de *FORUM* vous aidera à prendre une décision éclairée lors de l'élection et que votre vote du 6 octobre servira à protéger et à améliorer l'éducation publique en Ontario. ☺





unique confidence **pride** business humanities eco-friendly social work social sciences responsible innovation excellence home education support international professional financial aid engineering

flexible law Thinking Forward Taking Action safe helpful arts science mentoring learning **friendly** 100,000 alumni discovery encourage commitment flexible arts safe creative hands-on potential energy medicine research future nursing thinking dreams adventure

UWindsor **community** **quality** Teacher-student Interaction close-knit friends opportunity forefront

culturally diverse

The Right Choice. At UWindsor, we offer the quality education our students want and the personal attention they deserve. That's just one reason why UWindsor is the right choice.

www.uwindsor.ca

University of Windsor 
thinking forward



ONTARIO FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATIONS
FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS DU SPORT SCOLAIRE DE L'ONTARIO

**COACHES MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN
STUDENTS' LIVES**



OFSSAA thanks all coaches for their support in making "education through school sport" a reality.

www.ofsaa.on.ca




**Celebrating
Young Heritage
Leaders**

Are there students at your school helping to protect built, cultural or natural heritage? Schools and communities can nominate hard-working, dedicated individuals and groups of young volunteers for recognition through the Ontario Heritage Trust's Young Heritage Leaders program. The top individual nominee is eligible for a \$2,000 post-secondary scholarship.

The annual nomination deadline is **June 30**. To learn more, call 416-314-4907 or visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca.

Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life are proud sponsors of Young Heritage Leaders, a program that fosters a sense of local pride, community involvement and volunteerism.

 **ONTARIO
HERITAGE
TRUST**
An agency of the Government of Ontario

The lion in cell-block six

The implementation of the “democratic security policy” and the so-called war against terrorism in Colombia continue under the current government of Juan Manuel Santos, and this is how the situation of over 7,500 political prisoners and their families, far from getting better, is deteriorating.

But despite such a situation, the organizational work of the political prisoners and the construction of the national and international solidarity network have been two essential factors for the continuation of the political work in Colombia and the alleviation of the crisis of both political prisoners and their families. In this sense, the solidarity of friends and collaborators of the Canadian solidarity campaign with Lilianny Obando Villota and all Colombian political prisoners has been fundamental to mitigate the needs of her mother, her son Camilo and her little Laura.

On behalf of Lilianny, we would like to highlight and thank the valuable and permanent solidarity from members at OSSTF/FEESO and readers of *Education Forum* for their recent donations in money that exceeded \$500 for the diffusion of the campaign's statements, for the endorsement of the urgent actions and their continuing concern about Lilianny, the other political prisoners and the development of the political situation in Colombia.

Colombia Solidarity Campaign

colombiasolidaritycampaign@yahoo.es

International Network in Solidarity with

Colombian Political Prisoners

www.inspp.org

A worrying trend

I've been pondering Adam Mercer's article “A Worrying Trend” in the fall issue of *Education Forum*. My sense is that Mercer misses something in suggesting that we “put forth incredible efforts to prepare kids who struggle but ignore kids who do well.” He is concerned that funding for underachievers and aboriginal and gender studies programs outweigh the funding for gifted programs such as advanced place-

workforce from school depended on internships and co-op arrangements (where available) as transition programs from school to work. Still, about 25 per cent of students ended up not graduating and going directly to work. More recently, this imbalance has been compensated for with additional adapted and alternative programs and graduation options for students going directly from school to work. Such initiatives arose in the face of criti-

cism that students from low-paying blue-collar families tended to end up in similar blue-collar jobs. Although an argument could be mounted suggesting that this has not changed substantially, the shifts in the compulsory courses required for graduation have ameliorated some problems associated with students going directly into the workforce without graduating. Although the optics of this may be favourable, in reality we have multi-tiered graduation diplomas that may do little to really change the dynamics of privilege that Mercer promotes.

Putting the effectiveness of adapted programs for underachieving students aside, the programs exist because it is the duty of public education to address issues of equality and access to resources. The more public education manages this, the more equal

a society we become, for eliminating inequality is fundamental to real democracy. Finally, the ancient skeptics had something to say about what to do when faced with disparities of privilege: treat equals equally and unequals unequally, a dictum that holds here.

Karne Kozolanka PhD,
Kingston

On a global front by Roger Langen

The lion in cell-block six

Fighting for human rights even from a prison cell



Lilianny Obando is the woman in the yellow shirt with her arm raised

According to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement, the forced displacement of 4.5 million Colombians—80 per cent of them women and children—continues at a rate of 200,000 Colombians per year. Lilianny Obando objects. Amnesty International indicates that, of the disappearances, torture, kidnappings and murder of trade unionists, community leaders, human-rights activists and ordinary Colombians, 92 per cent are attributable to the state. Lilianny Obando objects.

Lilianny Patricia Obando Villota objects a lot. We are in her cell in Patio 6, the political prisoners' wing of Buen Pastor, Bogotá's prison for women. We will be joined

by her friend, Rigoberto, a professor of mathematics and the national expert for her son, Camilo, 17, who will write his high school graduation exams the following day. He has not seen his mother for a month. He aims to be a journalist.

My visit lasts five hours. “I am a kind of lawyer here,” Obando explains, “the only professional. The others are from the country. They have no education. Like me, their crime is their opinion. I help them to assert their rights. I am so busy!” and she laughs. She is on the phone to human-rights lawyers daily.

She refers to her cell as her apartment, sometimes her office. “Today is my apartment,” she says. Although a tiny

cell, it is charming. There is a hand-made curtain for a door; a wardrobe that hangs from the ceiling; a “kitchen” that slides out from under the double bunk she shares with one, sometimes two, other women; posters and messages and photographs taped to the walls; crates of law books and files piled high to the ceiling.

“The prison can't win me,” she says. “I try to convey this idea to the others.” Her chin is held high. She joshes with her son, banners with Rigoberto. I easily forget the two days of checkpoints to get this far: the fingerprinting, the nine consecutive arm stamps, the pat-downs, the sniffling by dogs for drugs or weapons concealed on my person. Obando's cell may be windowless, but it is filled with light.

A single mother, she is happy I am staying with her family. Her mother, Marta, 65, supports her daughter and the two children on a minimum-wage pension of \$250 a month. It is more than the cost of Camilo's high school tuition. I have brought gifts including, for Laura, seven, a vintage Poldham puppet that I thought a fair likeness of her mother.

Obando was arrested in her home on August 8, 2008. She was charged with “sedition.” Eleven other prominent Colombian human-rights activists, including her, the national press, but she alone is in prison. For several years, she had represented the human-rights concerns of Colombia's largest federation of peasant farm workers, FENUSAGRO, and visited unions abroad, including OSSTF/FEESO. A sociologist, she might have represented FECCODE, the national union of teachers, but she was more interested in the peasants' struggle. Both organizations have been severely bludgeoned by assassinations.

Her trial will be the first test of Colombia's strategy, under former president Álvaro Uribe, to associate criticism of the state with support for the Revolutionary

“The lion in cell-block six,”

Winter 2011, Vol. 37, Issue 1, pages 7-8

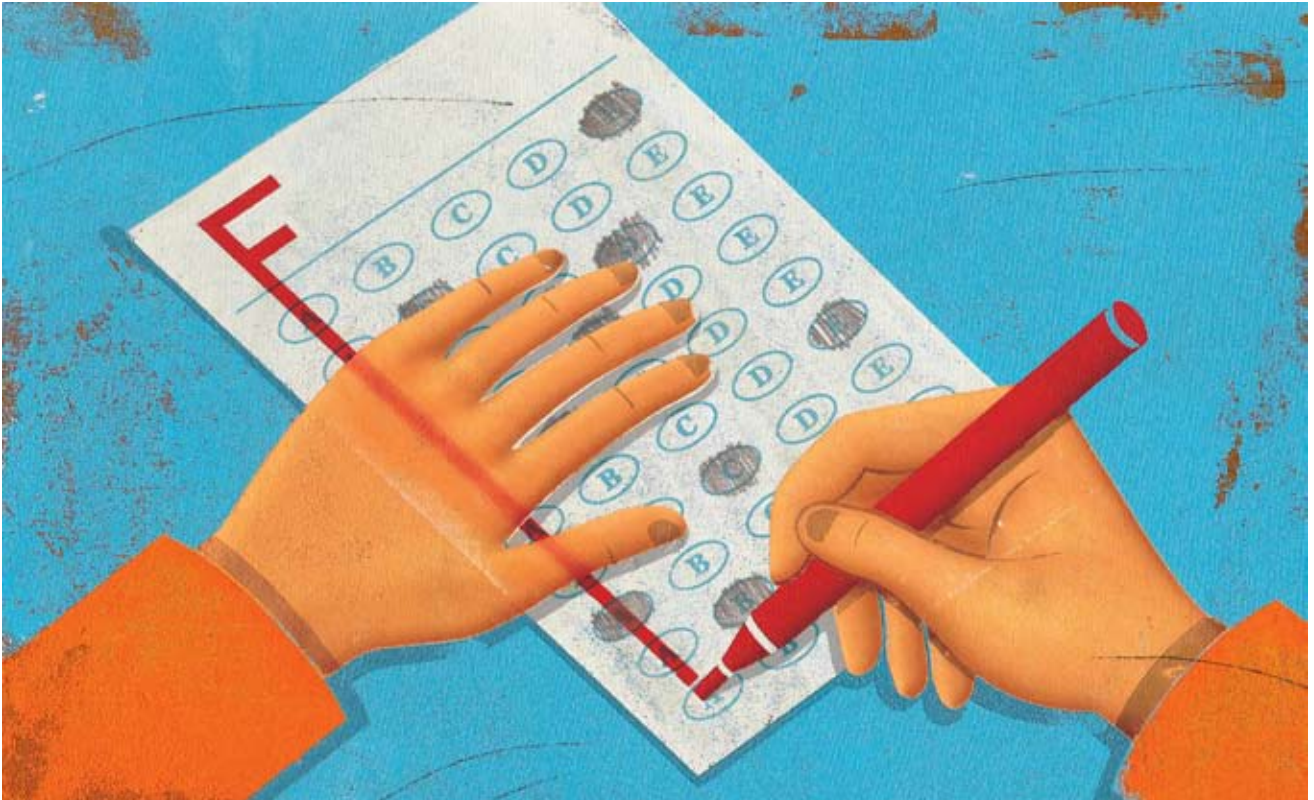
ment and the International Baccalaureate. Mercer believes that underachievers are headed for failure anyway, so it's a waste of resources when we could be directing funds at high-end students.

When one takes a historical look at compulsory courses required for graduation, those students headed to university and college have been privileged. In the past, those headed directly into the



High-stakes testing

A cautionary tale from California



One day in January, I was on deck to follow up the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) preparation activity conducted just before the Christmas break. For one full class period, Grades 9 and 10 teachers had been directed to have their students complete a three to five paragraph opinion piece assignment that was designed to model material they would encounter on the OSSLT. Their efforts were assessed and returned. My job with the students that day in January was to examine the results of their opinion pieces, to model effective pre-writing and writing strategies and then to launch the students into their second attempt at crafting the ideal OSSLT opinion piece response.

The task is straightforward enough, so why was I feeling so paralyzed trying to prepare for it?

I am no stranger to standardized testing. For two years, I had the opportunity to teach in California. Out-of-state/country teachers were actively recruited to work in schools and districts considered “bad” enough that Californians wouldn’t teach there. Upon my acceptance, I received a package in the mail including both the general demographics of the school as well as an overview of the school’s standardized test performance results. I didn’t really give much thought to these scores at the time, but that soon changed.

Immediately after the new school year began, colleagues were abuzz, albeit discretely, with speculation and insider tips concerning the material on the upcoming standardized tests. I quickly noticed that this information wasn’t broadly shared, which I assumed was due to confidentiality. One teacher was kind enough

to share with this Canadian newbie her sneaking suspicion that “the graph on page 37 might be on the test.” The grave delivery of her tip was enough to compel me to include an originally unplanned study of page 37 for the next day.

Still, I found it amusing how worked up everyone seemed to be over aching this test.

That is, until I was sitting in the first department meeting after the test had been administered and returned, staring in horror at a list of teachers’ names arranged in descending order according to their students’ test scores. My name was listed in the bottom three. The department leader began with glowing praise for the beaming teacher whose students’ test scores were highest, and concluded with a part scolding/part interrogation of those teachers sinking in the rear.

The implication of the results was clear: bad scores = bad teacher.

Shortly after this meeting, a colleague explained the power these test scores held: they directly influence teacher performance evaluations, the allocation of administration, the allotment of school funding and now may even be used to determine teachers' salaries—in other words, merit pay.

Furthermore, test scores were published and used to rank schools. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out how a parent or guardian might use this information to determine the "best" school for their son or daughter—and what the long-term implications of these choices have on individual school dynamics.

I began to wonder if test scores were at least one of the reasons my California school and district had been deemed "bad" by the locals. Sure, some teachers' classes had done well compared to others'—but when judging the school's results against the state's, there really wasn't much to brag about.

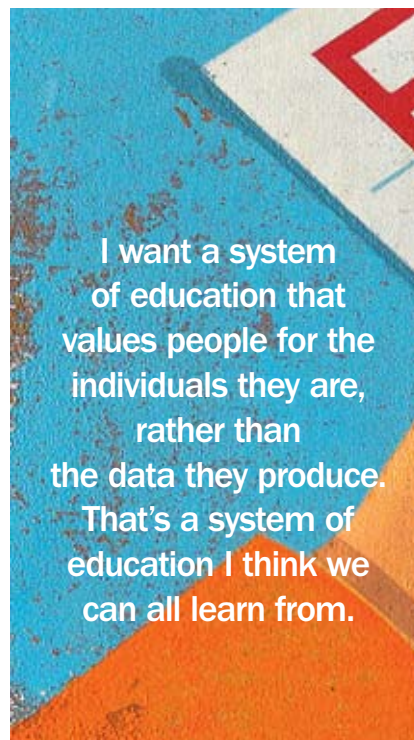
I began to see that such high-stakes testing threatens far more than a teacher's or school's reputation. It's great to be respected for doing a good job, and it's nice to work in a place that's lauded for its accomplishments, but that's not why I became a teacher. I became a teacher because of the kids. And sadly, it's the kids I see suffering the most as education is increasingly defined and determined by the preparation for, and the writing of and results of, these standardized tests.

It seems we are increasingly valuing tasks in education based on the data they can produce, rather than on the actual meaning of, these tasks to individual students. Literacy and numeracy skills are important. But are these skills truly being developed through test preparation, much less being accurately evaluated through test assessment?

