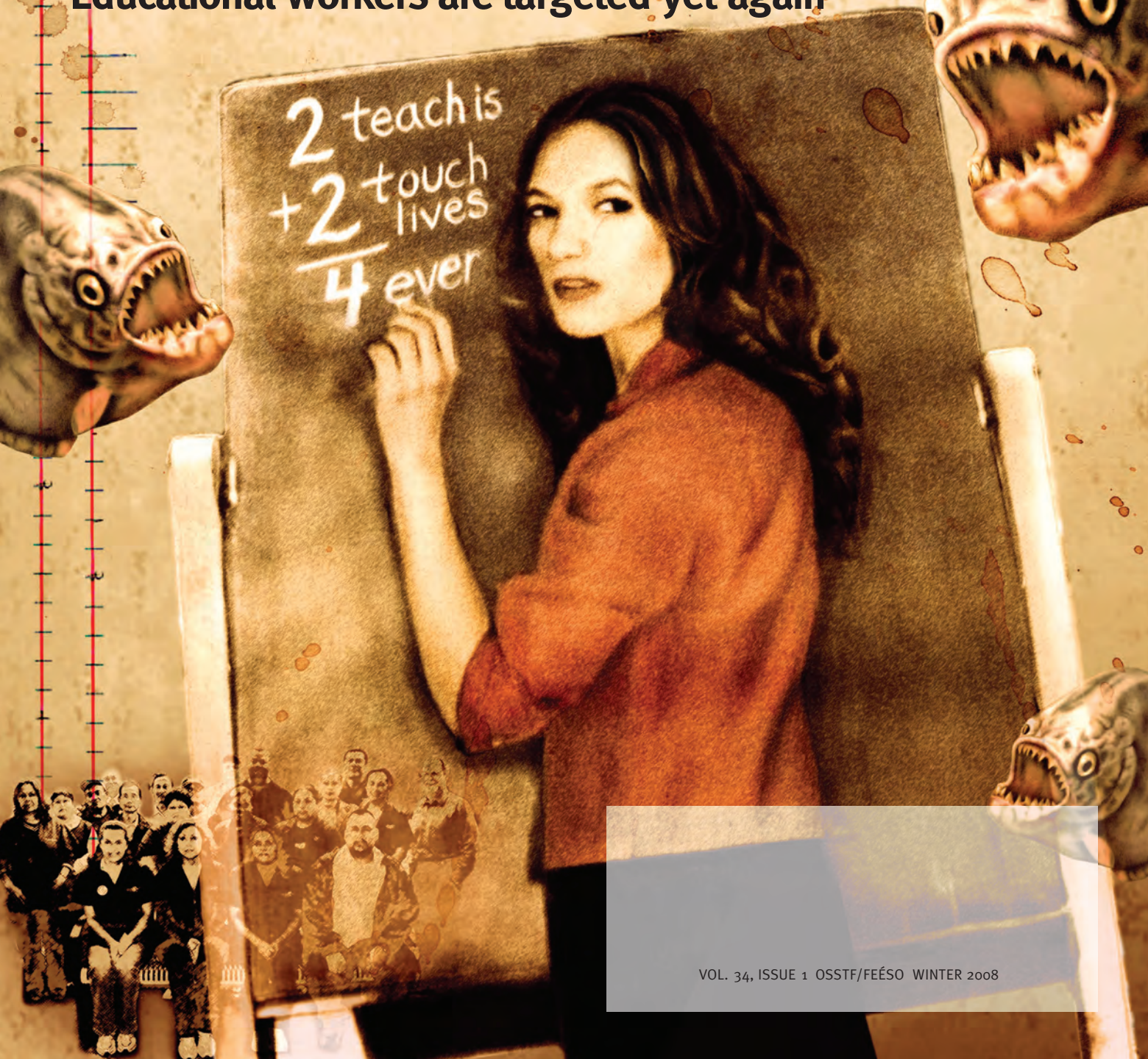


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**EDITOR** Wendy Anes Hirschegger **MANAGING EDITOR** Marianne Clayton **TRAFFIC CO-ORDINATOR** Janice Grant **COPY EDITORS** Dawn Martin, Pam Capraru **CREATIVE DIRECTION** Fresh Art & Design Inc. **ART DIRECTOR** S. Dale Vokey **DESIGN CONSULTANT** James Ireland **COVER ILLUSTRATION** Anne Horst **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 on-line 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/La Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario, www.osstf.on.ca. Published seasonally. Advertising rates listed in CARD, on OSSTF's website www.osstf.on.ca or available upon request **BUSINESS MANAGER** Wendy Bolt **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 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. Outside Canada: \$20. Single issues: \$5. Back issues: \$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; claytom@osstf.on.ca.



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# Unions: The people who brought you weekends

A couple of months ago, I received an e-mail from a labour lawyer friend that contained a link to a YouTube video from *ManicTimes*, a weekly newspaper and website in Australia. This two-minute video takes place in a corporate boardroom where seven people are sitting around the table.

The hard-nosed CEO-type begins sternly: "Right, I've called this meeting to discuss the Australian workplace agreements. We are going to send a pretty clear message to the unions that we're not going to be strong-armed," and "The unions have negotiated everything away from us; they have bled us dry...and after all that, what has the union movement ever done for us?"

At that point, the lone female in the group tentatively says, "maternity leave?" Then, one by one, the others join in and enumerate other benefits union negotiations have brought to society, such as workers' compensation, occupational health and safety, medicare, and the list goes on.

The same scene could have been shot in Canada. It is a fact that many of the things society now regards as givens and which are part of the Employment Standards Act protecting all workers, not just union members, were originally hard won through collective bargaining between unions and employers.

Despite this, there are still those who try to denigrate the work of, and perpetuate myths about, unions. One such attempt was the paper *Getting the Fox Out of the Schoolhouse: How the Public Can Take Back Public Education* published in September 2007 by the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS). I found the paper so infuriating that I felt a rebuttal would make a great article for *Education Forum*. I contacted Dr. Rebecca Coulter, a respected professor at the Faculty of

Education at the University of Western Ontario. She, too, had seen the paper, and she accepted the request enthusiastically.

The result is our cover story, "Piranhas in the Think Tanks," a beautifully written and thoughtful debunking of the more flagrant myths trotted out in the AIMS paper. She very clearly articulates how teachers' unions have not only worked diligently to improve the working lives of their members, but how, in doing so, they have also improved much in public education and, in turn, society as a whole.

OSSTF/FEESO is very proud of the work it does in this respect; our website and publications are a testament to this.

The OSSTF/FEESO *Students First Plan* and its predecessor, *The Student Success Plan*, outline our vision for giving Ontario students the academic and social skills to enable them to become confident individuals, and for ensuring that schools are clean, safe and healthy places in which students can learn and education workers can support their learning.

Our conferences are all about these same goals; their very titles tell that story: Shoulder to Shoulder...Putting Students First; and Human Rights: Ours to Defend are just two from the past year and a half, and Stronger Together...Diversity in Education is in the planning stages.

Workshops such as Beyond Bullying: Building Safer Schools, curriculum packages such as our *Common Threads* series, and resource books, including our newest addition, *Students First: Creating Dynamic Classrooms*, all speak to the rich and diverse ways in which OSSTF/FEESO members care deeply about their students and their education, and work toward their success.


Elsewhere in this issue, more articles demonstrate members' diligent work to make the world a better place. Suzanne

Burchell's article "It's Cool to Care" tells the story of her work with the student council of Orchard Park Secondary School to bring character education alive for the student body. Judith Robinson writes about the important work of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in her article "Human Security—A Canadian Concept Worth Protecting." Ruth Kirkham, OSSTF/FEESO's pension and retirement planning guru, gives solid advice and resources to get us started thinking about what we can do well before we retire.

Recent *Education Forum* articles have voiced concerns about the intense pressure to raise graduation rates and lower dropout rates. Former deputy minister of education Ben Levin's article "Student Failure: The Other Side of the Story" responds to some of those concerns.

With respect to the political aspect of public education, OSSTF/FEESO is pleased that, unlike the previous Conservative government, the current government invites education unions and other stakeholders to take part in meaningful consultation on all aspects of public education. While we don't always agree completely with some government initiatives, we do appreciate the opportunity for dialogue and the fact that the ministry does listen to our positions and takes them into careful consideration.

Paul Kossta, a member of OSSTF/FEESO's Communications/Political Action Committee, recently interviewed Premier Dalton McGuinty about the Liberal government's education policies. His meeting with the premier is highlighted in the article: "Dalton McGuinty: Proud of His Accomplishments So Far."