And what about the time we increasingly spend teaching to the test? First, students began with just writing the OSSLT. The next year, the school offered and actively encouraged students' participation in an after-school OSSLT preparatory course. This year, in addition to that program, students and teachers will have

lost *four* periods of regular program instruction in order to practise components they will encounter on the OSSLT.

I understand the pressure. Obviously, the greater the implications of test scores to teachers, schools and districts, the more emphasis will be placed on high achievement. But when the preparation for this



test begins to come at the expense of regular programming and the infringement on teachers' instructional time, have we gone too far?

And what do we make of a teacher's performance being reduced to test scores? Are teachers who are hired or retained solely for their ability to elicit the highest test scores really the ones we want teaching our children? Is it possible these test scores may be skewed in the first place? And what are the implications of a system that praises those who perform well on these isolated tasks and penalizes those who don't? Lest we think these things couldn't happen in Ontario, it should be noted that merit pay is rumoured to be a key election issue for the Conservative party and surfaced as a highly publicized issue in the B.C. Liberal party leadership race.

So there I was, ready to go into a science class the next day to continue with the third of four periods devoted to the

OSSLT opinion piece review. I tried to ease my conscience, reassuring myself that a) I was only doing this to support the students; in no way was I lending support to the test, and b) as I often heard teachers lament, the issue truly was out of my hands.

But was it? Isn't it my responsibility as a public educator to stand up for what I feel is right in public education...even if I am just one small voice?

I suppose that's why I'm writing this. Teaching in California opened my eyes to a world where public education has been reduced to standardized tests and test scores. It's not a nice place to teach or be taught. I am sorry to say that I see education in Ontario galloping in the same direction.

I don't know how to make courses like dance, music and visual arts important in a world that is increasingly determined by data—but we need to. I realize it is increasingly difficult to defend the immeasurable in education, but we need to. These subjects breathe life into classes.

Tests may be standardized, but our students aren't. And neither are their teachers. They're unique.

I want a system of education that values people for the individuals they are, rather than the data they produce. That's a system of education I think we can all learn from. ☺

Stephanie Silvester-Keating taught two years of middle school social studies and high school biology in Fontana, California, and now teaches at Eastview Secondary School in District 17, Simcoe.

“Be it resolved that...”

High school debating in Ontario



When people picture a debate, some think of a legislature or House of Commons filled with a vast sea of faces confronting one another in a boisterous verbal free-for-all that goes on interminably and without resolution. When it comes to organized student high school debate, however, nothing could be further from the truth—in reality, competitive high school debating is one of the oldest and most instructive forms of informed, respectful discourse.

High school debates, though confrontational and sometimes intense, are always very civilized. Pairs of students from two rival schools, matched on the basis of their experience and age, are faced off in a classroom to examine the pros and cons of an issue of current interest with at least one adult judge and a speaker-timer. Younger, newer debaters might be

challenged to talk about cell phones in the classroom or single-gender schools or mandatory student activity fees, whereas veteran debaters could square off on topics such as the security aspects of WikiLeaks or the pros and cons of globalization.

Equal speech times, usually between five and eight minutes, are allotted to each of the four paired debaters, along with an opportunity for both sides to refute, rebut and summarize. In a large tournament there could be as many as 40 such pairs from the 15 or 20 schools taking part. The organizational logistics can be challenging and the time commitment on the part of both debaters and sponsoring coaches significant, but, on the upside, the learning of analytic and presentation skills, the increase in self-confidence and the social bonding that take place can be remarkable.

When a round of debate is done, the

opponents cross the floor, shake hands and congratulate one another, and then head off for a beverage and a cookie or two back in the cafeteria to await their next round, in which, against new opponents, they will then have to argue the position opposite to the one they just supported. Simple token prizes like medals or small trophies go to the winners, but the lasting value of the activity is in the written and spoken feedback offered by the judges, which will lay the groundwork to equip them as active citizens in tackling current issues in their community.

The various skills inherent in debate—argument, illustration, response and rebuttal—carry over into all classrooms, and the topics proposed can draw from subjects far beyond the standard English, social studies or history areas. In fact, many debate coaches are teachers of science, music,

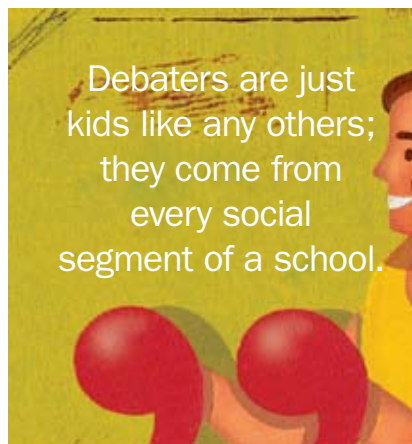
health or media. These are not coaches in the traditional athletic sense, though. These are teachers who coach athletics for the mind. Most schools commit thousands of dollars and countless coaching hours to sports so students can be enriched in their physical and social lives. Why does a similar commitment not exist in more schools for the enrichment of young minds? Surely that is a question for teachers and administrators to consider.

Essential to the opening of young minds and the development of skills is that, in two rounds of every event, each partnership must argue both sides of the given prepared topic. The debaters are expected to take a position first for and then against a resolution in their two rounds, but ultimately they end up realizing that the truth on the matter likely lies somewhere in the murky middle. That kind of open-mindedness is rare, even in politicians several times the age of our students.

A short time spent at a typical debate tournament quickly dispels any possible stereotype of young debaters as miniature clones of stuffy parliamentarians or domineering lawyers with arched eyebrows. Nor are they necessarily academic students in the traditional sense. Debaters are just kids like any others; they come from every social segment of a school and include athletes, drama students, techies and many others. No stereotypes apply, nor does one gender outnumber the other. Initially their reasons for coming out to try debating include curiosity, having fun, socializing or an interest in new ideas or in trying something a little different, a

bit out there. Any or all of these might be the motivator for any given debater.

Assistance in starting a school debate program is available through the Ontario Student Debating Union (OSDU), which dates back to the late 1960s when small groups of schools across Ontario ac-



tive in debating decided to get together to hold an annual friendly competition. Eventually about a dozen geographic regions that included these schools were formed to compete together through standardized judging criteria and to create instructional materials for the use of coaches throughout the whole union.

The debate season often begins with a fall novice workshop, followed by a series of low-key tournaments in local schools, these being much more instructional than competitive, as judges are usually coaches who provide written feedback on the judging ballot. One event might be a seasonal impromptu event in which pairs are given 25 minutes to prepare

such tongue-in-cheek positions as "This House believes that Mrs. Claus will soon be driving the sleigh" or "This House believes that Justin Bieber should be our next Governor General." Then, after Christmas, comes a more competitive regional tournament leading to the provincial finals in March.

From that March competition, in a site that rotates from year to year around Ontario, outstanding delegates are chosen to go on to a national debate and speech event, called a seminar to underline its learning components. This and other national events are sponsored by the Canadian Student Debating Federation (CSDF), which resulted from a provincial and territorial agreement 40 years ago to hold a national debate event. Open House Canada grants offset the considerable costs for students who in many cases are travelling thousands of kilometres to the seminar.

There is also a world level of schools debate competition, although it is rarified territory. Still, it is worth noting that about 35 countries compete at the world level and Canada has won twice, most recently last year.

French and bilingual divisions were, and continue to be, natural offshoots of the annual seminars. Teachers of French have an ideal opportunity to inculcate French fluency through participation in debate. The expectation of fluency in French is partial in the bilingual category (up to 30 per cent minimum delivery of the speech in each language) and total in the *français* category. Teachers of French interested in looking into French and bilingual debate are encouraged to contact OSDU, which has resources for complete debate programs in these categories.

For help getting started, or for more information about resources and upcoming events, see the OSDU website at osdu.on.ca. The CSDF has a national office and director of debate endowed by the extraordinary patron of Canadian debate for the last 40 years, the late Willis McLeese. See the CSDF website for further information at www.mcleesedebate.com.

George Pepall, a retired teacher from District 24, Waterloo, is the past president of the CSDF. He can be reached at pepall@rogers.com.



PRINCIPALS—TEACHERS Looking for the Ultimate Cultural Experience?

With 3 Ontario certified secondary school campuses in China (Shanghai, Quanzhou and Jinhua)—The Canadian Trillium College is searching for qualified principals and teachers of: English, E.S.L., Mathematics, Physics, and Business & Social Science for Sept. 2011 & Jan. 2012. Familiarity with ESL programs/services an asset.

Terms: Competitive compensation (CND\$) and free: return air, private furnished accommodation, local travel and more.

This is an ideal opportunity for retired teachers or beginning teachers or teachers on "teacher funded leaves" to experience the culture and mysteries of China.

**Apply Now! Forward resume and cover letter to: Supervising Principal
Tel: 416-763-4121. Fax: 416-763-5225. Email: kenyanku@glcstschool.com**





I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME MY DAY ENDED AT 3

**NON-
COMMISSIONED
ADVISORS**

By understanding you better, we can help you best.

After 35 years of working exclusively with the education community, we've learned a lot. That includes a greater understanding of everything from your pensions to your pay structure to 4 over 5

plans. And it's this inherent knowledge that allows us to offer the solutions best suited to you. To chat with a specialist, call 1-800-263-9541 or visit us at EducatorsFinancialGroup.ca.

PLANNING • INVESTING • LENDING



LOOKING BACK AT THE PAST

To make informed decisions
about the future

By Matt Gilbert

“Those who cannot remember the
past are condemned to repeat it.”

—George Santayana

The looming October provincial election poses a serious challenge to public education. Although Premier Dalton McGuinty’s Liberals have been working to rehabilitate the system from the devastating cuts to education imposed by the previous Progressive Conservative government, recent polls are strongly in favour of Tim Hudak, the current provincial Tory leader and a key figure in the Mike Harris government. As such, it is important to remember what happened the last time Hudak was part of the government.

Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education, a collection of essays gathered together by the Campaign for Public Education and edited by Stephen Seaborn, puts the destructive policies of the Harris years in perspective. Including work by prominent Canadian writers such as John Ralston Saul, Linda McQuaig, David Suzuki and Margaret Atwood, the discussion focuses on the damage done to public education in Ontario by Mike Harris’s Conservative government, but also suggests ways to rebuild and strengthen public education for the challenges of the 21st century.

Proposals include tackling child poverty by investing in school lunch and after-school programs, as Hugh Mackenzie suggests, with schools needing to be “more than factories producing future workers and taxpayers.” Adam Vaughn says we need to install geothermal energy systems under our schoolyards to heat the schools and surrounding neighbourhoods while also generating clean-energy revenue and making it harder to close local schools. David Suzuki and Dave Waldron argue in favour of sustainability science, which goes beyond environmental problems to also consider “ways to alleviate poverty, hunger, social

/CONTINUED ON PAGE 16





RETOUR SUR LE PASSÉ

Pour prendre des décisions
éclairées sur l'avenir

Par Matt Gilbert

« Ceux qui ne peuvent se souvenir
du passé sont condamnés à le répéter. »

(George Santayana)

L'élection provinciale d'octobre prochain constitue pour l'éducation publique un défi de taille. Bien que les Libéraux du premier ministre Dalton McGuinty aient cherché à réhabiliter le système suite aux compressions imposées à l'éducation par le précédent gouvernement Conservateur, selon de récents sondages, l'opinion est fortement en faveur de Tim Hudak, le chef provincial actuel du Parti conservateur et qui fut un membre clé du gouvernement de Mike Harris. Il est donc important de nous souvenir de ce qui s'est produit la dernière fois que Tim Hudak a fait partie du gouvernement.

L'ouvrage intitulé *Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education*, une collection d'essais rassemblés par la *Campaign for Public Education* (CPE) et édité par Stephen Seaborn, met en perspective les politiques destructrices des années Harris. Incluant le travail d'écrivains canadiens de renom, comme John Ralston Saul, Linda McQuaig, David Suzuki et Margaret Atwood, la discussion est axée sur les dommages infligés à l'éducation publique ontarienne par le gouvernement Conservateur de Mike Harris, mais suggère également des moyens de la refonder et de la solidifier pour lui permettre de relever les défis du XXI^e siècle.

Les propositions portent notamment sur la lutte contre la pauvreté infantile en investissant dans les repas à la cafétéria et les programmes parascolaires, comme le suggère Hugh Mackenzie, partant du constat que les écoles doivent être « plus que des usines qui produisent de futurs travailleurs et contribuables. » Adam Vaughn soutient que nous devons installer des systèmes de chauffage géothermiques sous les cours des écoles pour chauffer les écoles et les quartiers environnants tout en produisant des recettes d'énergie non polluante et en rendant encore plus difficile la fermeture des

/ SUITE À LA PAGE 17



Since then, much of that lost confidence has been restored, but we must remain vigilant, particularly in light of the upcoming election.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14/

inequities and disease.” Finally, Tim McCaskell proposes alliances between those who are dissatisfied with the system in order to reinvigorate our schools and challenge the neo-liberal agenda first brought to Ontario by Harris’s Conservatives.

While reading, I was reminded that the Harris government, driven by an ideology based on cutting taxes, systematically attacked the province’s education system. In fact, probably the most infamous of the changes brought about by Harris’s Common Sense Revolution was the reform of the education system. These reforms placed the government more directly in control while drastically cutting funding to the newer, larger school boards. Essentially, the tax cuts were achieved on the back of the education system.

On the campaign trail, the Tories knew it would have been political suicide to have told the electorate the specifics of their plan. But, as mentioned in *Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education*, then Education Minister John Snobelen was heard to say, “We need a plan to create a crisis” in public education in order to implement wholesale changes to Ontario’s education system. This strategy, used in more violent contexts in Chile under General Augusto Pinochet’s regime and in Iraq during George W. Bush’s presidency, has been described by writer and social activist Naomi Klein, in her eponymous book, as The Shock Doctrine. First, create the spectre—or reality—of chaos, devastation and confusion to distract people from the real problems and instill a sense of panic. Then seize on the disorganization as an opportunity to

quickly implement radical changes before people can recover their sense of balance. By the time they react, it is too late.

The Tories demonized teachers’ unions, claiming they selfishly held back the advance of public education to protect their own interests. Faced with Bill 160, which proposed to legislate major changes to the educational system, the unions had no choice but to fight back. After failed attempts at dialogue, the teachers’ unions walked off the job on October 27, 1997 to protest and protect the system from slash-and-burn tactics. The government quickly went on the attack, branding the “striking” teachers as criminals and bribing the electorate with cash in the form of childcare rebates.

As a Grade 10 student in 1997, I clearly remember the protest. I strongly supported the teachers in their fight. I knew a few teachers personally and I understood the sacrifices they and their families were making. Like most students, for the first couple of days my friends and I were excited about some time off school, but almost all of us were on our teachers’ side in standing up for good-quality public education. Many students around the province even marched alongside their teachers on the picket lines.

After two weeks and a court battle over the legality of the protest, the resolve among the unions disintegrated and the walkout ended. The government seized greater control of schools by amalgamating school boards, high school was reduced by a year, standardized testing was introduced and radical changes were made to curriculum.

Many parents didn’t realize that teachers’ working conditions affected their children’s learning environment. More teachers burned out because of the higher demands being made on them—a significant number of support staff lost their jobs—and there were an unprecedented number of retirements. Often extra-curricular activities, such as school teams and field trips, were cancelled due to lack of funding or lack of supervision. Perhaps the worst consequence, though, was the public’s overall lack of confidence in the Ontario education system.

Since then, much of that lost confidence has been restored, but we must remain vigilant, particularly in light of the upcoming election. As of this writing, legal battles and protests continue in Wisconsin and several other American states, which are attempting to scale back collective bargaining rights. In fact, Wisconsin, like Ontario in 1997, is looking at cuts to education in order to implement state-wide tax cuts. Sounds frighteningly familiar.

Right now, there are thousands of underemployed and unemployed teachers and education workers. They face many challenges in establishing careers, including record debt loads and a highly competitive job market that puts permanent jobs out of reach for many years. If the Tories are returned to power, jobs in public education will undoubtedly become even more scarce.

Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education helps remind us about what happened the last time the Tories formed a provincial government. In recent political ads, Hudak points out that both of his parents were teachers, perhaps as a way of reassuring Ontarians of his benign intentions for the education system. However, Harris himself was once a teacher and a school board trustee, yet he presided over the largest cuts ever in the education system. If even a fraction of these cuts are made again in the current job environment, teachers and education workers will be hit the hardest. And shortly after that, so will students and parents. ☹

Matt Gilbert is an occasional teacher in District 11, Thames Valley, working towards a full-time contract position.



écoles locales. David Suzuki et Dave Waldron plaident en faveur de la science de la durabilité qui va au-delà des problèmes environnementaux pour explorer aussi des « façons de soulager la pauvreté, la faim, les injustices sociales et la maladie. » Enfin, Tim McCaskell propose des alliances entre ceux qui ne sont pas satisfaits du système dans le but de revigorer nos écoles et de contester le programme néolibéral qui a été introduit en Ontario par les Conservateurs de Mike Harris.

Ma lecture m'a rappelé comment le gouvernement Harris, mu pour une idéologie basée sur les réductions d'impôts, attaquait systématiquement le système d'éducation de la province. En fait, les plus infâmes changements apportés par la « Révolution du bon sens » de Mike Harris ont probablement été la réforme du système d'éducation. Cette série de réformes permit au gouvernement d'exercer un contrôle plus direct tout en diminuant radicalement le financement des conseils scolaires venant d'être élargis. Au fond, les réductions d'impôts ont été réalisées au détriment du système éducatif.

Lors de la campagne, les Conservateurs savaient que révéler les détails de leur plan à l'électorat aurait été pur suicide politique, mais comme le mentionne l'ouvrage *Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education*, on a entendu John Snobelen, alors ministre de l'Éducation, déclarer que « nous avons besoin d'un plan pour provoquer une crise » dans l'éducation publique et mettre en œuvre des changements à grande échelle dans le système éducatif ontarien. Cette stratégie, utilisée dans un contexte plus violent au Chili sous le régime du général Augusto Pinochet et en Iraq durant les années de présidence de George W. Bush, est décrite par Naomi Klein, écrivaine et activiste sociale, dans son livre portant le même titre, comme « la doctrine du choc » (*The Shock Doctrine*). Créer d'abord le spectre, ou la réalité, du chaos, la dévastation et la confusion pour détourner les gens des problèmes réels et insuffler le sentiment de panique. Ensuite, s'emparer de la désorganisation ambiante comme d'une occasion pour mettre rapidement en œuvre des changements radicaux avant que les gens recouvrent leur équilibre. Le

temps qu'ils réagissent, il est trop tard.

Les Conservateurs ont diabolisé les syndicats enseignants en prétendant qu'ils retenaient égoïstement l'avancement de l'éducation publique afin de protéger leurs propres intérêts. Face au *Projet de loi 160*, qui proposait de légiférer des changements majeurs au système éducatif, les syndicats n'eurent d'autre choix que de riposter. Suite à l'échec des tentatives de dialogue, les syndicats d'enseignants ont appelé au débrayage le 27 octobre 1997 dans le but de manifester et de protéger le système contre les tactiques de défrichage systématique. Le gouvernement ne tarda pas à riposter, traitant les enseignants grévistes de criminels et achetant le silence de l'électorat en lui promettant des remises sur les frais de garde d'enfants.

En tant qu'élève de 10^e année en 1997, je me souviens très bien de cette manifestation. Je soutenais fièrement les enseignants dans leur lutte. J'en connaissais d'ailleurs quelques-uns et comprenais les sacrifices qu'eux et leurs familles s'imposaient. Comme la plupart des élèves les premiers jours, mes amis et moi étions heureux de ne pas avoir d'école, mais nous soutenions pratiquement tous nos enseignants dans leur lutte pour une éducation publique

de bonne qualité. Nombre d'élèves de la province se sont même joints à leurs enseignants sur la ligne de piquetage.

Deux semaines plus tard, après une bataille juridique sur la légalité de la manifestation, la détermination des syndicats faiblit et le débrayage cessa. Le gouvernement exerça alors un plus grand contrôle sur les écoles en regroupant les conseils scolaires. Le nombre d'années d'école secondaire fut réduit d'un an, les tests normalisés furent lancés et le programme éducatif subit des changements radicaux.

Plusieurs parents ne réalisaient pas que les conditions de travail des enseignants ont une incidence sur le milieu d'apprentissage de leurs enfants. Un plus grand nombre d'enseignants furent victimes d'épuisement professionnel en raison des exigences qui leur étaient imposées, un nombre important de membres du personnel de soutien perdaient leur emploi et il y a eu un nombre sans précédent de départ à la retraite. Les activités parascolaires, comme les équipes d'école et les voyages éducatifs, furent souvent annulées faute de financement ou par manque de supervision. La conséquence la plus néfaste de tout ceci était probablement le

/SUITE À LA PAGE 18

Depuis ce temps, la majeure partie de cette confiance perdue a été rétablie, mais nous devons rester sur nos gardes surtout à l'approche des prochaines élections.





Marjorie Blake
Member since 2001

Charles Binkley
Member since 2002

Fran Wren
Member since 2001

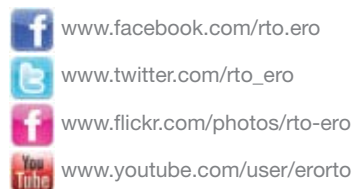
Connect with the
RTO/ERO
community
and join us for...

- Access to excellent group health plans
- Bilingual services
- Active peer community
- Group travel program
- Dependable pension support
- Advocacy on social and political issues
- Member magazine

Sign up for a
Retirement Planning
Workshop near you.

1.800.361.9888
www.rto-ero.org

Follow us on:



À votre service...pour le soin de votre avenir.
THE RETIRED TEACHERS OF ONTARIO
LES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS

yourfuture

SUITE DE LA PAGE 17/

manque de confiance que l'ensemble du public manifesta dès lors envers le système éducatif de l'Ontario.

Depuis ce temps, la majeure partie de cette confiance perdue a été rétablie, mais nous devons rester sur nos gardes surtout à l'approche des prochaines élections. Au moment de la rédaction, les luttes juridiques et les manifestations se poursuivent au Wisconsin et dans plusieurs autres États américains qui tentent de diminuer les droits à la négociation collective. En fait, le Wisconsin, comme en Ontario en 1997, envisage des réductions dans le domaine de l'éducation dans le but de mettre en place des réductions d'impôts à travers tout l'État. Cela semble un peu trop familier.

À l'heure actuelle, il y a des milliers de travailleurs de l'éducation et d'enseignants qui ne trouvent pas ou qui sont à la recherche d'un emploi. Ils doivent relever de nombreux défis pour se bâtir une carrière et ils sont notamment aux prises avec le poids record de la dette et un marché du travail ultraconcurrentiel qui mettent les emplois permanents hors de leur portée pendant de nombreuses années. Si les Conservateurs retournent au pouvoir, les emplois dans le domaine de l'éducation publique deviendront indubitablement encore plus rares.

Lire l'ouvrage *Playing Fast and Loose with Public Education* aidera à nous rappeler ce qui s'est produit la dernière fois que les Conservateurs ont formé le gouvernement provincial. Sur ses récentes affiches politiques, Tim Hudak fait remarquer que ses deux parents étaient enseignants peut-être dans le but de rassurer les Ontariens sur le bien-fondé de ses intentions envers le système éducatif. N'oublions cependant pas que Mike Harris, qui fut lui-même enseignant et conseiller scolaire, a dominé les plus grandes compressions jamais exercées sur le système d'éducation. Si une fraction seulement de ces compressions devait être décidée dans le contexte de travail actuel, les enseignants et les travailleurs de l'éducation en paieraient le plus lourd tribut. Et peu de temps après, ce seraient les élèves et les parents. ☹

Matt Gilbert est enseignant suppléant au District 11, Thames Valley, à la recherche d'un poste à temps plein.

Share in the CELEBRATION!



Soyez de la FÊTE!



JUNE 21 is National
Aboriginal Day, a time for
all Canadians to recognize
the diverse cultures and
outstanding contributions of
First Nations, Inuit and Métis
peoples.

LE 21 JUIN est la Journée
nationale des Autochtones,
une occasion pour tous les
Canadiens et Canadiennes
de reconnaître la diversité
culturelle et la contribution
remarquable des membres des
Premières nations, des Inuit et
des Métis.



Of gardens & ships

A tale of two metaphors in public education

By Rod Heikkila

Since 1997, when principals and vice principals were removed from their roles as principal teachers to become principal site administrators, we have seen the evolution towards two separate visions of what a school is, what a classroom is and maybe even who a teacher and student are. The views from the office and from the classroom have always had their differences, yet I suggest we are creating a climate in which site administrator and teacher will soon have such different concepts of the real world in which both must live that their premises and resulting world views risk becoming at odds with each other, comically paradoxical at times and tragically conflicting at others. Recognizing the limitations of symbols and metaphors and aware of the pitfalls of generalizations, I contend nonetheless that teachers see themselves largely in terms of the garden while administrators are being selected and trained according to their capacity to become the captains

“We must
cultivate our
garden.”

-*Candide*, Voltaire

of ships. The former is an image of cultivation and place; the latter seeks to set a course and to travel. While each has its role today, of course, and is by no means exclusive, it is worth thinking now and again about what motivates us, in the spirit of promoting what is best for all members of the school.

Education and gardens go back a long way. Ancient Egyptian god and King of Egypt, Osiris, is said to have been a great teacher; he taught his people about agriculture and government, foundations of the first civilizations. People plant Osiris gardens to this day. Socrates, Plato and Ar-

istotle all taught at the Lyceum, originally an outdoor public meeting place named after the god of the grove, later home to a gymnasium and other outbuildings. The ruins of the Lyceum were recently rediscovered in Athens in 1996. The impact of these teachers cannot be overstated. Aristotle, student of Plato, taught Alexander the Great, for example, and influenced many other traditions. Most people are familiar with another example, the Jewish story of the connection between a garden and its Tree of Knowledge. Curiously, part of Adam and Eve's punishment for eating of that tree includes having to plant and harvest to survive. No surprise then that, when Christians tell of their favourite Jewish teacher, he is betrayed in a garden and later mistaken for a gardener after rising from the dead. This is not to argue any particular philosophical or theological point but to highlight the longstanding relationship between education and gardens.

ILLUSTRATION: JACK DYLAN





Teachers
strive to
promote the
growth of
understanding.
In education,
almost
anything
that is said
to be
flourishing
is usually
positive and
desirable.

The power of words to give form to an idea, and the extent to which ideas are themselves shaped by words, have long fascinated scholars. That those ideas in turn affect human behaviour is today largely accepted, even though we lose track of the etymology of most things we say. Examples abound. Although some might see the difference as trifling, a man hole and a sewer cover evoke important distinctions between the very same physical object. That which we call a rose would still smell as sweet, but would it be as beautiful if it were called the prickly aphid bush? Would Shania Twain have had the same power had she instead cooed, “Man, I feel like a lady”? George Orwell’s books and essays, of course, are exquisite reminders of the often negative potential of abusing language, especially when language is wielded by people in authority to control and even to kill. Sloppy language leads to sloppy thought as the 2006 American satirical comedy film, *Idiocracy*, re-examines in a lighter way, wherein gardens die across America, soaked with corporate energy drinks, while water is used only in toilets.

In the world of education, garden language has strong roots. For example, people still talk of planting the seed of an idea, of cultivating appreciation and of weeding or rooting out bad students and teachers. Teachers strive to promote the growth of understanding. In education, almost anything that is said to be flourishing is usually positive and desirable. We send our children, some not yet able to count to 10, not to a child-ship but to a child-garden, kindergarten. A fertile imagination leads to creativity. Perhaps Shakespeare’s greatest intellectual, Hamlet, describes his dark and depressed take on the world as “an unweeded garden/ That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature/Possess it merely.” Like ancient cultivators, we know the importance of nourishing and shedding light on things if ever they are to grow. After a short time in the field of education, one comes to appreciate the extent to which school is very much a matter of timing, of seasons, of cycles. Furthermore, a garden is beautiful. Beauty is—just ask Plato—essential, but not something that is easy to

quantify. By extension, when a physicist is faced with determining which competing theory is most likely the best for explaining, discovering or articulating a new idea, the most elegant usually wins out. Any physicist with a beautiful mind or lover of Keats knows its importance: “Beauty is truth, truth Beauty.”

Again, while it is fun to play with the words surrounding education, the metaphors within which we think and work affect our behaviour and sense of ourselves and of others. Classroom teachers, in my experience, take their gardens very seriously.

Gardening language, however, is no longer the fashion. Classroom teachers who still ascribe to the fundamentals of the garden imagery find themselves in an awkward and sometimes bewildering paradox. Gardens are, after all, places of constant and beautiful change. We live in a time, however, of a more linear and superficial ethos of change through the implementation of frameworks, of purpose, of systems, of leadership. No longer content to live in a pastoral spirit of inculcation and of learning (including purposeful learning) for its own sake or art for art’s sake, this is largely a post-industrial time of goal-setting, of mission statements, of action. We must see where we are, take a snapshot, set targets and move forward. Evaluate. Move forward again. Identify obstacles to change. Seek to bring obstacles on board, or go around them, leaving them bobbing or sinking in the wake. In short, we have entered the age of the ship’s captain. Where do we go from here? Ahead, warp factor four.