You'll find all this and more, in what is yet another interesting and thought-provoking issue of *Education Forum*. We hope you enjoy it. 



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# Les syndicats : On peut les remercier pour nos fins de semaine

J'ai reçu il y a quelques mois un courriel d'un de mes amis avocat spécialisé en droit du travail, avec un lien renvoyant à une vidéo YouTube provenant de *ManicTimes* un hebdomadaire et site Web australien. Cette vidéo de deux minutes nous montre sept personnes réunies autour d'une table pour un conseil d'administration.

Le PDG annonce d'un air déterminé : « Si j'ai organisé cette réunion aujourd'hui, c'est pour discuter des conventions de travail en Australie. Nous allons expliquer clairement aux syndicats que nous n'avons pas l'intention de nous laisser faire » et que « si les syndicats ont réussi à nous soutirer presque tout ce qu'ils voulaient, ils nous ont laissés dans un piteux état... et, après tout, qu'est-ce que le mouvement syndical a jamais fait pour nous? »

C'est à ce moment que la seule femme du groupe dit en hésitant « les congés de maternité? » Alors, un par un, les participants énumèrent tout ce que les négociations syndicales ont apporté à la société, notamment l'indemnisation des accidents du travail, la santé et la sécurité au travail, l'assurance-maladie et bien d'autres choses.

La situation est la même au Canada où ce que la société considère souvent comme « normal » aujourd'hui et fait partie de la *Loi sur les normes d'emploi* qui protège l'ensemble des travailleurs, pas seulement les travailleurs syndiqués, a dû à l'origine être chèrement gagné par négociation collective entre les syndicats et les employeurs.

Et pourtant, il y a encore des gens pour dénigrer le travail des syndicats, et perpétuer toutes sortes de mythes à leur sujet. Comme par exemple l'article intitulé « *Getting the Fox Out of the Schoolhouse:*

*How the Public Can Take Back Public Education* » publié en septembre 2007 par *The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies*. Cette étude m'a tellement offusquée, que j'ai décidé qu'une réfutation était nécessaire dans *Education Forum*. J'ai donc communiqué avec Rebecca Coulter, professeure bien connue de la faculté de pédagogie de l'Université Western Ontario. Elle aussi avait lu cette étude et a accepté avec enthousiasme ma demande.

« ... les syndicats  
de l'enseignement  
ont travaillé  
d'arrache-pied pour  
améliorer les  
conditions de travail  
de leurs membres,  
...à améliorer  
l'éducation publique,  
et même la société  
dans son ensemble »

Le résultat, c'est notre article-couverture intitulé « *Piranhas in the Think Tanks* », article bien pensé et bien écrit qui vient réfuter les mythes les plus grossiers repris dans l'étude de l'AIMS. Elle y explique de manière claire et éloquente comment les syndicats de l'enseignement ont travaillé d'arrache-pied pour améliorer les conditions de travail

de leurs membres, réussissant souvent par la même occasion à améliorer l'éducation publique, et même la société dans son ensemble.

OSSTF/FEESO est très fier du travail qu'elle accomplit dans ce domaine. Il n'est pas nécessaire de chercher bien loin dans notre site web et dans nos publications pour s'en rendre compte.

Le *Programme de priorité aux élèves* d'OSSTF/FEESO, tout comme celui qui l'a précédé, le *Programme de réussite des élèves*, soulignent bien notre vision pour donner aux élèves de l'Ontario les compétences scolaires et sociales qui leur permettront de devenir des personnes pleines d'assurance, et pour veiller à ce que les écoles soient des lieux propres, sans dangers et sains, où les élèves peuvent apprendre avec le soutien des spécialistes de l'éducation.

Nos conférences visent ces mêmes objectifs et leurs thèmes en disent long : Main dans la main... Accordons la priorité aux élèves et Les droits de la personne : À nous de les défendre pour n'en nommer que quelques-unes organisées au cours de l'année et demie écoulée, sans oublier non plus Tous ensemble... La diversité en éducation, en cours de préparation.

Il y a aussi les ateliers comme Au-delà de l'intimidation : Accroître la sécurité dans les écoles, les programmes comme notre série *Common Threads* et les guides de ressources comme notre nouveauté *Students First: Creating Dynamic Classrooms*, qui montrent tous bien comment les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO trouvent toutes sortes de manières de s'occuper de leurs élèves et de leur éducation, en œuvrant à leur succès.

Dans ce numéro, vous trouverez d'autres articles qui mettent en lumière



le travail acharné de membres pour bâtir un monde meilleur. L'article « *It's Cool to Care* », de Suzanne Burchell, parle de son travail avec le conseil étudiant de l'école secondaire Orchard Park pour faire profiter tous les élèves de l'école de ses efforts de développement du caractère. Judith Robinson nous parle du travail important de la Campagne internationale pour l'interdiction des mines terrestres dans son article intitulé « *Human Security—A Canadian Concept Worth Protecting* ». Ruth Kirkham, la spécialiste des retraites et de la planification des retraites pour OSSTF/FEESO, nous donne de solides conseils avec une liste de ressources sur ce qu'il faut faire pour préparer sa retraite.

Dans les derniers numéros d'*Education Forum*, certains articles ont exprimé des inquiétudes face aux très fortes pressions pour augmenter les taux de réussite et diminuer les taux d'abandon. L'article de l'ancien sous-ministre de l'éducation Ben Levin, intitulé « *Student Failure: The Other Side of the Story* », répond à certaines de ces inquiétudes.

En ce qui concerne l'aspect politique de l'éducation publique, OSSTF/FEESO est satisfait du fait que le gouvernement actuel, à l'encontre de l'ancien gouvernement Conservateur, invite les syndicats de l'enseignement et les autres parties intéressées à participer à des consultations valables sur tous les aspects de l'éducation publique. Et si nous ne sommes pas toujours entièrement d'accord avec certaines des initiatives du gouvernement, nous apprécions le dialogue et le fait que le ministère soit à l'écoute de nos positions et les prennent en considération.

Paul Kossta, qui est membre du Comité des communications/action politique d'OSSTF/FEESO, a interviewé le premier ministre Dalton McGuinty au sujet des politiques en matière d'éducation du gouvernement Libéral. Cette entrevue avec le premier ministre fait l'objet de l'article « *Dalton McGuinty: Proud of His Accomplishments So Far.* »

Voilà : nous avons préparé pour vous un nouveau numéro aussi passionnant que stimulant. Nous espérons qu'il vous plaira.



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# Human security

A Canadian concept worth protecting



**AS** educational workers, we want to protect people. It's part of our job.

But do we agree that it's our country's job to protect people all over the world just because they're our fellow human beings? Have the values of Canadians changed along with those of our federal government?

There's an immense difference between human security, which promotes the responsibility to protect people all over the planet, and national security, which promotes the need to protect a particular country's sovereignty and business interests. Recent decisions by the Harper government would suggest that it prefers the latter. But this is not the traditional Canadian behaviour.

Canada may indeed be the country

that coined the phrase and the concept "human security" over a decade ago—before then-prime minister Tony Blair heard it and adopted it as part of his Blair Doctrine.

Canada was the first to initiate many important policies and priorities in the cause of human rights. But the Ottawa Treaty may have been our country's pivotal moment in taking a leadership role to guide the nations of the world toward world peace.

In 1997, Lloyd Axworthy, then foreign affairs minister, gathered leaders from 154 countries in Ottawa to sign a treaty banning the use, stockpiling, production and trade of anti-personnel land mines.

While there had been many international peace and disarmament talks prior to that gathering, none had involved the

number of countries engaged by Canada. To date, 156 states, or 80 per cent, have signed the treaty (39 have not yet signed). That's a monumental accomplishment.

Congratulations to those Canadian history teachers who celebrate this achievement with their students. It's important to talk about the things Canada is doing right on the world stage, and to celebrate the few real heroes that we do have. And one of these heroes is clearly Lloyd Axworthy.

Due to Canada's prompting, 80 states have already finished destroying their stockpiles of land mines, with approximately 41.8 million of these destroyed since the treaty was signed. In 1999, the year the treaty came into force, an estimated 26,000 people were injured or killed by mines; in 2006, the number of reported cases had been reduced to 5,751 (though many casualties are still unreported). Prior to the treaty, 50 countries were producing land mines. That number, now reduced to 13, includes the US, India, China and Russia.

We can all take pride as Canadians in the role our country has played in reducing the potential of so many injuries and deaths. It's fair to say Canada has been involved in saving 20,000 lives a year. Let's celebrate that with our students.