The language of linear change is attractive and useful, but like any metaphor that guides our thinking, it too affects our behaviour. Today’s site administrators are being trained for action. *Putting Ontario’s Leadership Framework into Action: A Guide for School and System Leaders, from Purpose to Practice* is published in Ontario by the Institute for Education Leadership. It is part of an extensive training program for prospective principals and vice principals and provides a glimpse into the ways of thinking being taught to tomorrow’s site administrators. Let us doubt the directional thrust of the document, two



subheadings on page three are “Navigating the leadership maze” and “Needed: A leadership roadmap.” The first category of the “Leadership Framework for Principals and Vice Principals” is “Setting Directions” under which is written: “The principal builds a shared vision, fosters the acceptance of group goals and sets and communicates high performance expectations.” In this training document, the word “change” appears repeatedly within four of the five categories—“teaching and learning” only once, under “Securing Accountability.” Even then, a principal is tasked with “ensuring that students benefit from [not receive or even earn] a high quality education.” There is no reference to change, however, under “Securing Accountability.” Goals are to be “ambitious and challenging” yet “realistic and achievable.” There is an extra category and several liturgical and theological implementation bullets for Catholic principals and vice-principals with frequent references to “Gospel values.” Not enough research has been done on the effects of divergent and convergent visions—visions that guide our thinking, as opposed to visions as goals to be reached or frameworks to be implemented—in schools. In fact, few seem to question the efficacy of even thinking about the relative worth of either or both, though my bias is probably evident.

So, if the enthusiastic classroom teacher is essentially trained to garden while the dedicated administrator is trained to captain a ship, what does that mean? For one thing, it means day-to-day priorities are bound to differ. Means can become ends. The descriptive can become prescriptive. Consistency, standardized formal evaluation and assessment in their many splendoured forms (summative, formative, diagnostic, select response, self-assessment, rubrics and so forth), policies, procedures and shared vision matter a lot to captains, for example—not so much to the gardener. “So Plato, when you ask students about the three levels of love, do

you count that under Inquiry, or under Knowledge? It’d better not be Application, or I could receive some calls. Here are some differentiated instruction strategies for engaging learners. Don’t be too teacher-centered—the sage on the stage is so...Socratic.”

In practice, for example, that which produces measurable, tangible results,

Teachers and educational workers know and appreciate the value of good school leadership and long for meaningful professional development.

like the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) test scores, can come to matter more than intangibles like the appreciation and thirst for knowledge, like school spirit or staff morale. A navigator, naturally, can come to dwell more on data that show progress than on the reasons the data exist. Having consistent evaluation strategies and results can come to eclipse the subject matters themselves. The situation is complicated when the captain holds the authority, and the ship is crewed by gardeners.

EQAO is a parallel example. Implemented during Ontario’s so-called Common Sense Revolution, born as administrators were legislated away from the very teacher unions they had founded, the

EQAO exists to generate, circulate, then to make love to supposedly measurable data. One consequence: a whole generation of young people now believes a paragraph needs a topic sentence, a body and a conclusion. Some teachers are starting to think so too. Some gardeners naturally are beginning to doubt themselves.

The garden of language and literature begins to wilt once the captains of literacy take charge.

There is reason to be optimistic, however. For now at least, all school administrators in Ontario have been teachers, albeit not for long in an increasing number of cases. Schools need good principals and vice-principals. No one doubts the significant difficulties they face or the need for strong leadership. Most teachers and educational workers know and appreciate the value of good school leadership and long for meaningful professional development and the wonderful change, like gardeners sharing and developing cultivation know-how and new discoveries, that comes from it.

Other premises behind other types of language deserve attention too, of course, such as the corporate assumptions behind “client,” “service provider” and “human resources,” or the ubiquitous vampire-slayer image of the “stakeholder.” Clearly, no school is actually a garden or a ship, and every school has elements of both. However, more critical thought and discussion need to go into anticipating the pitfalls of conflicting priorities within schools, especially as they pertain to the potential divisions between teachers and administrators. Perhaps board administrators at all levels would benefit from looking at their schools as gardens once in a while, while classroom teachers might climb on board, from time to time, for collegial navigation strategies that might move their school in a new direction. ☺

Rod Heikkila, a long-time Federation activist, teaches English and French at Parkside Collegiate Institute in District 11, Thames Valley.





CREATING POSITIVE SPACE

The new anti-homophobia education network in Ontario schools

By Nora Baboudjian,
Susan Corrigan,
Natascha Grant,
Jennifer Lavender
and Nancy Sullivan

On Tuesday, May 17, the International Day to Eliminate Homophobia, the newly established Ontario Positive Space Teachers' Association (OPSTA) celebrated its launch and its website, www.opsta.com. Both were created to provide a support network and a range of resources to help teachers and education workers build confidence and proficiency in anti-homophobia education.

Through the support of a Ministry of Education of Ontario Teacher Leadership and Learning Program (TLLP) grant, we—five Hamilton-Wentworth District school board teachers—worked over this past year to establish OPSTA and its website. This is the story of our journey through this project and the vital lessons we learned along the way.

Editor's note: The stories in this article are told in the first person without identifying the specific writers to protect the privacy of the students and schools involved.





March 2007

For me, it started with a number of “out” lesbian students who were regularly harassed, and even physically threatened, in the halls of my school. It escalated when two students were pistol-whipped as they walked hand-in-hand down a busy Hamilton road. It ended with police and ambulances, and an urgent call for change. The harmed students and their parents demanded the school respond and take action.

To that end, principals, superintendents and community activists were consulted. Based on a variation of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) used by another school in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, the framework for a student group called a Positive Space Group (PSG) was established. The principal asked for staff facilitators and I came forward.

Sixty-five students arrived at the first meeting with a mission to end homophobia, create positive space and protest

against hatred. I saw immediately that students in the PSG took on leadership roles when they felt valued and supported, including, most recently, two openly LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning) students who currently serve as student-body co-presidents. We invited members of the LGBTQ community to help students create and consolidate a common ground.

These days the presence of the PSG at my school is normal; it is just one of many student clubs. Students attend bi-weekly lunch meetings to socialize, talk about issues of importance, fundraise and raise awareness. Last year we even hosted a system-wide Rainbow prom. Our PSG is a visible and vocal part of the school community. After only four years, it’s hard to remember a time when Positive Space didn’t exist.

This vignette represents both the worst adversity and the best possible

outcome that incidents of brutality and intolerance can inspire. On one hand, we are reminded that despite our best efforts, schools are not equally safe for all students; on the other, such incidents present important opportunities to galvanize positive change.

We need to be vigilant in checking common assumptions that schools are safe and equitable places. Our students live in environments that often fail to question or correct—much less end—the homophobic language and hatred that are the daily diet of their interactions. Sometimes teachers are assigned to fix the problem of homophobia in a school climate. But this is no easy fix. If administrative support is lacking, change is difficult. Individual teachers cannot alone change homophobia. We need community: the commitment of all education workers to see the inequality that LGBTQ students confront every day.



September 2009

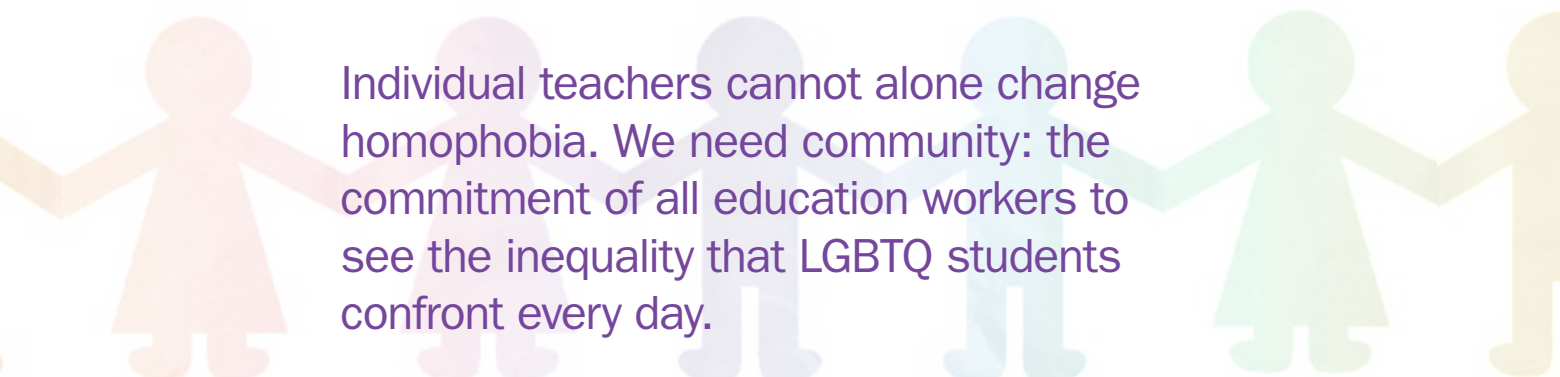
In the spring of 2009, a student approached a teacher about starting a PSG. The administration thought it would be best to start in the new school year, and so in September, an announcement invited students to come to a designated room for Positive Space. Twelve brave students showed up. The very next day, the entire back wall of the school was covered with hate-filled graffiti: “Die fags, die” and

need to educate ourselves and our students about fundamental human rights. This hatred emphasized the need for a PSG in order to restore hope that things would, somehow and some way, get better.

November 2010

Nine months after my arrival at Hamilton’s most diverse inner-city school, a PSG finally launched. Students at my former school had founded the first PSG

be ready, we would be waiting a long time, since some students were not yet ready to cope with discourses on gender equality and religious freedom, never mind sexual orientation. Part of making LGBTQ students feel safe meant openly naming them as a group, just as we named any cultural and religious groups in the school. Further, we believed that by treating LGBTQ kids differently than any other group, we would actually perpetuate their



Individual teachers cannot alone change homophobia. We need community: the commitment of all education workers to see the inequality that LGBTQ students confront every day.

“No fags at our school.” The excitement that precipitated the group’s formation was instantly dashed, and sent the school into a state of anxiety and despair.

Caretaking staff immediately cleaned off the graffiti. The administration announced that hate and maliciousness would not be tolerated. Some students and teachers became allies out of righteous indignation. Our community rallied: city leaders, our board’s director, police leaders and students from other schools came to the next meeting in support. However, others found it difficult to recover and try again.

This homophobic episode sharply underscores the need for a dramatic change in the school culture, reminding everyone that, despite a push for character education, homophobia can be deeply encoded in the DNA of a school. The mere existence of the PSG had precipitated a homophobic backlash. It urgently indicated the need to create a school climate that embraces difference.

This event is a reminder, yet again, that the work of creating Positive Space is necessary not only for our LGBTQ students but also for the character education of all our students. It speaks to the essential

in our school board in 2005, recruiting me as “that feminist teacher” they suspected would support them in their efforts. The emergence of Positive Space at my new school in 2010, however, occurred under very different conditions.

In the preceding five years, our board had developed specific guidelines for sexual orientation in its robust Equity Policy, including a recommendation that each secondary school offer a Positive Space Group. Conceived by a team of caring and dedicated staff who banded together through our common commitment to principles of equity, my colleagues and I set out to start a PSG. While the committee shared the view that our school was due for a PSG, we did encounter some concern that introducing a PSG “the wrong way” could potentially disrupt the climate of inclusion the school had worked so diligently to foster.

In response, our committee lobbied for the introduction of a PSG into the school that centralized the needs of LGBTQ students rather than accommodated the dissent of their detractors. We reasoned that human rights trumped student readiness, and that if we waited for everyone to

experience of shame and invisibility.

Our ongoing discussions with administrators and staff paid off, and our principal allocated a half-day professional development session for our group to introduce Positive Space. Staff shared personal experiences and learning, producing data that ultimately added veracity to our application for a school PSG. By engaging our whole staff in this process, we arrived at a collective understanding: naming differences is fundamental for all equity seeking groups, including the LGBTQ community at our school who were also members of other minority groups. To ignore the significance of students’ sexual orientation would be to ignore the full range of their humanity.

The experience of lobbying for this PD presentation made me reflect on the politics of diversity. Several staff indicated that they had already had equity training, and while I realized this project was not inconsistent with related forms of diversity-training that staff had already undertaken, I also recognized that a more generalized understanding of “The Other” wasn’t specific enough to address the needs of LGBTQ students.



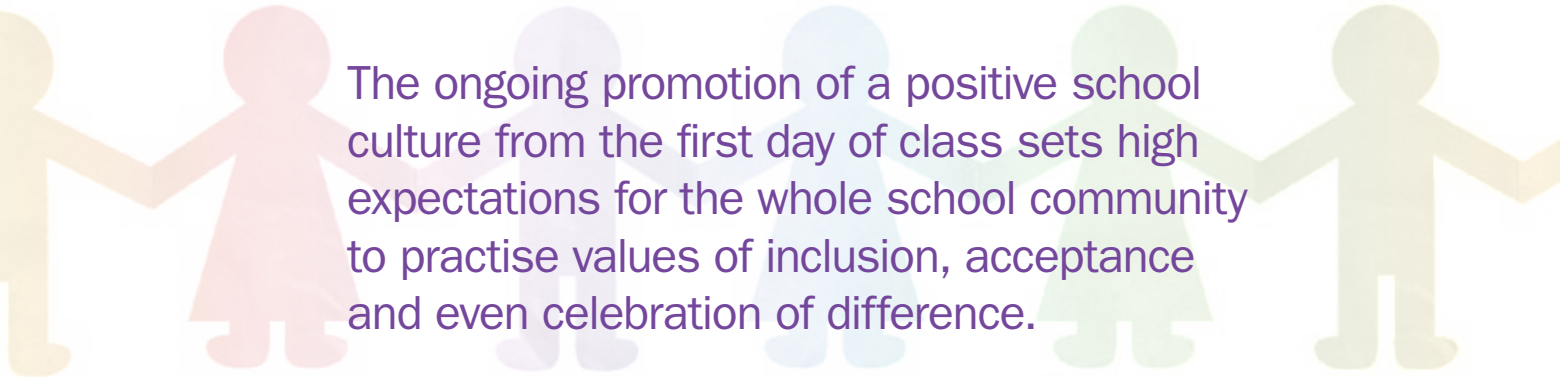
Six years of work as a Positive Space teacher-advisor at two Hamilton schools has taught me that it is vitally important to name *and* to contextualize LGBTQ experiences across intersections of difference. Visible differences, because they are seen, are often prioritized as the only part of identity that shapes who we are. Because LGBTQ identities are invisible, the need for staff to undergo Positive Space training can pass unseen, just as the needs of

January 2011

When a boy came into my classroom at the end of the semester, I thought he wanted to talk about the upcoming exams, but instead he wanted to discuss the PSG sign posted in my room since September. That sign, he told me, got him through school each day. He insisted he “wasn’t gay or anything,” but confessed he was in love with his male teacher and some other boys. This student would

community to practise values of inclusion, acceptance and even celebration of difference.