But Canada may be losing ground. The December 3, 2007, CBC Radio broadcast of *The Current*, featured American Jody Williams, a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Williams said during the broadcast that she believes that while Canada deserved an A+ on the international scale for its leadership in the campaign 10 years ago, it now deserves a C— or a D+. She said Canada has refused to take a leadership role in the current campaign against cluster bombs, and it has largely withdrawn from international peace diplomacy.

The world once viewed Canada as a compassionate, caring nation—a nation of peacemakers, mediators, reconcilers and listeners. We were the people that all

nations of the world wanted to have around. Is that still true?

There may be a glimmer of hope on the horizon. Canadian politicians from all three levels of government, and academics, ambassadors, activists and military leaders from all over the world attended a symposium on the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Ottawa Treaty banning land mines in Waterloo, December 1 and 2, 2007. In this joint initiative of the Canadian Landmine Foundation, the Centre of International Governance Innovation and the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, delegates discussed next steps in eradicating land mines and getting rid of cluster munitions. Unfortunately, Canada is not leading the current charge. Norway is at the forefront.

Although there was much bad news at the symposium about the buildup of weapons, the stubbornness of munitions manufacturers and countries that refuse to disarm, there was also some incredibly good news from a boisterous, enthusiastic retired US Army general.

Lieutenant General Robert G. Gard Jr. (Ret.), a 79-year-old veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars, works full time, travelling all over the world educating people about the need for the military to return to the role of defence, not offence. General Gard is fed up with troops being used to promote government or business strategies rather than protect citizens.

General Gard, the former president of the National Defense University and of the Monterey Institute of International

Studies, is in a good position to make people listen. He has friends in high places, and he has rallied a large number of high-ranking retired military officers behind him.

Many at the symposium felt a stronger sense of hope for our world after listening to this man than we had

As educators, we realize how important it is to protect people. It's a pivotal part of our job. Perhaps it's time we took that message not only to our classrooms, but also beyond, and into the offices of our MPs

felt in a long time. His mission to divorce American troops from what he calls the military industrial congressional complex makes great sense. For if the military becomes merely a wing of commerce, how is that different from mercenary soldiers of the Middle Ages, or even the shock troops of the papacy during the Spanish Inquisition? If the military becomes divorced from its protection role, who is to protect innocent citizens? The general feels that many nations have

stepped over the line from national defence to national offence. Has Canada become one of them?

This hot topic is one that many teachers are uncomfortable discussing with their students. There are many different views on this subject, and while most of us would say that we support our troops, many of us do not support the Canadian military's role in Afghanistan, for example.

Perhaps General Gard would say it's time for the nations of the world to allow their troops to return to the role for which they were created: that of human security, or of interventions to protect people.

Land mines may never be totally eradicated, although we're well on our way to achieving that goal. But nothing can erase the role that Canada played in 1997, which led the world one step closer to adopting world peace. It may well be time for Canada to step up to the plate once again to support human security over national security—and to do what's right for humanity as a whole, not just for our own country and its business interests.

As Lloyd Axworthy, now president of the University of Winnipeg, said in his keynote speech at the symposium, "Canadians like to be involved in something that they think helps other people...to go beyond immediate self-interest. The protection of people is every bit as important as the protection of a nation state."

As educators, we realize how important it is to protect people. It's a pivotal part of our job. Perhaps it's time we took that message not only to our classrooms, but also beyond, and into the offices of our MPs. The Ottawa Treaty deserves to be remembered and emulated.

To learn more about land mines, go to [www.icbl.org/lm](http://www.icbl.org/lm).

**Editor's note:** *The International Campaign to Ban Landmines is referenced in the Ontario curriculum in both compulsory history courses (CHC2D and CHC2P), as well as in several optional geography courses (CGW4U and CGU4U), history (CHH3C) and politics (CPC30).* 🐦

**Judith Robinson**, an occasional teacher from OSSTF/FEESO District 20, Halton, is a frequent contributor to *Education Forum*.



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# It's cool to care

A conference to create cultural change



Suzanne Burchell (far right) and Stoney Creek students prepare to greet conference presenters

“School days, school days, dear old golden rule days”...remember that tune? How many of today’s students know what the golden rule is? How do they practise “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you” when the media, television, movies, games and the Internet bombard them with violence and the dark side of being human? As educators in the 2007–08 school year, we are mandated to teach character education and “old-fashioned” values. How are we going to accomplish this? How will we make a change in the beliefs of what is right and what is wrong in the face of enormous negative external messages? This is a most daunting challenge.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

It’s Cool to Care, a conference on character education held at Orchard Park Secondary School in Stoney Creek on

October 25, 2007, focused on the 10 character traits established by the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. The traits are:

- caring
- citizenship
- empathy
- courage
- acceptance
- honesty
- integrity
- respect
- responsibility
- trustworthiness.

The importance of the board’s initiative motivated us to take on a new challenge, and we were encouraged to do so by the success of our 1994 conference on racism and violence.

I was trained to implement the 1994 conference by Canadians Against Violence Everywhere Advocating Its

Termination (CAVEAT), an organization founded by Priscilla DeVilliers in 1992, shortly after her daughter Nina was murdered. DeVilliers’ strength of character has helped hundreds of victims and has brought about change in laws to assist victims of crime.

Students Against Violence and Racism (SAVAR) enabled a cultural change at Orchard Park by giving students a focus and direction on choices to deal effectively with issues of violence and racism. New attitudes prevailed. Hallway conversations included such phrases as “We don’t do that here” and “We don’t talk that way about race.” Staff and students wrote a Code of Conduct based on speakers’ messages and what they learned in the workshops. Copies were framed and posted throughout the school. The code clearly states that “we treat all people equally” and “we have a right to individuality.” The City of Hamilton awarded Orchard Park a citation recognizing the conference’s innovative efforts to deal with the problems of violence and racism.

## SPRING 2007

Planning for It’s Cool to Care is well underway. The 22-member student council and the 35 volunteer teachers, support staff and administration combine their expertise to suggest workshop leaders, provide visuals, coordinate breakfast and lunch for presenters, send invitations, create timetables and provide ideas for the conference events. Council member Katie Tran created the stunning conference logo, which shows two hands joined. Principal Pat Rocco budgeted sufficient funding to ensure that the conference was a first-class event. He was accessible and supportive of all aspects of this initiative. Bright green It’s Cool to Care T-shirts with the

conference logo on the front and the 10 traits on the back were produced for key players. Gift bags were packaged for the workshop leaders, and funds were supplied for the two keynote speakers.

For six months, the student council prepared for the conference with constant commitment to detail, working together to realize a dream. During the week before the conference, the student council ran such events as a speaker's corner, and poetry and poster contests on the character traits. Morning announcements included music and messages related to the conference. The council was a driving force behind the conference. It was their conference.

#### OCTOBER 25—SHOWTIME!

The school foyer was decorated with posters of the character attributes and a magnificent centrepiece donated by a local florist. A violinist played classical music. Council members, wearing big smiles and It's Cool to Care T-shirts,

greeted presenters with gifts and handwritten cards of welcome and thanks. They extended their hands and smiles to the presenters and said, "Hi, welcome to Orchard Park, I'm your host."

I had never felt so proud to be an educator as I did at that moment.

The 1,200-member student body wore personalized conference tags printed with their names, and those of their chosen speakers and workshops. The morning speaker, Andy Thibodeau, gave an upbeat, laughter-filled message regarding the "caring bubble." Students then found their way to one of the 18 workshops, which included such topics as bullying and cyber-bullying, stress, divorce, drug abuse, entrepreneurship, stress management and the power of the voice. In the afternoon, the student body gathered again to hear an inspiring message to "follow your dreams" by Nadya Halilbegovich, a young survivor of the siege of Sarajevo. In last period, students filled in a survey and

discussed the day's experiences.

The survey revealed the conference's effect on the students. Michael, a Grade 9 student, stated, "I never knew something as jaw dropping as this could happen." Caitlin said, "The day showed us that even though it seems like one person can't make a difference, they can." Sarah, a senior student, said "The conference was outstanding. The various workshops to choose from were unbelievable, from substance abuse to speaking with a powerful voice."


Survey data revealed the highest-rated workshops were Building an Inclusive Canada, What You Need to Succeed, the session with Priscilla DeVilliers, and True Colours.

Weeks later, just before Christmas break, a student came to my office with a card she had made for DeVilliers. She asked me to forward it to her with the message that she would like to do anything she could for her. It was a very moving moment for me to see how deeply one session had touched a student.

Has there been a cultural shift with respect to caring? Has a character education conference made a difference at Orchard Park? Time will tell. Follow-up activities have been planned for the second semester, to reinforce the impact of the conference.

In 1969, at teachers' college, I had a dream to make a difference in the lives of students. It's Cool to Care was an affirmation of that dream. Collectively and collaboratively, teachers, secretaries, support staff, caretakers, students and the administration worked together for six months to make the day a success. This was a most inspiring experience of how we can expose students to positive choices.

We can provide direction for our students when we continue to use our talents together.

David slew the giant with one stone, and we can win this new battle to instill positive character attributes in our students. One conference is a start. 

**Suzanne Burchell** teaches at Orchard Park SS for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

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Home Country: Canada

U.S.A. Placement: Georgia

Professional Goal: Start an international pen-pal program

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# Moments of laughter can lighten the load

A new experience



Canadian professor Heather Menzies has written an award-winning book called *No Time: Stress and the Crisis of Modern Life*. She examines the many strains that the workplace and relentless technology unleash on our lives.

I understand. I am a teacher. There never seems to be enough time, at least not during the typical school day—so many demands, so many responsibilities, and just too many needs.

Then there are stresses outside the classroom. Recently on TVO's *The Agenda with Steven Paikin*, the discussion was on public education. There was an impressive selection of panellists present, but the absence of any public school educator—elementary or secondary—was noticeable. Rhetoric, words, idealisms, a continuous stream

of abstractions upon abstractions. So incongruous with the acute realities of teaching. It is easy to talk of reforms, student expectations, provincial standards, teacher performance and appraisal, educational accountability; but it is another thing entirely to live this reality, as a teacher, day in, day out.

This job requires us to be skilled communicators and to negotiate and renegotiate relationships continuously. “Please settle down. Please focus. Please learn. Please like me.” Teachers are many things besides educators: substitute parents, police officers, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, friends, foes, facilitators of success or of failure; be positive, warm yet firm; mark fairly and consistently, but allow room for individual reparations; teach what has worked,

however, be creative and current.

The one, if not often disclosed, truth? Teaching is exhausting. Managing a class is exhausting. No hiding behind a computer screen, disappearing into another room, taking a longer break. We are not afforded such luxuries. The numbing routines of the timetable, of bells and of inappropriate, sometimes abusive and lessening behaviours take their toll, even on days when we ourselves are happy and healthy. Teaching during trying and difficult times in our personal lives is absolutely impossible, because we cannot disappear into our inner thoughts and apply balm to our wounds. There are just too many needs and others existing outside ourselves. Youth is impatient and cannot wait.

Another descriptor of teachers is “performer.” We are on all the time, without fail. But unlike actors, who perform in front of a receptive audience, we have to compete against teenage angst, iPods, MP3s, computers, video games, relationship woes and joy, and, sadly, uncontrollably, darker truths. Adolescent audiences can be harsh critics, hurt and damaged youths lashing out at the world. Frequently, they are just bored and disinterested. We can be easy targets. Every period, every day, we tread on delicate terrain.

We do what we can.

We do this for many reasons—extrinsic, intrinsic, a blend of both—experiencing both the sunny moments and those more garish ones.

And then there are moments of laughter.

While in graduate school, I read an article on teachers and humour. And still, all these years later, I remember it. Maybe it is because I was studying education theory, and so much seemed neatly packaged and laden with the same layers of abstractions. University professors, as well intentioned as they might have been, were talking that talk that seemed so removed from the realities I was living.

Part of the problem, of course, is that we try to capture, crystallize and describe





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pedagogy in ways that human complexity and the messiness of our lives defy. Unlike what we are told, what we wish for, students may not come in ready to learn, well fed and well loved, and filled with academic goals and aspirations. They are not *tabulae rasae*, fulfilling John Locke's philosophical premises. They might come in angry, upset, hurt, hungry, broken-hearted, confused and academically weak. Frequently, we too come in tired, bruised and knocked around by life's many trials. We do what we can.

Laughter. It is those brief moments of levity and humour that can lighten the load and, at times, dispel our communal frustration and disappointments.

I asked colleagues about comical events and remembered laughter shared with others, colleagues and students, in classrooms, in halls, gyms and staffrooms. The stories are many. I share a few here.

- OAC English class: My colleague heard a disturbing knock on the door, opened it to find a gorilla, actually a student dressed as a gorilla—the costume used by student council members—then seized this teachable moment, and waltzed with the gorilla to the amusement and, perhaps, shock of the class. Laughter erupted—most likely, too, embarrassed looks. Years later, it might be said, “I forget what we were ever taught in that class that year. I remember our teacher dancing with a gorilla.” It's all about the moment.

- A teacher runs clumsily through the breezeway, stumbles, continues on. “Run Forrest, run,” says his student, perched on the windowsill, watching the scene. One joke, then shared laughter.

- Staff meetings after long, stressful, dizzying days or during more calm, less-frenzied ones: the last June staff meeting, when bellows of laughter came a little more easily. In appreciation for their work all year, each of the secretaries (all females in this case) was presented with a beautiful floral bouquet, accompanied by a kiss. “Hey,” shouts a colleague from the back, “how come he gets to kiss all the ladies?” “Because I know how,” the lucky presenter shoots back.

- The school secretary worked tire-

lessly and faithfully each year with a group of student first aid providers, some of whom hoped to become paramedics. One student returned from a stint as a MedVent (Medical Venturer) at camp. How was it? “Miss, these children had splinters on their bodies in places I never even knew existed.”

In a Google search on teaching and humour, one hit alludes to a D.H. Lawrence quote, “So long as there's a little bit of laughter going on, things are all right. As soon as this infernal seriousness, like a greasy sea, heaves up, everything is lost,” and warns that humour can be destructive, if used to demean, silence and control. Of course, one person's sense of humour differs from another's. A joke, falling disastrously flat, can hurt and injure.

Humour, clean and good, can soothe an awkward moment, lighten a darkened mood, and help build a connection, however brief. We face adolescents who prefer to be anywhere but in a cramped and confined classroom, who challenge and resist every day, who lack the motivation and ability we believe they should have. We might complain, count the days until retirement, until the Christmas, March or summer break, seek salvation in whatever form we can. We must. Because there is period 4. And chaos:

“Miss, you're boring us.”

“Miss, take us on a field trip.”

“Miss, he hit me, that jerk. I'm going to get him.”

“Yeah, just you try, loser.”

“Ah, be quiet, man, you don't know what you're talking about.”

“Miss, she's dissing me.”

“Yo, would you just be quiet. Shhhhhhh.”

“Miss, I can't stand this class. School sucks.”

“Miss, I can't hear. What are you saying?”

“I was saying, ‘If every word I said could make you laugh, I'd talk forever.’”

“Miss, that's cheesy.”



**Mika Damianos** teaches history and special education at Central Commerce Collegiate Institute in Toronto.



### Does size matter? Do lates deserve mark penalties?

I have retired from teaching, but I just have to respond to the letters from Don Cooper and Ken O'Connor regarding credit integrity (Fall 2007).

I'm sure Cooper means well, but there are many holes in his argument. His last line, "I believe that every case should be judged individually and retention decisions should be made in the student's and school's best interests," makes complete sense, but his example sure doesn't, unless this "hulking boy" is 16 or older. If size is a criterion in the decision to advance students, then I feel sorry for all short students who have the same abilities as tall students. Because a student is a bully, or violent, is no a reason to promote them.

This same bully can find a smaller classmate in Grade 9 and attack him too! Cooper stated this incident in Grade 8 would not happen in Grade 9, but it

could happen in any grade. Pushing the problem to Grade 9 seems to be a solution some administrators use, but it doesn't work unless a special program is in place for these students. I still feel that academic standards and integrity must be maintained in both elementary and secondary schools. Students should not be pushed through when they aren't ready for the next year. Failing a student once or twice in elementary school may actually lead to later success instead of constant failures and frustrations! If safety is a concern, then problem students have to be dealt with, maybe even separated from other students.

Now, on to O'Connors' philosophy of no penalty marks being given for missing deadlines. In real life, there are huge penalties for lateness and missing deadlines. Obviously, most teachers are flexible enough to know when there are valid reasons for late submissions. Mark penalties should be enforced so that stu-

dents realize the importance of handing in their work on time. O'Connor thinks behavioural consequences will work, but I noticed he didn't give any examples. Is it fair to give some students more time while other students hand in their work on time? Of course not! That's why penalties are needed, so that fairness and standards are maintained. Where have some of these new ideas come from? How could educators have bought into them?

Harry Huizer  
(St. Catharines, ON)

### Our Mistake

"Organizing: What a ride! Le recrutement : Quelle course!" (Fall 2007) incorrectly stated, "Twelve hundred new francophone members from the university sector..." While the figure of 1,200 is correct, the makeup of the bargaining unit is 80 per cent francophone and 20 per cent anglophone. *Education Forum* apologizes for the error.