As our stories demonstrate, we have experienced various degrees of student, staff and parent resistance in response to our efforts to establish Positive Space Groups in Hamilton schools. These responses have ranged from subtle signs of indifference and unease to passive acts, such as the removal of posters and door-



The ongoing promotion of a positive school culture from the first day of class sets high expectations for the whole school community to practise values of inclusion, acceptance and even celebration of difference.

LGBTQ students can pass unseen.

We also understood that if naming and addressing the specific needs of LGBTQ students in an already highly diverse school community was our goal, then educating staff needed to be our first step and educating students, the second.

It is important that educators understand that Positive Space is not an anti-bullying or diversity club but rather a group for LGBTQ youth and their allies to work towards an end to homophobia and heterosexism. Importantly, naming the specific terms is what connects students across differences. Everyone benefits from the acknowledgement of exactly who they are, what they experience and how they experience it. Thus, while it uses an anti-oppression lens, Positive Space primarily focuses on LGBTQ issues and experiences as a way to value and protect everyone. LGBTQ students come from diverse racial, ethno-cultural, language and religious groups, and represent people of all ages, abilities and socio-economic statuses. By creating an environment that is welcoming to the LGBTQ community, our school created one that is welcoming to all groups.

never come out to the PSG—he wasn’t ready to even come out to himself!—but the fact that the PSG was a presence at our school got him through the day. I wondered how many other students there were like him in our classes, struggling with their identity, looking for supportive spaces that affirmed their journey of feeling conflicted between who they are and who they are told they should be.

The first scenario in this piece illustrates how crisis can lead to change. By contrast, this scenario illustrates that efforts to embed equity in everyday school practices can help avoid such crises. Many LGBTQ students do not self-identify and would never come to meetings. By making the LGBTQ community visible within the broader school community, students’ experiences are normalized and legitimized. Even if a student never comes out, this climate of acceptance will invite students and staff to engage in internal and external dialogue about sexual and gender identity. Sometimes, it’s better not to wait for teachable moments. The ongoing promotion of a positive school culture from the first day of class sets high expectations for the whole school

hangers, to more visible expressions of hate graffiti and hate mail, and finally, to explicit forms of terror and violence.

While on an institutional level these experiences have met with strong equity policy and directives, on ideological and individual levels much work remains to transform patterns of thinking and everyday practice.

OPSTA is a project that formalizes the community we have established with each other as colleagues who identify our shared experiences, address our unique dilemmas and celebrate our successes. It extends these relationships and experiences with educators across the province, especially those in remote communities with few local resources and supports, to remove barriers of isolation. Any educator engaged in anti-homophobia work needs support, and OPSTA aims to be part of the larger fabric of supports that educators can access, including Egale Canada’s MyGSA.ca. ☺

Nora Baboudjian, Susan Corrigan, Natascha Grant, Jennifer Lavender and Nancy Sullivan are teachers in District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth, and are the founders of OPSTA.





TEST #	1247a	DATE	05/01/2011
--------	-------	------	------------

ACCOUNTABILITY ON STEROIDS

COURSE	Testing, continuous improvement and privatization		
NAME	Gordon Bambrick	STUDENT #	0023567849

QUESTION 1:

Is the statement
below true or false?

Despite pretensions of
helping the kids, it is
increasingly evident that
the real goal of testing
is to put a spotlight
on the supposed
underperformance of
public education.

Teachers know that results on high-stakes testing are not a fair indicator of school success. Schools don't teach just numeracy and literacy. And, by any estimate, these subject areas don't represent more than a fraction of the curriculum.

Although no teacher would be foolish enough to claim that exams in two subject areas represent the sum of a child's learning in all subjects over three years, this is what is sold to the public by both the government and the media. The government boasts about improved Education and Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) results; oversimplified headlines and sound bites do the rest.

Despite pretensions of helping the kids, it is increasingly evident that the real goal of testing is to put a spotlight on the supposed underperformance of public education. This is exactly how high-stakes testing gets used by dozens of pro-privatization think tanks, many of which, like Canada's Fraser Institute, publish their school rankings in the media. These organizations know that all tests mathematically guarantee lots of "below average" schools and unhappy customers. This ratchets up parental paranoia, which then can be used to drive parents into the net of school choice—non-public alternatives that include vouchers, charter schools and home schooling. By perpetuating the EQAO tests and publishing results it knows will be used for school rankings, the government feeds into this narrowing of public perception.

It's no secret that Mike Harris's education reforms, such as EQAO testing, were aligned with the dreams of the Fraser Institute (where Harris is now a Senior Fellow). However, the same testing and accountability agenda continues with the current government. EQAO results are now publicized on the Ministry's School Information Finder website. A *Toronto Star* article, "Premier defends school shopping with ministry data" (April 8, 2009), explains that the Ministry site, in its original design, included a "controversial online school comparison feature known as the 'shopping bag,'" which McGuinty claimed "helps parents pick the best education for their kids and spurs principals to do better." Fortunately, pressure from educators and parents groups led to that feature being deleted.



Other measures to heighten accountability for “results” include the threat of “intervention” from the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP). According to the Ministry’s OFIP website, “In 2008, 1,100 schools were receiving interventions.” The degree of Ministry intervention in schools is based strictly on test performances, with the cut-off for

Results Team,” “stretch targets” for achievement and graduation rates, “finely tuned intervention strategies,” “new data management and assessment tools,” strategies to “increase pressure for accountability, including transparency about results” and “negotiation of targets.”

Another Ministry web page is entitled “The K–12 School Effectiveness Frame-

ship training, benchmark assessment, data warehousing, test preparation and information technology.

Invariably, private sector providers advertise based on claims of offering “solutions” to new forms of accountability, sometimes introduced by their own research, philanthropy and lobbying influences. They promise improvement of “outcomes,” “re-

OSSTF/FEESO created the “Credit Integrity Workgroup” to look into defining “real” versus “artificial” student success. Its final report continues to inform Federation positions and input to current Ministry initiatives related to student success and achievement.

satisfactory performance set around the number of students scoring Level 3 (i.e. 70 per cent) or better. Such an approach is arguably more focused on justifying putting more schools under intervention than on helping failing students. Even schools with above-average grade averages will receive intervention if they do not show continuous improvement.

Another indication of the government’s attempt to raise the stakes was the “Provincial Interest Regulation” attached to Bill 177, the *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act, 2009*. The “Provincial Interest Regulation Consultation Paper” indicated that test scores and graduation rates would be used as “triggers” for “intervention” and Ministry “takeover.” One proposed trigger was that a board had “40 per cent or more of its schools in the bottom 20 per cent of schools in the province based on EQAO Grades 3 and 6 scores.” Although the triggers were eventually removed as a result of objections from various stakeholders, they reveal the obsession with making the drive for constant improvement of results into the new purpose of education.

The Ministry’s own websites indicate just how focused on results it has become. “Case Study—System on the Move: Executive Summary” reveals that Ontario’s strategy includes an “Education

work: A support for school improvement and student success.” Among other things, the “framework” asks schools to ask themselves, “What actions will we take to ensure continuous improvement?”

One symptom of increased pressure for accountability is the rise of concerns about teachers and administrators improperly administering EQAO tests or inflating pass rates. Last September it was revealed that 10 schools in the province were being investigated for bending the rules in their administration of the tests.

A *Toronto Star* exposé, “Failure is not an option” (June 9, 2007), revealed new pressures on teachers to pass more students and evidence of students being undeservedly passed. In response to such concerns, OSSTF/FEESO created the “Credit Integrity Workgroup” to look into defining “real” versus “artificial” student success. Its final report, published on February 14, 2008, continues to inform Federation positions and input to current Ministry initiatives related to student success and achievement.

The most worrisome result of such pressure, however, is the opening up of new markets for private sector providers. Such school-improvement businesses include for-profit products and services such as consulting, professional development, tutoring, teacher testing, leader-

suits,” “performance,” “achievement,” “success” and “closing gaps.”

One large and growing area of this market is that of education consultancies, which are hired by school districts to raise scores. Angus McBeath, former Superintendent of Edmonton’s schools, recounts how he hired Focus on Results, an American turnaround consultancy. In the company’s winter 2006 newsletter, McBeath explains:

“With [Focus on Results] assistance, we asked each of our schools to implement an improvement framework... Monthly training...was quickly established. Instructional walk-throughs, where staff learned how to observe best teaching practices and give quality feedback, became part of the norm. Thirdly, we strengthened the way we collect, use and display student achievement results in order to help our schools better use data to make good instructional decisions.”

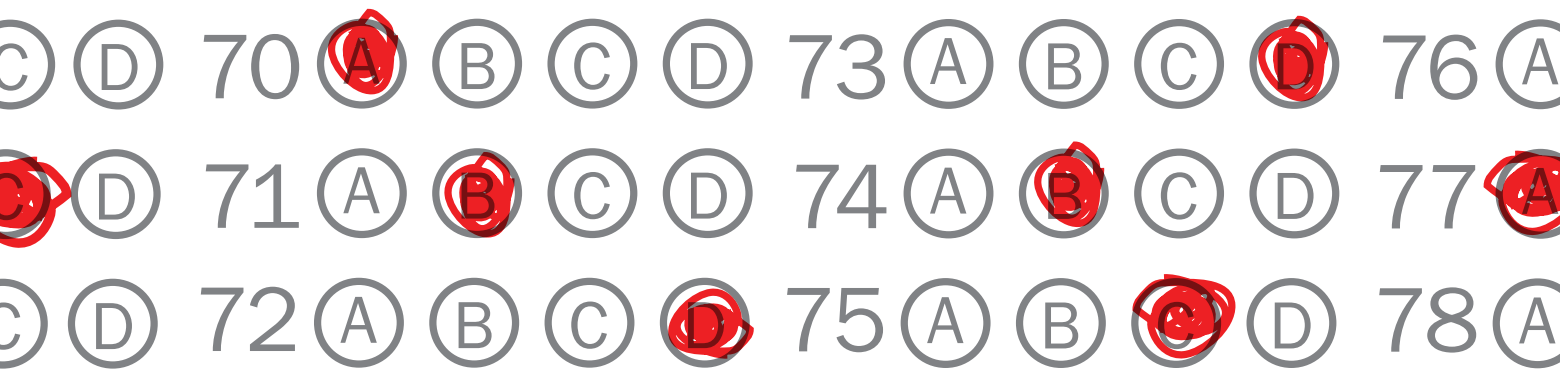
Certainly this agenda differs little from Ontario’s. In his address “Before the PEI Task Force on Student Achievement” in July 2005, McBeath, who upon retirement was hired by both Focus on Results and the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies business think-tank, mentions that he even brought in Ontario’s Special Advisor, Michael Fullan, who taught him that “if [schools] persistently don’t improve, then

I have to bring in another measure called ‘pressure import.’” It is worth noting how well this agenda aligns with Ontario’s: “And when are we going to have to stop this work of measuring, setting standards, setting targets?” asks McBeath rhetorically, to which (not surprisingly) he replies, “It will not stop. It cannot stop.” There is no true goal to continuous improvement,

Improvement Process’ and Staff Development to improve student outcomes.”

Meanwhile, the Public Consulting Group offers “Skovision™ School Improvement Planning,” which “Improves the execution of strategies leading to greater results” and is endorsed on its website by Waterloo’s “Superintendent of Learning: School Effectiveness.”

continuously assessing student progress.” Solution Tree also offers training in the implementation of professional learning communities, which “promote higher levels of learning for all students.” One such Solution Tree expert is the TDSB’s Director, Chris Spence, who “has worked to... promote causes that benefit students and achieve measurable results.”



but the true result will always be to generate an insatiable demand for private sector products and services.

The commercial expansion of professional development is predicated largely on needs created by accountability for continuous improvement. Edu-quest International Inc., another improvement consultancy, promotes founder Avis Glaze on its website as “Ontario’s first Chief Student Achievement Officer and founding CEO of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat [who] played a pivotal role in improving student achievement in Ontario schools.” Edu-quest specializes in such topics as “maximizing student achievement,” “school and system effectiveness,” “district improvement planning,” “school improvement planning,” “assessing school effectiveness,” “self-assessment and accountability,” and “strategies for monitoring improvement.”

Wayne Hulley, president of the Canadian affiliate of the U.S.-based Effective Schools, was presented as a keynote speaker at a Toronto District School Board (TDSB) rally for 20,000 teachers at the beginning of the current school year. Hulley’s firm advertises on its site that it specializes in “Workshops, presentations and multi-day training of school improvement teams using the ‘Correlate of Effective Schools,’ the ‘Effective Schools

Some of Ontario’s new mandates for accountability and professional development are aligned to specific services offered by American PD firms with focuses on such areas as differentiated instruction, assessment *for* learning, professional learning communities and “closing the gap” for underperforming races, ethnicities or genders. PD is marketed not only as a solution to new accountability but also as an amplification of those demands. School Improvement Network, for instance, echoes the accountability battle cry of “No Excuses! How to Increase Minority Student Achievement DVD Program.”

The Ontario Ministry’s promotion of “assessment *for* learning” through “Growing Success” opens the door for the Education Testing Service, a giant of the measurement industry, to promote its “Assessment For Learning” line of products that purports “to improve student achievement by integrating student-involved classroom assessment with day-to-day instruction.” Pearson, a globally dominant education corporation, offers similar services from its Canadian branch, the Assessment Training Institute.

U.S.-based Solution Tree, which advertises in Ontario, offers its own Assessment Institute in which “Educators create high-performance schools by skilfully and

It is questionable whether consulting PD firms or the broader improvement industry should be so focused on wringing ever-higher results from students. Societal goals of educating the whole child with the whole curriculum may be replaced with the narrower concerns of demonstrating measurable improvement between elections and contracts. Teachers may find themselves accountable for using the latest performance-enhancing pedagogies in the face of up-to-the-minute data correlations between “investments” and student outputs. In Louisiana, even teachers’ colleges are being held accountable for K-12 results: “It’s accountability on steroids,” as one university president enthuses, in a *Washington Post* article. “Louisiana serves as model in teacher assessment” (December 13, 2009).

More importantly, a side-effect of commercial expansion is the erosion of public control. School improvement puts much control over funding, defining and purchasing improvement in the hands of competitors who may not care to keep things public. The lofty ideals of continuous improvement may well have more to do with justifying expansion and bottom lines than helping kids. Unlike the more explicit privatization threat of charter schools, the new privatization is entirely hidden from those outside its networks.



Barbara Coloroso's 2011 Summer Institute Teaching with Wit & Wisdom

A 3-day institute for K-12 educators,
administrators, and trustees

Day 1

**Teaching with
Wit and Wisdom**

Day 2

**The Bully, the Bullied,
and the Bystander**

Day 3

**Just Because It's Not Wrong,
Doesn't Make It Right**

Register Today!

By phone: 800-729-1588

Online: www.kidsareworthit.com

By Email: info@kidsareworthit.com

By Fax: 303-972-1204

Cost: \$475 US funds

Dates: July 6, 7, 8, 2011

Location: Ryerson University

Toronto, Ontario CANADA



Kids
are
worth it!® PO BOX 621108
Littleton, CO 80162

Two recent books, *Hidden Privatization in Public Education* and *Hidden Markets: The New Education Privatization*, highlight both the invisibility of privatization and its rapid expansion.

In the U.K., Tony Blair's focus on testing and accountability has come to fruition with virtually every aspect of its system now open for business, as revealed in Stephen Ball's recent study, *Education plc: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education*. The lag between the U.K. system and our own may be only a few years, due to the commonly acknowledged architect of Ontario's reform Michael Fullan, whom McGuinty hired in 2003 as Special Advisor on Blair's recommendation (*The Globe and Mail*, May 1, 2004). Not only was Fullan Blair's guru but he was also a key advisor brought in to New Orleans to help with reform after Hurricane Katrina wiped out public schools and they were replaced with charter schools. According to "A Fresh Start For New Orleans' Children: Improving Education After Katrina," New Orleans schools brought in Fullan to "develop and implement a five-year plan for system-wide capacity building."

While teachers in Ontario have been spared the direct assaults underway in more advanced stages of reform, the rise of the new privatization inside our borders is a strong hint of what's to come. Such problems as we may soon be facing in an increasingly borderless economy are well documented in Mary Compton's *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers and Their Unions* (2008). Through its analysis of globalization's impact on education, the book demonstrates that, in the quest for profit, international reforms are threatening both public education and teaching conditions everywhere. Fortunately there is still time for us to build awareness among ourselves and the public about the implications of privatizing society's most precious institution. ☺

21st Century
TRAVEL INSURANCE LIMITED

Your
Edvantage

Save **10%** off our regular premiums on

- Medicare International Travel Insurance
- Visitor to Canada Insurance
- Trip Cancellation, Baggage Insurance, etc.

Call us at 1-800-567-0021

Gord Bambrick is a teacher at Eastview Secondary School and recently served as Communications Officer for OSSTF/FEESO District 17, Simcoe.





® A+ is a service mark of Johnson Inc.

At Johnson, we know teachers. In fact, over 76,000 teachers trust us with their Home & Auto Insurance. And we can get to know you too, as well as your specific needs, with our dedicated Personal Service Representatives. Call us, any time, day or night to find out if you are eligible for our special teacher benefits.

Home and Auto Insurance for teachers.

Call **1-877-632-2964**
or visit **johnson.ca/teachers**



Proud sponsor of the 5th Annual Great Teacher Award.

Personal Service Representatives | AIR MILES® reward miles | 24 Hour Accessibility | Accident Forgiveness



 **Johnson Inc.**

Home and auto insurance is available through Johnson Inc., a licensed insurance intermediary. Policies are primarily underwritten by Unifund Assurance Company (Unifund). Unifund and Johnson Inc. share common ownership. Only home insurance is available in BC, SK and MB. An alternate plan is available in QC. Certain conditions may apply. AIR MILES® reward miles awarded on regular home and auto insurance policies underwritten by Unifund. At the time the premium is paid, one AIR MILES reward mile is awarded for each \$20 in premium (including taxes). AIR MILES reward miles not available in SK, MB or QC. ©™ Trademarks of AIR MILES International Trading B.V. Used under license by LoyaltyOne, Inc. and Johnson Inc. (for Unifund). *Mediacorp Canada.



FINDING COMMON GROUND

Mediation and the restorative approach
to solving conflicts

By Angie Dornai

Ne sibi quisque consultat, sed inter nos auxilio simus. (Let us not take thought for our separate interests, but let us help one another.) —OSSTF/FEESO motto

In his treatise *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserts that part of a good leader's job is to create an environment in which its members can achieve their highest potential. In all of our jobs, we have opportunities and even obligations to be leaders of this kind. Sometimes, we need to emerge as leaders for others' benefit. Issues arising from miscommunication and misunderstanding can confound the manifestation of this leadership potential. That is where restorative approaches, including mediation, when necessary, are beneficial. Our OSSTF/FEESO motto encourages us to work together towards a common good, and the Mediation Services Resource Bank is available when concerted efforts do not attain the collectively desired outcome.

Mediation: the process

In *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* by Robert Fisher and William Ury, there is a story involving two students fighting over an orange. A staff member comes across the two squabblers and, after a brief assessment of the situation, uses a convenient board-approved cutting utensil to divide the orange in half. Each child has 50 per cent. The question the

story poses is this: is this a satisfactory resolution to a mediated settlement? On the surface, it might in fact appear so.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines a dispute as an argument or disagreement. The OED definition of conflict includes a "serious disagreement or argument" involving "incompatibility between opinions or principles." For OSSTF/FEESO's purposes, when a professional dispute or conflict creates a situation that impacts on people's abilities to work together effectively, members may accept a neutral third party's facilitation of a discussion that helps shift attitudes from being intransigent to being open to discovering areas of common interest. This facilitated dialogue allows staff to hear and be heard sufficiently to present, consider and discuss areas of commonality, and where positive outcomes can be achieved for mutual benefit.

Fairly often, concerned colleagues or District Officers are the first line of support when a conflict between members becomes public. In the event that long-term success in the resolution of this conflict is not achieved, the district may, at the disputants' behest, request the services of one of eight OSSTF/FEESO member mediators who have honed "conversation facilitation" skills. These mediators also hold the advantage of being from a different district, a situation that promotes the necessary faith in impartiality and in the mediation process.



Restorative approaches in mediation or in life encourage us to make intelligent choices that ultimately help us function in community, as civil, caring and supportive citizens.

That process involves making sure those with the dispute have a relatively specific conflict, the parties perceive the mediator as neutral and the process is one to which they have agreed voluntarily. Once these parameters have been established, all those involved should have some investment in the resolution of the dispute. In other words, not dealing with the conflict is unacceptable to all involved and adequate time and space are available to fully examine and address the concerns. If a grievance or arbitration is pending, the mediation cannot take place. However, many a grievance has been avoided because skilled facilitation has enabled those in conflict to find ways to come together that are hard on the problem and gentler on the people involved.

A mediator is a neutral, fully impartial third party who assists disputants in bringing their best selves to the exploration of options that will ultimately resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of all involved, or at least allow members to reach an agreement that is acceptable to all involved. This is a seven step, fluid process that involves letting the disputants know how the mediation will proceed, what ground rules will be applied, why the process needs to be strictly confidential and how everyone will be able to speak and be heard over the course of the mediation. Throughout this process, each person shares his/her perspective while the others listen and take notes as needed for follow-up discussion. The facilitator helps determine convergent interests, encourages dialogue to achieve these ends and works to identify the outstanding issues.

Once everyone agrees that no impeding conflict stone has been left unturned,

the mediator assists in brainstorming options, generated by asking, “How can we achieve resolution for X while meeting the needs identified by Y?” This takes a fair bit of time as those with the conflict work together to select the most realistic and durable options, sometimes talking through what those options will look like when carried back into the workplace. The final stage involves closure, at which time the disputants will hopefully be feeling from a little to a lot better about what led up to the mediation and what will come next.

How does the opening story of the students and the orange connect with your understanding of the process of mediation? The staff member who divided the orange 50/50 watches as one student eats her half of the fruit and discards the peel, while the other student pitches the fruit in the garbage and takes the peel outside, to be used as hair on the head of her snowperson. The staff member learns, at the students’ expense, the value of asking questions to facilitate dialogue about needs and interests. Sometimes we get so embroiled in our own wants and needs that we require a skilled mediator to ask questions that not only help us articulate what we need in order to work and live at our highest potential but also to hear and support and help one another get what we need.

Maintaining Common Ground— Perspectives in Alternative Dispute Resolution

“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they do not know each other; they do not know each other because they have

not communicated with each other.”
—Martin Luther King Jr.

A mediation is deemed successful when those in dispute can work together to find solutions to the problem that is affecting their professional lives. A mediator finds ways to help disputants get to know one another better through guided communication.

While this is always good and desirable, better yet is an arrangement where people also have the opportunity to address the harm that has been done to the relationship if the conflict has been long-standing. Usually, by the time a mediator is called in, more than just two individuals are linked to the specific conflict. Often there are colleagues who have taken sides. Whether out of an attempt to help or because of an unwelcome desire to stir the pot, they have fomented dispute while gossip and innuendo have flourished. This begs a rather large and important question. When the successfully mediated disputants return to the workplace, will the fragile bonds of community—forged through difficult communication and resulting unity—stay in place and even continue to repair and strengthen? In order for that to happen, an extended restorative approach to our co-operative work with one another becomes necessary.

How can a restorative process be incorporated into our mediations? A skilled mediator assists disputants to speak and be heard, and helps those in conflict find areas of common ground. These places of common interest serve as a starting point at which options leading to livable solutions can be brainstormed, abandoned or embraced.



“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they do not know each other; they do not know each other because they have not communicated with each other.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.



In an alternative dispute resolution like mediation, options are selected only if each person accepts them as better than those that can be arrived at outside of the mediation process. It is then that an examination of repairing the harm caused to relationships can be attempted. A restorative approach can be incorporated into mediation proceedings, when disputants find ways to move from the story that they have been telling themselves to the “re-story” or new version of events perceived as a result of new understandings of the other person. The flawed or damaging perspectives from which the disputants have been viewing people and events often change through mediation. Nevertheless, unresolved damage to relationships may still persist. For this reason, a restorative approach is useful in moving towards a healthier, newly constructed reality and repaired or restored relationships.

The restorative approach recognizes the need in all of us to build, maintain and foster community in our professional as well as our personal relationships. To an observer, a restorative shift can be seen as disputants move from sitting across a table from one another (with their not-so-secret desire to punish the other), telling their version of what happened, to their eventual ability to sit side by side, sometimes even with heads together, united in their efforts to find mutually agreed upon solutions that ensure the problem does not occur again. This is the point at which mediation can sometimes end, and the former disputants head back

to the workplace with hopeful, rather than harmful, intentions.

However, a restorative approach to mediation invites all involved to consider what else has to happen to make things right beyond the mediation process. What might still exist in the disputants’ relationship that could thwart their ability to maintain their agreements? The participants will only benefit if they consciously find ways to express what they still need to do to close the remaining wounds on the professional relationship.

This restorative approach involves asking the disputants to address specific points.

- What happened?
- Who was affected by what we have each done, and in what ways?
- What were we thinking about at the time, and since?
- And what still needs to happen to more fully make things right?

This shift from an adversarial (and punitive) focus on the past to a more healthy and helpful focus on accountability for actions so things improve in the future is what makes outcomes generated by restorative approach-assisted mediation really stick.

The word “intellect,” which is what we try to develop in our students, comes from the Latin *intellectus*, from *intelligo*, to understand: *inter*, between, and *lego*, to choose or pick. Our responsibility, as intelligent people, is to make choices from our understanding of the big picture—choices that reflect our belief that we’re all relevant, not that some are more relevant than others. Even if our colleagues may have a

vested interest in seeing our conflicts continue, we can anticipate the politics that interfere with our best efforts to help one another. If we look back at the root of the word “politics,” it, in Aristotle’s ancient Greek was *politaias*, from which we get words like “polite,” among others. It also meant “citizen.” Restorative approaches in mediation or in life encourage us to make intelligent choices that ultimately help us function in our communities as civil, caring and supportive citizens.

While it is human nature to be invested in our own interests, the interests of our classrooms or workplaces, our students and/or our colleagues, it is also wise to find ways to help one another be empathetic, respectful, responsible and even courageous. And if we are unable to do so, on our own or with the help of one another or through a restorative approach to mediation, I hope we try to find the common ground in our separate interests with a view to speaking our truths so we can all be heard. Schools don’t just serve society; to a degree, they create it. On what kind of grounds do we want to make our contribution to the creation of an improved society?

Our Federation doesn’t just serve us, it *is* us. What we want it to be is reflected back in how we are with one another. And if, because of conflicts, you find yourself in over your head, let us know. We are, after all, here to help one another. ☺

Angie Dornai is the Chairperson of the OSSTF/FEESO Mediation Services Resource Bank and a member of District 16, York Region.



A unique point of view

Bernd Krueger, a teacher at Renfrew Collegiate Institute, has had a lifelong interest in art that eventually focused on photography. After working for a few years in photojournalism, he gradually switched to more commercial work. Having obtained his teaching certificate in 1997, Krueger

started teaching communications technology in 1998.

His images illustrate his unique vision. They often have humorous or odd juxtapositions or they comment, documentary-style, on society.

His digital photos resemble the silver-based prints he once made in his

darkroom. The black border represents how he used to print his negatives: full-frame with a bit of the clear film edge creating a black border and with nothing cropped out.

He took all of the photographs featured here in various locations throughout Ontario. ☞





Clockwise from far left: A wind-eroded sand pile, north shore of Lake Huron near Thessalon. Parking meters in the off-season, Wasaga Beach. Older cottage courts, once thriving in these towns, no longer draw contemporary convenience-comfort-seeking holiday crowds. A rural gas station closed and disappearing along the Trans-Canada Highway east of Mattawa. Old chair in a wooded area of Renfrew County left by hunters after the fall deer hunt.



Lessons from the beyond

A “ghostly” learning experience

There is not a lot these days that can win over the attention of high school students quite like YouTube videos. Unfortunately, finding original videos of the War of 1812 or behind the scenes footage of the 1885 trial of Louis Riel posted on the site isn't going to happen. And engaging your students through re-enactments and reading can be a hard sell at times. However, if anything other than social networking can capture students' attention, it's stories from the beyond. Horror films or those with paranormal themes attract tons of young viewers—and teachers are now in luck. Your lessons can be just as popular by introducing your students to the Haunted Walk tour guides.