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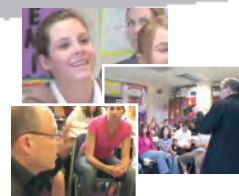
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# PIRANHAS in the THINK TANKS

Educational workers  
are targeted yet again

BY REBECCA PRIEGERT COULTER



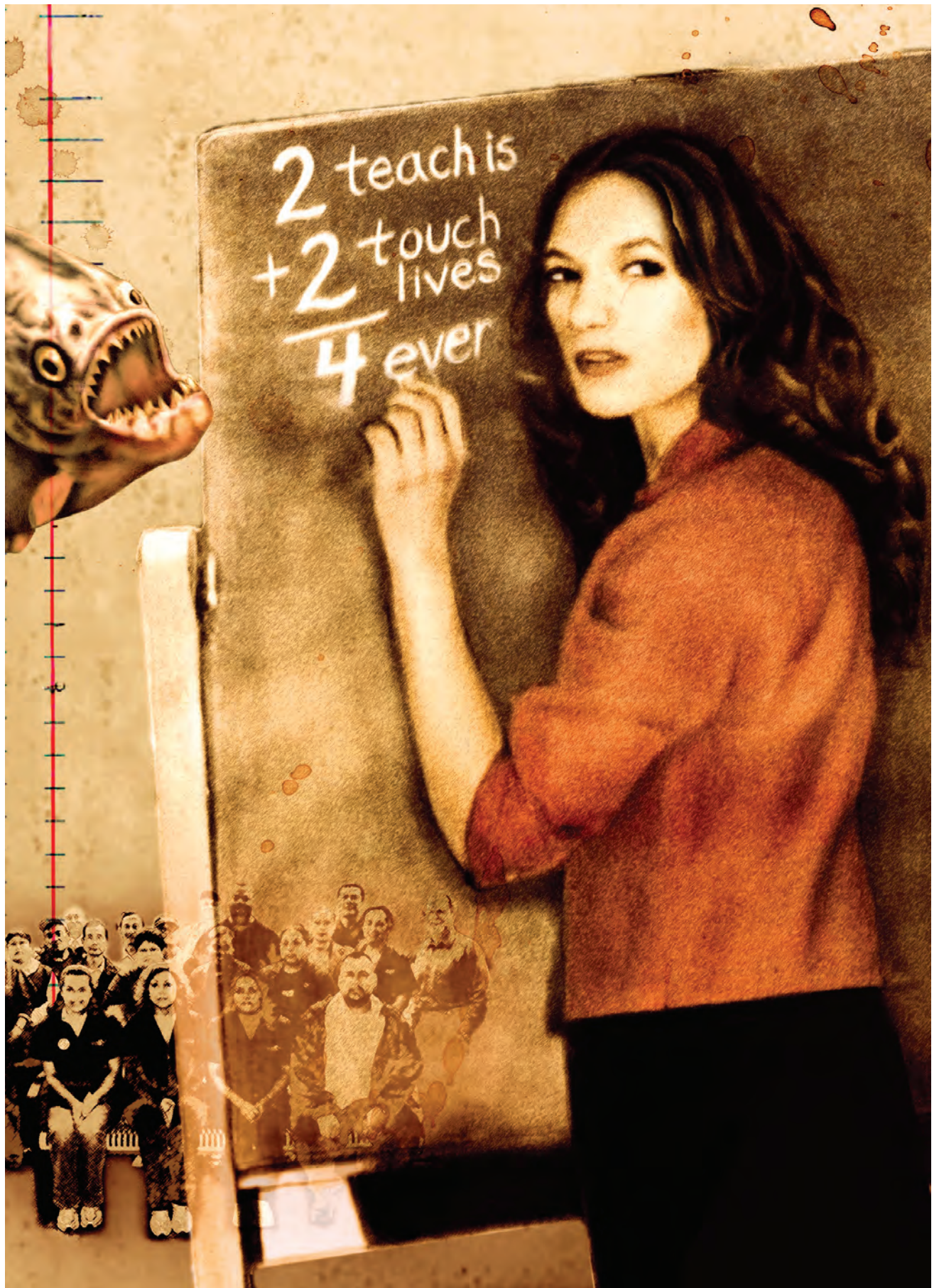
Once again, educational workers and their organizations are being targeted as the culprits responsible for hindering school effectiveness and reform initiatives. This time, the accusations are made in the report *Getting the Fox Out of the Schoolhouse: How the Public Can Take Back Public Education*. Authored by Michael Zwaagstra, a Steinbach, Manitoba, high school social studies teacher, and two University of Manitoba education professors, Rodney Clifton and John Long, and emanating from the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS), the report is really a bit of the “same old, same old” argument we hear so often from the Fraser Institute and its kissing cousins.

Think tanks, such as the Fraser Institute or AIMS, are, of course, widely used in political strategies to promote the ideology of neoliberalism, the idea that market principles should govern all

aspects of social life. Corporate leaders and retired politicians with vested interests in privatizing, downsizing, restructuring and disciplining public services, such as health care and education, serve on the boards of these think tanks. The public is inundated with commissioned research reports, media releases and commentaries produced by these think tanks as part of a concerted effort to gain support for the neoliberal agenda and make it seem like common sense (and we know where that got us a decade ago). For this reason, educational workers and supporters of public education must continually expose the self-interested analyses promoted through corporate-sponsored think tanks and keep the discourse and practices of social responsibility alive.

In reiterating the ideological position that Canadian schools are inefficient, ineffective and unsuccessful because

they are held hostage by teacher unions, *Getting the Fox* boldly, though mistakenly, claims “not one of the major objectives of teachers’ unions is framed in terms of creating or maintaining effective schools.” This sweeping generalization, unsupported by any concrete evidence, simply ignores nearly 100 years of efforts by teacher federations to improve the quality of the teaching force, enhance student learning, contribute to curriculum development, provide professional development, and encourage equity, anti-poverty and other social justice initiatives at home and abroad. The most cursory glance through the back issues of the professional journals of any Canadian teacher federation will quickly demonstrate how very committed to student learning and school improvement these organizations have been since their formation in the early 20th century. In fact, some educational historians and policy





analysts have observed that teacher organizations have been too focused on curriculum and pedagogical initiatives, and spend too little time on improving their own conditions of employment.

Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long also argue that teacher unions have spoken out against regimes of standardized testing, because they oppose all measures of public accountability. That teachers, through their unions, raise questions about the value of testing programs, and oppose the misuse, overuse and abuse of standardized testing, does not demonstrate a rejection of public accountability. In Ontario, for example, teachers accept and are held to high standards of accountability through a variety of mechanisms, including legislation and regulations governing certification, provincially mandated curriculum and control over textbooks and other teaching materials, a code of ethics, standards of practice and regular performance appraisals. Indeed, although skeptical of standardized testing programs, teachers who are the members of those demonized unions have been central to the success of Canadian students in the barrage of testing programs they have been subjected to in recent years.

Far from being ineffective and unsuccessful, a report published by the Canadian Education Association (CEA) in 2007 states that our schools have produced students who “regularly achieve higher outcomes than students from many other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.” Testing administered in 41 countries through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that 15-year-old Canadian students outperformed those from all but two countries in mathematics, came second only to

Finland in reading, and scored “well above the OECD average in science and problem solving.” The CEA report goes on to note that, “Canada’s achievements as a nation, compared to other industrialized western countries, are quite impressive.” Such facts challenge the view that somehow the principled opposition of teacher federations to the use of standardized tests for everything from assigning final grades to ranking students, teachers, and schools or even selling real estate has somehow jeopardized students’ ability to be successful on tests they are forced to write and that teachers must give.

Measures of public confidence indicate that teachers enjoy high levels of trust and respect. A May 2007 Léger Marketing poll found that 89 per cent of Canadians trust teachers. *Public Attitudes Towards Education in Ontario 2007: The 16th OISE Survey*, written by Doug Hart and David Livingstone, revealed that 65 per cent of the public believe that high school students’ final grades should be based primarily on teachers’ assessments, not provincial examinations—a strong indication that teacher competence is well recognized. And contrary to Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long’s unsubstantiated declaration that “the influence of teachers’ unions on Canadian school systems and educational policy has become a significant cause for concern for informed parents and taxpayers,” 67 per cent of parents surveyed by Guppy et al. in *Parent and Teacher Views on Education: A Policy Maker’s Guide*, reported that teacher union influence was “about right” (39 per cent) or “not strong enough” (28 per cent). Teachers themselves, by a very large majority (in the range of 95 per cent), “believed the influence of their unions was either ‘about right’ or ‘not strong enough,’” thus challenging the canard that teachers themselves are somehow at odds with their representative organizations.

Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long are at least fair enough to acknowledge in a positive way that “Teachers’ unions have an important role to play in school systems. They provide a crucial voice for teachers, and their collective agree-

ments ensure they receive reasonable salaries and working conditions and are not subject to unfair labour practices.”

But they are just plain wrong in alleging that teacher unions contribute nothing to the success of students or schools, eschew any commitment to public accountability and do not act altruistically. So what is the real intent of their report? Well, we are back to that “same old, same old” observation. At its conceptual core, *Getting the Fox* is built on the assumption that education is a product; its “customers” (i.e., parents) should have choices, schools should be run like traditional businesses, and unions must be curtailed. This message is sold in soft-sell neoliberalism packaging that attempts to camouflage the hard edges of the report’s anti-union and anti-teacher agenda.

*Getting the Fox* argues that parents want, and must have, greater choice in selecting schools, and that teacher unions are an impediment to choice. They are not talking here about more variety and choice inside the public education system. What they really mean, in the main, is that governments should transfer educational funding through vouchers, tuition subsidies or income tax relief to support private schooling. This is the slippery slope to for-profit schooling. How that will improve school effectiveness, as Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long claim, is not readily apparent. When education becomes nothing more than an individual choice, the principle of public education as a shared public good gets lost. It is for this reason that teacher unions support public education as the fairest, most just way to offer an education for all.

And educational workers are not alone in their support of public education. As Hart and Livingstone point out, a strong majority of Ontarians support funding either a single public system, or the current public and separate Roman Catholic boards. The extension of funding to faith-based or to all private schools is only supported by “a distinct minority.” In addition, the “public” also supports increases in spending for schools (73 per cent), and most people (60 per cent) are



even willing to pay higher taxes to ensure the viability of public education. Although *Getting the Fox* suggests only teacher unions want more money for education, the *16th OISE Survey* demonstrates that “Both parents and non-parents have become more supportive of spending on schools and more willing to accept higher taxation to this end.” In this context, we must ask, who then is the “public” which Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long claim is unhappy with public education and unwilling to support it.

Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long also decry limits on management rights. As they put it, “despite the fact that strong instructional leadership is a key component of effective schools, teachers’ collective agreements constrain the exercise of such leadership by school administrators.” This top-down image of instructional leadership flies in the face of our understanding of schools as places where all educational workers toil together in teams, where professional expertise is shared, and where good administrators facilitate and support the work of all staff members. *Getting the Fox* supports the removal of principals from bargaining units, because it prefers a hierarchical, authoritarian managerial model, where the principal is the boss and can make unilateral decisions about such matters as workloads, teaching schedules and timetabling, in order to service students and parents. It is a short step from there to the view that management is a generic skill and that knowledge about education or schools is not necessary for principals. Good managers can manage anything, it is said, and the spectre of business school graduates with MBAs running schools looms.

Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long also recommend a number of tools for strengthening management powers. One of these is the introduction of a system of merit pay that they openly acknowledge “would require a scheme of workload assignment, performance review, and managerial oversight currently unfamiliar to Canada’s public school systems.” They couch their support for merit pay

in the seductive language of compensation for superior teaching performance, and of recognition for outstanding teachers and schools. However, workplace merit pay schemes have not been consistent in achieving the goal of improved performance. In fact, such schemes often create discord and animosity and encourage nasty forms of competitiveness among people in organizations of all kinds. For teachers who must work collectively in schools to best support student learning, merit pay would almost certainly create destructive divisions and actually impede school effectiveness rather than enhance it. In practice, merit pay often serves as little more than a managerial tool to control or contain critical or dissenting staff, create adversarial relations among people who should be col-

**Attacks on teacher unions remind us of the important dual role teacher unions play in supporting and promoting fair, universal, accessible and equitable systems of public education, and in protecting and enhancing the work lives of their members**

leagues, and, at worst, reward friends.

Coupled with merit pay, Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long propose that teachers should have “freedom of association” which they redefine as “the right to join or not to join a union.” This “relaxation of the legal requirements of bargaining and union membership,” they argue, would allow “a genuine degree of flexibility to try different approaches to staffing, remuneration, and instructional organization.” Canadian workers,

including teachers, are all too familiar with the real meaning of “flexibility.” It means part-time work, contract work, work if and when the employer needs you. It means reducing pay, involuntary overtime, fees for service, pay by piecework, and reduced or no benefits. For teachers, so-called flexible approaches to instructional organization might mean such changes as longer days, compulsory extracurricular assignments, mandatory daily supervision of lunchrooms and playgrounds, involuntary summer school or evening teaching. Without the protection of unions, teachers would be open to many different forms of exploitation. Indeed, Zwaagstra, Clifton and Long’s crafty reconstruction of the meaning of the Charter right to freedom of association replicates another cunning sleight of hand, the so-called anti-union “right to work” legislation of the American South. It goes without saying that they oppose the right to strike.

Attacks on teacher unions remind us of the important dual role teacher unions play in supporting and promoting fair, universal, accessible and equitable systems of public education, and in protecting and enhancing the work lives of their members. Educational workers, in coalition with concerned parents and other communities, must strive not only to defend public education and their own rights, but to make schools one arena where the language and ideas of neoliberalism can be contested, and alternative visions of civil society can be created. 🐉

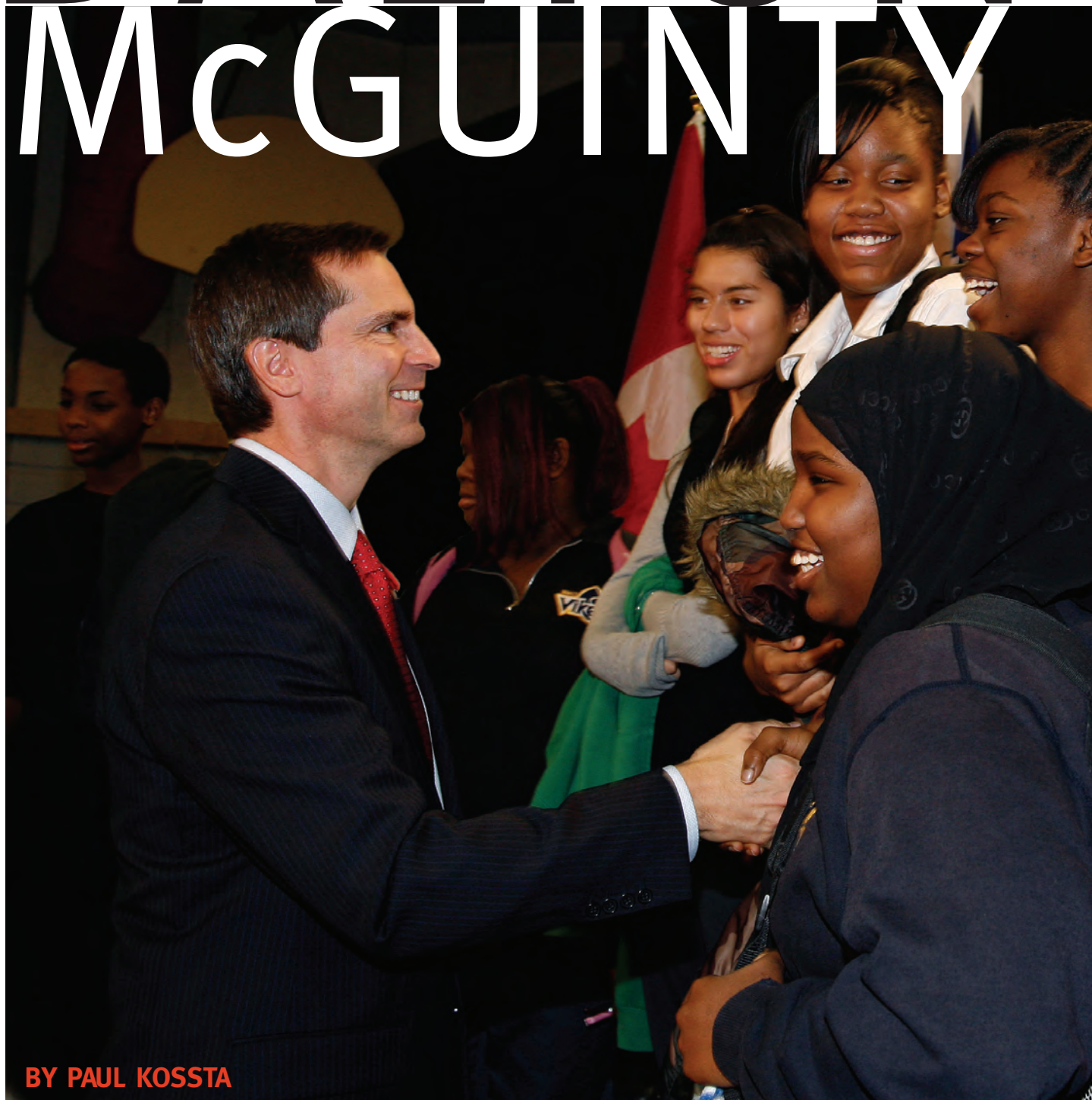
**Rebecca Priegert Coulter** is a professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario.





Proud of his accomplishments so far

# DALTON McGUINTY



BY PAUL KOSSTA



Sitting in the premier's office seven weeks after his comfortable re-election victory, I note that the modest reception area is adorned with photos of Dalton McGuinty and ordinary Ontarians at various functions. I carefully review the photos for any political leaders or celebrities. There are none, just McGuinty and those ordinary citizens.



Ten minutes after I arrive, I am summoned to see the premier. He is dressed in his customary white shirt, red tie loosened at the neck, no jacket. It is a look we are used to seeing from Dalton McGuinty, one that conveys hard work, with little formality. He greets me at the door with a smile; we exchange a few words about the day and the weather. A photographer is present, and he takes a few shots.

The premier's office contains more photos, but these, on a credenza behind his desk, are of his wife and children. But still none of McGuinty with political leaders or celebrities.

I advise the premier that this interview is meant to be an update of one he did with *Education Forum* prior to the 2003 election. He was featured on the cover with the question "The Education Premier?" He said he remembered the interview, the cover and the article.

Naturally, I ask him if he believes he has earned the title of Education Premier. He responds modestly, "I'll leave it to others to decide whether I am worthy of the title, but I can tell you my passion for publicly funded education is as strong as ever; it still remains my highest priority as leader of our government."

He points out that the education system was in a mess when he took over from eight years of Conservative rule. He says, "We left behind an era of cuts and conflict and demoralized educational workers; now we have peace and stability. We've brought respect to the system for all of our educational workers." He proudly proclaims, "We have smaller classes, higher test scores and higher graduation rates, and we're building new schools and repairing old ones, so we have successfully turned the corner together."

He sees this past election as a directive from Ontarians to continue making

the necessary enhancements to the publicly funded system. He adds, "One of the clear marching orders that I received from Ontario voters from the time of the last election was, 'Build on the foundation, don't weaken our foundation when it comes to our publicly funded schools—find a way to build on that foundation,' and that's what we'll do."

While McGuinty proudly points out that his government has invested as much in education in the four years of Liberal government as the Conservatives did in eight years, he still has not resolved the funding formula question. The Rozanski report, published in December 2002, gave Ontario a blueprint for education funding. McGuinty said prior to the 2003 election, in the pages of *Education Forum*, that the funding formula was inadequate and inflexible. Yet, in this past election, he only promised to review the funding formula by 2010.

How could he reconcile his promise prior to the 2003 election with his present position on the funding formula? He states, "We've set 2010 as the date for formal review but we will continue to make changes between now and then, just as we made changes

to the funding formula during the course of the past four years." He adds, "The funding formula is a work-in-progress. It will never be—in my ideal world—formally and finally fixed, because our aspirations as a society and our expectations will evolve, and we're going to want to see new resources implemented, perhaps in a different way than they were in the past. We want to ensure that we are always looking to evolve the funding formula."

He talks about the \$300 million his government invested in August 2007 to illustrate his commitment to providing school boards with more flexibility in

**"I can tell you my passion for publicly funded education is as strong as ever; it still remains my highest priority as leader of our government"**





**PREMIER MCGUINTY BELIEVES EDUCATION IS LIFE-LONG LEARNING—  
A CONTINUUM FROM JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN TO POST-DOCTORAL PROGRAMS**

hiring education workers, despite the lack of a funding formula review. For McGuinty, “2010 is a moment in time when we say, ‘Hang on for a second now—we’ve made all these changes since 2003. What’s the sum total of those changes, and what more do we need to do to continue to improve it?’”

One of the biggest challenges facing education over the next few years is declining enrolment. Of 72 Ontario school boards, only 18 have seen increases in enrolment over the past four years. While acknowledging the challenge, McGuinty says, “What we have done is put in place an approach to funding that provides additional support to schools in rural Ontario, schools in northern Ontario, where the economies of scale are not to be found. We’re providing additional funding where boards have some schools with lower enrolment and have

extraordinary costs to keep those schools open because of lower enrolment.”

He claims that despite declining enrolment, his government has hired nearly 9,000 more teachers, 5,000 more educational assistants, 770 more custodians, 830 more secretaries and 960 more student support staff. He adds, “So we have not said, ‘Well, since there was declining enrolment we’re going to cut back on our investment.’ We’ve thought there is still a lot of room to improve the quality of education we’re delivering to our young people. That demanded not fewer but more resources in the face of declining enrolment.”

For communities that fear they may face school closings, McGuinty says he cannot guarantee that no schools will close. But he goes on to say, “A school in a community is more than just another building; it’s more than just another

enterprise or organization. It represents part of the heart and soul and the promise that a community holds for the future. To close a school has a profound impact on the sense of community and the promise it holds for its future, so we’ve got to be really careful.” He adds, “We’ve made it law now that if you want to close a school in your board, you have an obligation to prove it’s in the interest of the children’s education that the school be closed.”

McGuinty is especially proud of the peace and stability he believes his government has brought to the education system. He talks about his visits to schools, and says, “I definitely get a sense that morale is much better, and that there is real partnership between the government and our educational workers.” He adds, “I’ve talked to older teachers, who’ve said they are now delaying their retirement, and to the newer teachers who are not leaving before they have barely begun (the attrition rate at the outset for young teachers has come down) as a result of this new atmosphere and the new resources we have put in place.”

McGuinty continues, “I’ve understood from the outset that we’ve got to treat everybody who works in education with a great deal of respect, and that’s not just a matter of money. You can’t buy people’s enthusiasm, you can’t buy their dedication, you can’t buy their sense of commitment, but you can earn it through respect, and ensuring the proper resources are in place.”

But what about the sense that McGuinty has concentrated on resolving teachers’ concerns but not those of support workers? He rejects the claim and believes there is a misperception about his commitment to all education workers, saying, “Let me make it clear that all of our educational workers are essential to the delivery of good-quality education to our students. I see them, all of them, as part of an integrated team where every player on the team has an invaluable role to play.” He continues to make his appeal. “We’ve hired 7,600 more support workers—that’s an increase of 15 per cent despite a decline in student enrolment of over 60,000 students.” He

also points out that the August 2007 funding announcement of \$300 million was “for more secretaries, educational assistants, para-professionals, supply teachers and the like.” And he emphasizes that the Liberal election platform promised, “We will hire more support workers to ensure schools are clean and well supervised.”

Supervision is a major issue for education workers. I remind McGuinty of the increasing violence in schools, which culminated with the tragic murder of a student this past year. He expresses his concern for the family, and the community, and says, “Parents have the right to expect that when they send their kids to school, they will be safe. Educational workers have the right to expect that when they go to school, that school place will be safe for them as well.” He discusses some of the efforts his government has made in the Safe Schools Act. He talks not only about crime and punishment, but says, “We have also ensured that those suspended and expelled had the opportunity to take alternative programs, so they didn’t just go out there and get into more mischief.” He points to the Liberal platform promise to “create teams of social workers, youth workers and police to work with at-risk students to make sure they have the support they need to succeed. We will work with police and community groups to add more prevention initiatives to our Safe Schools strategy, and we look forward to consulting our educational workers in that regard.”

McGuinty’s press aide interrupts to remind us that the premier has other appointments and that we should conclude the interview. By this point, it is clear McGuinty is focused on the interview. He says we can extend the time to accommodate the remaining questions. And so we proceed.

I advise the premier that OSSTF/

FEESO has recently added 1,200 new members from the university sector and that our agenda has broadened. I


ask him about the manufacturing crisis occurring in Ontario, and how the university and college sector can help alleviate the situation.

He starts by reminding me of his vision that education is about life-long learning, a continuum from junior kindergarten to post-doctoral programs. He talks of the \$6.2-billion investment made by his government; and of the

86,000 more young people in the post-secondary system, including an additional 6,000 in apprenticeship programs. He adds, “The more young people we can get to complete their high school education and go on to college, universi-

ty or apprenticeship, the stronger their chances to get and keep a good-paying job and the stronger our chances to have a stronger economy.”