Haunted Walks Inc., founded in 1995, offers a variety of unique historical walking tours in both Ottawa and Kingston. Best known for their evening tours of local ghost stories and darker history, these tours take place when the lights are low and the atmosphere is just right for a good spooky tale. The stories are unexaggerated and are told by the best of the best in local storytellers, dramatists and amateur historians. Several years of research have gone into each tour which provides interesting, reliable and fact-filled information about each city.

The Haunted Walk in Ottawa is now entering its 14th season of revealing

glimpses into the darker history and haunting of the nation's capital. The Kingston tours, which are entering their 16th season, take you through the streets of the limestone city and introduce the Ghosts of the Fort that haunt Old Fort Henry.

All tours are available for private groups any time in during day or evening, any day of the week, year round, in English or in French (subject to the availability of guides). Specific routes and tour duration times are flexible.

Students will learn about the value of historical research and how to incorporate factual events and documents into an entertaining narrative. As well, the ghost tours teach interesting and relevant local Canadian history that includes key figures, dates and events.

Through the presentation and subject of their “Crime and Punishment” and “Ghosts and the Gallows” tours, the Haunted Walks make connections with subject matter found in the Ministry of Education's Ontario curriculum. While being intrigued, scared or horrified by the storytellers' ghostly accounts, students in English can perfect skills used for critical listening and drama students can learn presentation and acting tips from the experienced storytellers. In addition, there are ghost stories that revolve around the rights and responsibilities of

Canadian citizenship that will be useful for civics students, since they help explain why it is essential in a democracy for governments to be open and accountable to their citizens. Other stories help in teaching law students how to assess the early legal systems' contributions to contemporary Canadian law, all the while explaining the interrelation of law, morality and religion.

Haunted Walks Inc. not only offers tours as a teaching tool for Canadian history but the website also has a long list of suggestions for educational games and activities you can do with your students before or after a tour. Suggestions include such things as dramatic in-class recreations of events specifically linked to the “Ghosts and the Gallows” tour and the investigation of the murder of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. As a class, you can recount the major details of the story (drama, English, history, law), write a newspaper article (English, history, law) and organize a debate on whether the guilty verdict of Patrick Whelan for the murder of D'Arcy McGee was justified (history, law, English, drama).

The Haunted Walk website has much more detailed information about its tours and how they can benefit your students. To find out which ghostly tours speak to which course content, visit www.hauntedwalk.com. ☞





Top: Brave visitors meet with their tour guide at the entrance to the Carleton County Jail for an evening of thrills and chills on the cellblock.

Right: Lisgar Collegiate is purported to have a ghost that looks out the round window in the square tower.

Left: A tour guide from The Haunted Walk leads her group up the steps to Parliament Hill while sharing local ghost stories and the darker history of Ottawa.

Keeping you in the loop

Reviews, conferences, PD opportunities and other items of interest

BOOK REVIEWS

Leading With Trust:

How to Build Strong School Teams

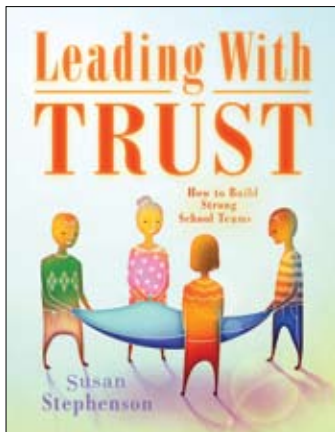
By Susan Stephenson

Solution Tree Press, 2009

251 pages, \$34.95

Reviewed by Shaun Naroski

Leading with Trust begins by addressing the identity and causes of mistrust among staff and why that issue needs to



be dealt with first. The author defines the nature of trust and its varying degrees along a continuum from distrust to mature trust. The softcover book is laid out in a workbook format with activities identified in columns and a “Now What” section in grey boldface. There is also room to write your own notes in the margins. The book could be used in schools of any size and has many trust-building activities that can be used in the classroom and beyond. Each of the six chapters is structured in a format that identifies the trust challenges and

goal and sets the stage by providing research and references. Each chapter also contains key messages, questions and further resources to investigate.

A special feature at the back of the book are reproducible resources and fictional scenarios for team-building activities to be compared and resolved. Readers can also go to go.solution-tree.com/leadership to download further resources. However, with the multitude of activities and solutions presented by the research, one would have to be selective about which path to follow.

I enjoyed this book because it acknowledges that schools fit within a larger structure but it also reinforces the fact that staff will have greatest impact on students within their own school.

Shaun Naroski teaches music in District 6A, Thunder Bay. He is a member and a former Chair of the Educational Services Committee.

Dark Legacy: Systemic Discrimination Against Canada's First Peoples

By L.J. O'Connor and Morgan O'Neal

Totem Pole Books, 2010

157 pages, \$18.98

Reviewed by Sue Melville

From the moment Europeans arrived in what is now Canada, the goal of early colonists and subsequent ruling governments had been to “civilize” First Nations peoples by assimilating them into mainstream society with the ultimate goal of erasing Native identity. This is the viewpoint from which the authors of *Dark Legacy: Systemic Discrimination Against Canada's First Peoples* develop connections among colonization and:

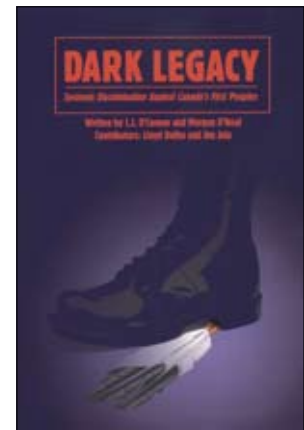
- male misogyny aimed specifically at Aboriginal women;
- the residential school system;
- fallout from the residential schools;
- over-representation of Aboriginal women in prostitution and in prisons; and
- missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

At the heart of their argument is the

belief that racism drives the violence, stalls the RCMP in investigating crimes against Aboriginal women and prevents non-Aboriginal community members from coming forward in support of Aboriginal victims of violence.

The early chapters of the book juxtapose pre-contact conditions in First Nations communities and traditional social order with graphic descriptions of the intrusion of Europeans into those communities and the resulting devastation. Survivor accounts enhance the chapters entitled “The Residential School Nightmare,” “The Scoop of the Sixties” and “The Rise and Fall of the Downtown Eastside.” The authors link key events chronologically to identify racism as the foundation for systemic discrimination against First Nations peoples that continues in this country to present times.

The book devotes 10 chapters to



developing profiles of specific individuals who have been convicted of violent crimes against First Nations peoples, including Gilbert Paul Jordan and Robert “Willie” Pickton. Two chapters are devoted to exploring the culture and crime of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Several chapters describe how the police, charged with protecting the people of Canada, actually perpetuate and in some cases perpetrate the violence themselves. One of the final chapters documents the missing Aboriginal women along B.C.’s Highway 16, also known as the Highway of Tears.

This book paints a compelling picture of devastation of communities at the hands of colonists and their descendents, supported through ignorance and structured by Eurocentric policies. However, one element lacking in this book, in the reviewer's opinion, is a final chapter to summarize key events, identify who should be involved in redress and indicate what steps are required to repair the damage done. One is left feeling called to action but unsure of what action to take. Even so, it is impossible to read this book without being changed by the experience. It will be a valuable addition to any education worker's bookshelf.

Sue Melville is a teacher in District 3, Rainbow and a member of the provincial Status of Women Committee.

Kill Shakespeare

By Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery

IDW Publishing, 2010

32 pages/each, \$3.99/each

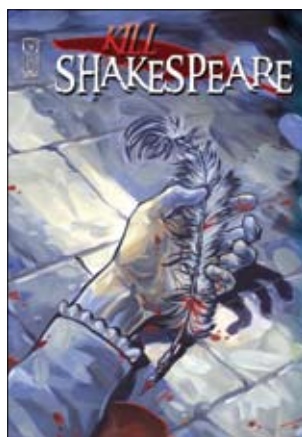
Reviewed by Matt Armstrong

Have you ever wondered what would happen if characters from several different Shakespeare plays got together for a no-holds-barred cage match? Me neither. But this very thing has found its way into print in graphic form with a 12-issue comic book series called *Kill Shakespeare*. (Doubtless there are many senior English students, struggling to finish that *Hamlet* essay at 3:00 a.m., who have wanted to do just that.)

The creators, Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery, are a couple of cool Canucks who have their share of supporters and critics alike. *Maclean's* profiled the series (January 24, 2011 issue) and had experts from Harvard and Columbia debate the merits of *Kill Shakespeare*, with one for and one against. But perhaps the harshest criticism has come from Kimberly Cox, a Shakespearean scholar and partner to graphic novelist Frank Miller, who wrote *The Dark Knight Returns*. It is more than a little ironic that Cox feels

they really are killing Shakespeare. Still, even those who criticize the series admit that the concept is both terrific and wholly original.

Others, including people at *The New York Times* and the Stratford Festival, have been far more generous with their praise. One admirable feature is that even those who are less than expert on Shakespeare—I'm raising my own hand here—can quickly pick up the nuances and motivations of the myriad characters that are thrown into the *Kill Shakespeare* soup. Hamlet, for one, is quite different from what the Bard created, but Lady Macbeth and Iago are still ruthlessly cunning and as starved for power as ever. Perhaps my favourite scene involves Lady Macbeth and Richard III burying Macbeth alive, just as Montresor did to Fortunato in the Poe classic "The Cask of Amontillado."



Juliet (she's alive!) is a powerful force and one of the few female characters not drawn with D-cups bursting out of her top. Sure, the sensational drawings may pique the interest of young males, but the story would benefit from less objectification and more thorough characterization of its women. Overall, the artwork is a mixed bag: it is rich and colourful throughout, but at times it is difficult to distinguish between some characters when they're not drawn as a close-up.

So what about the classroom? This does not seem to be the type of text you'd

order for a class in the way you might for the Classical Comics versions of *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet*, which come in three different readability levels, including the complete original version. However, there are three ways in which a school might want to use *Kill Shakespeare*: it could be a solid addition to your library's graphic novel collection; it could be used as a text for an independent study by a student with a strong background in Shakespearean plays; or it could be used as a gateway to Shakespeare for students who might otherwise be disinclined to read the Bard.

The 12-issue *Kill Shakespeare* series is ongoing, with Issue 9 having been released in February and Issue 10 in late April.

Matt Armstrong is a teacher at Adult High School in District 25, Ottawa-Carleton.

CONFERENCES

OTF's Summer 2011 Program

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is once again pleased to offer three-day workshops in different locations across Ontario this summer. These professional learning events will provide time to learn, reflect on your classroom practices, collaborate with colleagues and share best practices.

Workshop possibilities include Financial Literacy, Environmental Education, Subject-Based Workshops, Critical Thinking and Aboriginal Perspective. Online registration opened April 18, 2011 and closes June 6, 2011. A registration fee of \$50 applies. OTF covers the cost of workshop materials, on-site meals and two nights of shared accommodation, if required. OTF does not cover the cost of transportation or parking. Additional details are available at www.otffeo.on.ca.

July 20–22, 2011

Teaching & Learning in the 21st Century—An Inquiry-Based Approach
Courtyard by Marriott, Toronto

This Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)



conference incorporates critical inquiry skills with a hands-on approach to learning technology in order to examine ways to deepen student learning through technology-enhanced critical inquiry. Participants will be provided with the opportunity to become fluent in specific technologies and will leave with ideas and practical examples on how they can effectively apply those technologies in their classroom practice. This conference is intended for teachers who have NOT previously attended the OTF Technology Conferences. Visit www.otffeo.on.ca for more information and to register.

July 25–29, 2011

[Huntsman Marine Science Centre](#)
[Marine Biodiversity Institute](#)
[St. Andrews, NB](#)

Designed to assist teachers in delivering science in the classroom in a fun, hands-on way. Discover the intertidal zone, how to identify marine creatures, the diversity of natural ecosystems and how it all ties in with the science curriculum. The schedule includes excursions to the local shore, a boat trip, lab time and a tour of our new aquarium. There is no better outdoor marine classroom than Canada's own Bay of Fundy! For more information, visit www.huntsmanmarine.ca.

October 13–15, 2011

[2011 Opehea Conference](#)
[Nottawasaga Inn Resort, Alliston, ON](#)

Provides workshops on topics such as developing policy around healthy schools and communities; integrating elementary healthy-living curriculum into literacy and numeracy; basic principles of how to teach health and physical education; activity programs using funding from big or outdoor spaces for non-traditional games; and workshops incorporating mental health. For more information, visit conference.opehea.net.

October 21–23, 2011

[Drama and Dance Beyond the Classroom](#)
[Blue Mountain Resorts,](#)
[Blue Mountains, ON](#)

This conference will highlight the third strand of the expectations in the Ontario Arts Document and will bring together

artists and teachers to share in a rich professional-development experience, including workshops, panel discussions and numerous networking opportunities. The Council of Drama and Dance Educators (CODE), in partnership with the Ontario Arts Council, is delighted to be able to share and model artist, teacher and community partnerships. Such partnerships not only enrich the educational experience of students but also the life of the community. For more information, visit code.on.ca.

November 3–5, 2011

[Primo 2011](#)
[Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, ON](#)

The Ontario Music Educators' Association invites music teachers to attend Primo 2011. This year's conference features keynote speakers Dr. Peter Boonshaft and Denis Tupman, as well as performances by Duo Percussion, the Ontario Provincial Honour Band, the Central Band of the Canadian Forces and the a cappella group Cadence. As always, the workshops, clinics and concerts offer opportunities for every music teacher to find new wisdom, information, tips and tricks to blend into the ever-changing classroom. There are sessions for guitar, strings, beginning band, choir, 9-12 band, music technology, jazz, percussion, drumming and more. For more information, visit www.omea.on.ca.

November 10–12, 2011

[STAO2011: Science, Wise Choices, Healthy Planet](#)
[DoubleTree by Hilton—Toronto Airport](#)
STAO/APSO is proud to present the finest professional learning event in Ontario for Grade 9-12 science educators—STAO 2011: Science, Wise Choices, Healthy Planet. As science educators, it is our duty to inform our students to make wise choices pertaining to the environment and use of energy so we can keep this planet (and thus our future!) healthy. STAO2011 will offer ready-to-use classroom activities, ideas and lesson plans, ScienceWorks workshops, video conferencing, hands-on activities, Smarter Science sessions and much more! For more information and to register, visit www.stao.org.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Benefit from opening a tax-free savings account (TFSA) with Educators Financial Group

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to have more money to play with in the summer months? What about taking advantage of your deferred salary plan to take a year off and do what you've always dreamed of?

That's where a TFSA can be your BFF (a.k.a. Best Friend Forever). One of the great reasons for opening a TFSA is that it's the perfect "no muss, no fuss" way to save for large purchases. Whether you're looking to put money away for a down payment on a house, finally replace that old car or want to spend July and August travelling abroad, a TFSA easily enables you to put extra money aside, while earning interest—and it's all tax free.

Is a TFSA really tax free? Yes! There are absolutely no taxes on any interest earned or any withdrawals you make. It's 100 per cent yours to do with as you wish.

What is the contribution room? You can contribute up to a maximum of \$5,000 per year towards a TFSA. The unused contribution amount is carried forward in subsequent years. So let's say you haven't contributed since the TFSA launched in January 2009. As of this year, you would have a maximum contribution limit of \$15,000.

Why is a TFSA an especially good idea for an educator? As members of a defined benefit pension plan, teachers generate very little RRSP contribution room annually because of the substantial contributions they make to their pension plan in each pay period. Typically, the annual RRSP contribution room for a teacher is \$2,500 per year. With a TFSA a teacher can now save an extra \$5,000 a year!

With the ability to spread your contributions over 10 months and skip the summer payments, we pride ourselves on providing financial solutions based exclusively on the needs of the education community and their families.

Interested in starting a TFSA? Call 1-800-263-9541 or visit our website at www.educatorsfinancialgroup.ca.





Last word

by Ken Coran, President

Mot de la fin

par Ken Coran, Président

Informed and active members

The keys to protecting public education

AS the 2010-2011 school year draws to a close, I hope you have had a successful year and the summer months will bring you some time for relaxation and revitalization as well as time to consider whom you want to represent you in the next provincial government.

Why would I ask you to think about this during your vacation? Because this election matters! Ontario's provincial government plays a critical role in shaping the lives of all of our members, their families and communities. We have learned from experience that it does matter who wins the election on October 6, 2011.

It matters for education. The provincial government sets priorities, determines funding and controls policy at all levels of education from early learning right through to post secondary. These decisions shape not just the learning conditions of our students, they also affect the working conditions and future collective agreements of our members.

AMPA 2011 featured the launch of our education platform, appropriately entitled "Our Students. Our Future." The Annual Action Plan for 2011-2012 works towards ensuring the provincial government that is elected in October will also share in the key tenets of that platform:

- Public education is essential to a diversified and sustainable economy, workforce and culture.
- Public education opens doors to personal opportunity and develops involved citizens.
- Public education provides opportunities for all students.
- Public education builds vibrant and caring communities.

You will find each of these described in detail, along with several other political action resources, on the provincial website at www.ourstudents.ca.

Make no mistake; these ideals are under attack. We have seen it already in the United States as right-wing governments in state after state pass legislation to dismantle collective bargaining rights in the public sector and plunge the education systems there into disarray.

Des membres actifs et informés

Les clés de la protection de l'éducation publique

A lors que l'année scolaire 2010-2011 tire à sa fin, j'espère qu'elle a été excellente pour vous et que les mois d'été vous permettront de vous détendre et de reprendre des forces tout en vous laissant le temps de réfléchir à la personne que vous souhaitez élire comme représentant au sein du prochain gouvernement provincial.

Pourquoi vous demander d'y réfléchir pendant vos vacances? Parce que cette élection a une importance cruciale! Le gouvernement provincial ontarien joue un rôle essentiel dans la vie de tous nos membres, de leurs familles et de leurs communautés. L'expérience nous a appris toute l'importance du candidat qui gagnera l'élection le 6 octobre 2011.

Cela compte pour l'éducation. Le gouvernement provincial établit des priorités, détermine le financement et contrôle les politiques à tous les paliers éducatifs, de l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants jusqu'au niveau postsecondaire. Ces décisions influent non seulement sur les conditions d'apprentissage de nos élèves, mais aussi sur les conditions de travail et les futures conventions collectives de nos membres.

Lors de la RAAP 2011, nous avons lancé notre programme électoral en matière d'éducation, intitulé très justement « Nos élèves. Notre avenir. » Le plan d'action annuel 2011-2012 a pour vocation de faire en sorte que le gouvernement provincial élu en octobre partage lui aussi les principes fondamentaux de ce programme :

- L'éducation publique est un élément essentiel d'une économie, d'une main-d'œuvre et d'une culture diversifiées et durables.
- L'éducation publique fournit des occasions de perfectionnement personnel et favorise la contribution des citoyens.
- L'éducation publique fournit des occasions multiples à tous les élèves.
- L'éducation publique est au cœur de communautés dynamiques et bienveillantes.

Chacun de ces principes, ainsi que plusieurs ressources d'action politique, sont détaillés dans notre site Web provincial, à l'adresse www.ourstudents.ca.



In Ontario we must be cognizant of all actions and indicators that political parties exhibit, both currently and in the past. This allows us to make the appropriate political decisions to achieve our goal, “protecting and enhancing public education.” We know the current Liberal government has continued to invest in education. We know the NDP has strongly supported an education agenda, philosophically and financially. We are continuing to monitor the development of the Green Party’s education platform. In terms of the Conservatives, we have not seen their education platform. We can only speculate based upon their recent comments and past performance. In that respect, the dark years for education (1995-2003), when a Tory government led by Mike Harris and Ernie Eves were in power, are not forgotten. We must communicate effectively and strategize to guarantee that any party with a platform predicated on “creating a crisis in education” does not return to power.

We must be suspicious when we review the survey that Tory leader Tim Hudak has posted on his website. The survey themes reveal the direction the Tories are likely to take if elected: cuts to programs and services in every area—social services, health care, education and the environment. The tone of the survey is that of glorification of business and corporate interests and outright scorn for the public sector and unions and for those on public assistance. Our concerns about these directions are further reinforced when a highly touted Tory candidate has been quoted as saying, “We need a Wisconsin up here.” Either a poor choice of words or a strong indication of a direction reminiscent of the dark years mentioned earlier.

As the provincial election next October draws ever closer, your support and vigilance will become even more critical, and your active participation will become even more necessary.

At the provincial level, we have developed the OSSTF/FEESO education platform and other supporting materials and resources that your district and bargaining unit leaders can use to inform and inspire members. At the recently held

Ne vous méprenez pas; ces idéaux sont mis à mal. Nous y assistons déjà aux États-Unis où les gouvernements droitistes, État après État, votent des lois qui visent à démanteler les droits des conventions collectives dans le secteur public et à plonger le système éducatif américain dans le désarroi.

En Ontario, nous devons nous intéresser à toutes les mesures et à tous les indicateurs des partis politiques, présents et passés. Cela nous permet de prendre des décisions politiques judicieuses pour atteindre notre but de « Protéger et faire avancer l’éducation publique ». Nous savons que le gouvernement libéral actuel continue d’investir dans l’éducation. Nous savons que le NPD soutient fermement un programme éducatif, que ce soit financièrement ou dans ses principes fondamentaux. Nous continuons de surveiller la mise au point de la plateforme éducative du Parti Vert. Pour ce qui est des Conservateurs, nous n’avons pas connaissance de leur plateforme éducative et ne pouvons que faire des suppositions fondées sur leurs commentaires récents et leurs résultats passés. À cet égard, les années sombres de l’éducation (1995-2003), lorsque le gouvernement conservateur de Mike Harris et d’Ernie Eves était à l’œuvre, sont encore dans tous les esprits. Notre communication doit être efficace et notre stratégie garantir que tout parti dont la plateforme prévoit de « déclencher une crise dans l’éducation » ne revienne jamais au pouvoir.

Méfions-nous en consultant le sondage posté dans son site Web par Tim Hudak, le chef du Parti conservateur. Les thèmes de ce sondage révèlent la direction que les Conservateurs vont probablement suivre s’ils sont élus : restrictions au niveau des programmes et services de tous ordres : services sociaux, soins de santé, éducation et environnement. Le ton du sondage glorifie les intérêts commerciaux et des sociétés au mépris total du secteur public et des syndicats, ainsi que des bénéficiaires de l’aide sociale. Nos préoccupations envers ces idées ont été décuplées lorsqu’un candidat conservateur très en vue a déclaré : « Nous avons besoin d’un Wisconsin ontarien. » Des mots qui sont soit malheureux, soit indiquent clairement une vision rappelant les années sombres dont je vous parlais.

As the provincial election next
October draws ever closer,
your support and vigilance will
become even more critical,
and your active participation will
become even more necessary.

Au fur et à mesure que
l’élection d’octobre approche,
votre soutien et votre vigilance
prennent de plus en plus
d’importance et votre participation
active devient de plus
en plus nécessaire.

LAST WORD CONTINUED/

Communications/Political Action Conference, local activists and leaders received training in all aspects of being involved in the provincial election. Training is available at your local level as well.

Now what we need is you and your involvement. If you do not have time to be involved in a campaign for a candidate, you need to vote. It only requires a few moments of your time. Voting is easy to do and does not require much energy. If you cannot vote on Election Day, there are advance polls. If you are out of town, there are proxy votes. If you need a ride to the polls, candidates will arrange one for you. If you are not on the voters' list, you can get on it. If you need more information, call your local OSSTF/FEESO office or visit the Elections Ontario website: www.electionsontario.ca.

Your participation in the provincial election can make a difference in what your community and publicly funded education look like in the future.

You know the date. You know the reasons why you should vote. Circle October 6 on your calendar now. ☞

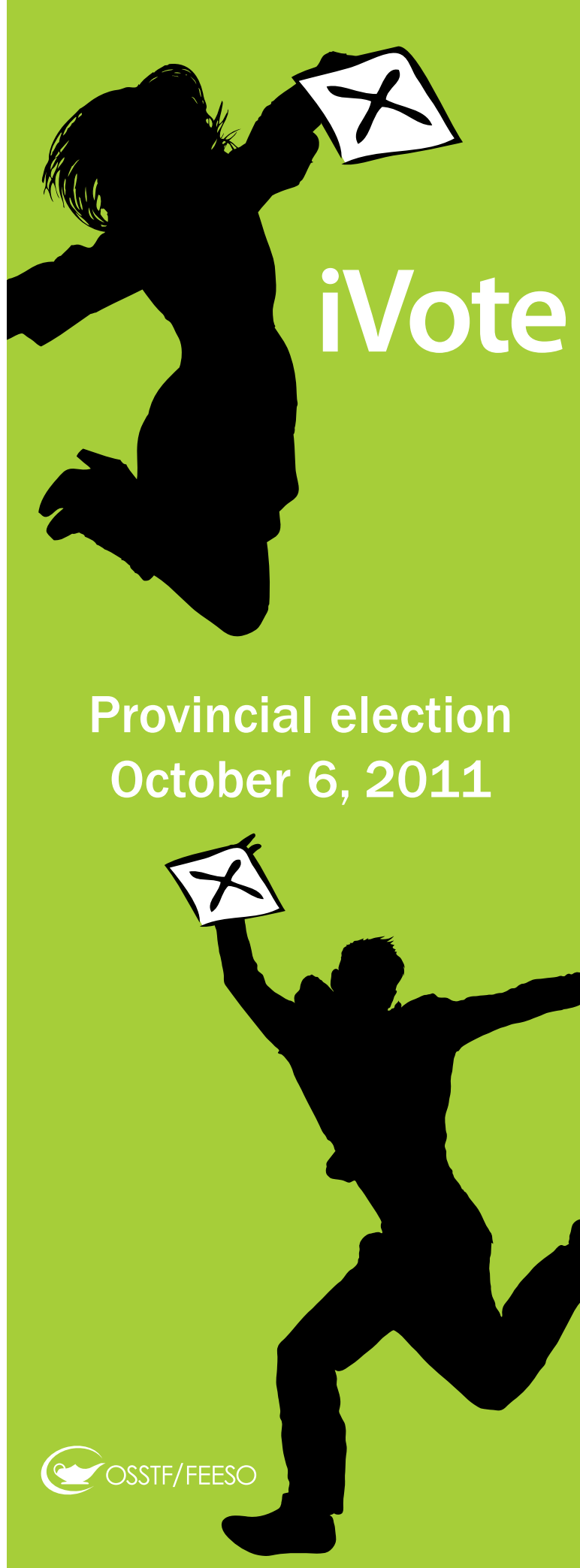
MOT DE LA FIN SUITE/

Au fur et à mesure que l'élection d'octobre approche, votre soutien et votre vigilance prennent de plus en plus d'importance et votre participation active devient de plus en plus nécessaire. À l'échelon provincial, nous avons élaboré le programme en matière d'éducation d'OSSTF/FEESO ainsi que d'autres documents et ressources dont les dirigeants de votre district et de vos unités de négociation peuvent se servir pour informer et inspirer les membres. Lors de la dernière conférence des communications/action politique, des activistes et des dirigeants locaux ont reçu une formation sur tous les aspects de la participation à l'élection provinciale. Au niveau de votre localité, des cours de formation vous sont également proposés.

C'est maintenant que nous avons besoin de vous et de votre participation. Si vous n'avez pas le temps de soutenir la campagne d'un candidat, vous devez néanmoins voter. C'est indolore et cela ne vous prendra que quelques instants. Il est facile de voter. Cela n'exige que peu d'efforts. Si vous ne pouvez pas voter le jour de l'élection, des bureaux de vote par anticipation sont prévus. Si vous n'êtes pas sur place, vous pouvez voter par procuration. Si vous n'avez pas de moyen de transport pour vous rendre au bureau de vote, les candidats vous en procureront un. Si votre nom ne figure pas sur la liste électorale, vous pouvez vous y inscrire. Pour tout renseignement supplémentaire, appelez le bureau d'OSSTF/FEESO de votre localité ou visitez le site Web consacré aux élections en Ontario à www.elections.on.ca.

Votre participation à l'élection provinciale peut influencer sur les perspectives d'avenir de votre communauté et de l'éducation publique.

Vous connaissez la date du 6 octobre et les raisons pour lesquelles vous devez voter. Encerclez-la sur votre calendrier sans plus attendre. ☞





OTIP wants you to get **In It to Win It!**

Receive a quote for any OTIP home, auto or life & living benefits insurance product for your chance to win 1 of 12 Apple® iPads® and for a shot at our grand prize of \$25,000. Explore our full line of products for even more chances to win!

Get In It to Win It by requesting a quote online at www.youareotip.com or call us at 1-877-277-6847.



OTIP RAE0®

Insurance solutions for the
education community

Proud Partner of *Edvantage*



Get contest updates by following us on Twitter! @InItToWinIt2011

Contest closes Dec 30, 2011

To see the monthly winners and for full rules and regulations, visit us at www.youareotip.com.