The interview concludes. McGuinty escorts me to the door and bids me farewell.

As I leave Queen’s Park, I reflect on how earnest he is on education issues. At every Ontario Liberal Party conference since assuming his party’s leadership, he has invariably started his speeches with a reference to education and its importance to Ontario and its future. He is a parent with four young adults still in Ontario’s education system. His wife and many of his relatives and friends are education workers. So, I ask myself, if this man cannot one day assume the mantle of Education Premier, then who can? 

**Paul Kossta** teaches for the Toronto District School Board and is a member of OSSTF/FEESO’s Communications/Political Action Committee.

**“I’ve understood from the outset that we’ve got to treat everybody who works in education with a great deal of respect, and that’s not just a matter of money”**



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# Belly Dancing? Travelling to the Antarctic?

Your retirement dreams can come true with proper planning **By Ruth Kirkham**

RETIREMENT IS ANOTHER PHASE OF YOUR LIFE IN WHICH YOU WANT to be successful—in this case, to enjoy a long and healthy life and be able to do what you want, when you want. However, to meet this goal requires some planning. There are many things to think about and decisions to make. Statistics show that those who plan ahead are more successful in retirement.

Discuss both lifestyle and financial issues with family and/or friends who play a significant role in your life. Use their input to help guide you.

**Lifestyle issues:** What do you want to be able to do in retirement? How can you ensure that you're as healthy as possible? Will you have relationships that will assist you to have a full, rich retirement? What do you want to do with your time? Will you be responsible for others? Will you do volunteer work? Will you be a caregiver? Will you require support systems?

**Financial issues:** Once you have decided what you want to do, you will need to estimate your expenses. Will changes in your lifestyle increase or decrease these /Continued on page 26



# Danse du ventre ou voyage en Antarctique?

Avec une bonne planification, vos rêves peuvent devenir réalités à la retraite

LA RETRAITE, C'EST UNE NOUVELLE PHASE DE VOTRE VIE, ET VOUS voulez en faire une réussite. Vous voulez vivre longtemps et en bonne santé, et pouvoir faire tout ce que vous voulez, quand vous voulez. Mais pour atteindre cet objectif, il faut un peu de planification. Il faut penser à beaucoup de choses et prendre toutes sortes de décisions. Les chiffres nous montrent que ce sont ceux qui planifient qui ont le plus de succès pour leur retraite.

Ce que vous devez faire avant de prendre vos décisions, c'est d'en discuter avec tous ceux qui comptent dans votre vie.

Dans vos discussions, n'oubliez pas de parler de votre style de vie autant que de votre planification financière.

**Le style de vie :** Qu'est-ce que vous voulez faire à la retraite? Que pouvez-vous faire pour veiller du mieux possible à votre santé? Vos relations vont-elles vous aider à vivre une retraite satisfaisante et bien remplie? Que voulez-vous faire de tout ce temps dont vous allez disposer? Allez-vous devoir vous occuper de d'autres? Allez-vous offrir bénévolement vos services à un organisme de votre choix? Est-ce qu'il /Suite à la page 27





*Continued from page 24/* amounts? Will you be changing communities, types of leisure activities, the size of your home or amount of travel?

Most OSSTF/FEESO members contribute to the Ontario Municipal Employees' Retirement System (OMERS) pension plan, or to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP). Both plans have excellent websites full of useful information, and they include online tools that allow you to estimate various pension scenarios. Check them out when planning your retirement. Ask your plan administrators for pension estimates for projected retirement dates. You can also obtain your Canada Pension Plan (CPP) estimate online, or by mail. Investigate whether your plan will have you begin to receive CPP at age 65, as early as 60, or delayed as late as 70. What will the purchasing power of your retirement income be? Does this meet your needs as outlined in your goals? If not, how can your plan be amended?

Will you have to prioritize your lifestyle choices, or will you supplement your pension with other income? This can include savings and investments, deregistering RRSPs, turning a hobby or interest into a small business, or other job opportunities. Research any post-retirement employment restrictions that might affect your plans. The OTPP limits how many days you can work for publicly funded school boards and OTPP-

designated employers without pension implications.

For most retirees, purchasing power will be at its lowest level immediately upon retirement, then increase when they begin collecting CPP and Old Age Security (OAS). In the first few years, you can choose to use your retirement gratuity, if you are entitled to one, as a supplement. All possible supplementary incomes should be considered in your discussions and planning.

Books on retirement that include both life and financial planning can also aid in discussion and decision-making. Time spent doing research is time well invested.

Changes in legislation can affect retirement planning. Changes to the Income Tax Act now allow workplace pension income (though not CPP or OAS) to be split between spouses when filing income tax. This could prove beneficial, especially if the pensioner's spouse has a much lower taxable income. The couple would then pay less total income tax. Combined CPP pension income can be split between spouses if both agree to do so. There are also personal tax deductions for pension income. Check out all available options so that you are making the most efficient use of the tax laws.

You will also need to determine what insurance coverage—life, property, automobile and health benefits—you will need in retirement.


Retirement planning also includes protecting you and your family by updating your will to provide estate planning for survivor benefits payable from your pension plan.

You may need or want a financial adviser to guide you through some of the decisions you will have to make. Do some homework to find an adviser with whom you can work well. Education workers and your families can contact OTG Financial, or check its website to see when advisers are available in your area for a no-fee financial planning meeting. (OTG Financial is a financial services company that has served members of the education community for over 30 years.)

Check your collective agreement to see what provisions, if any, it makes for you in retirement. The collective agreement outlines the steps and timelines you must follow to complete the retirement process.

Once you have decided to retire, as well as when you'll retire and what you would like to do afterwards, you should also check with your pension plan(s) to ensure that you follow the application process correctly so that you do indeed receive your retirement income in a timely manner.

OSSTF/FEESO provides retirement workshops for members who are in the planning stages. Check the OSSTF/FEESO website for dates, or contact your local bargaining unit.

Decide what you want and what you need from retirement. Custom-design your own plan, and amend it to adapt to changes in your life. With informed planning, the retirement phase of your life can be all that you want it to be. Whether it's belly dancing or travelling to the Antarctic, your retirement dreams can come true with proper planning. Enjoy! 

**Ruth Kirkham**, executive assistant at OSSTF/FEESO's provincial office, specializes in retirement issues.

## Resources for Retirement Planning

### **Ontario Municipal Employees' Retirement System OMERS**

1 University Ave., Ste. 700  
Toronto, ON M5J 2P1  
Tel: 1-800-387-0813  
Fax: 416-360-0217  
E-mail: client@omers.com  
www.omers.com

### **Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan OTPP**

5650 Yonge St.  
Toronto, ON M2M 4H5  
Tel: 1-800-668-0105  
Fax: 1-800-949-8208  
E-mail: inquiry@otpp.com  
www.otpp.com

**OTG Financial**  
2225 Sheppard Ave. E.  
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www.otgfinancial.com

### **OSSTF/FEESO**

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Tel: 1-800-267-7867  
Fax: 416-751-7079  
E-mail: kirkhar@osstf.on.ca  
www.osstf.on.ca

### **The Canadian Retirement Guide: A Comprehensive Handbook on Aging, Retirement, Caregiving and Health**

*By Jill O'Donnell, Graham McWaters and John A. Page*  
Published by Insomniac Press, 2004  
ISBN 1-894663-65-9  
\$21.95

### **Redefining Retirement**

*By Dr. Margaret Hovanec and Elizabeth Shilton*  
Published by Second Story Press, 2007  
ISBN 978-189717210  
\$15.72 (Amazon.com)



*Suite de la page 25/* va vous falloir prendre soin de quelqu'un? Allez-vous avoir besoin d'aide?

**Questions financières :** Une fois décidé ce que vous voulez faire, il va vous falloir calculer vos dépenses. Pensez-vous changer votre mode de vie pour augmenter ou diminuer vos dépenses? Allez-vous déménager, changer vos activités récréatives, prendre une maison plus grande ou plus petite, ou faire beaucoup de voyages?

La plupart des membres d'OSSTF/FEESO cotisent au Régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario (OMERS) ou au Régime de retraite des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario. Ces deux régimes disposent de sites Web très bien faits avec de l'information utile et des outils de planification qui permettent aux membres d'évaluer en ligne toutes sortes de possibilités. Vous devriez consulter ces sites dès les étapes de planification de votre retraite. Demandez à votre régime d'évaluer vos prestations en se basant sur les dates auxquelles vous songez prendre votre retraite. Demandez aussi une évaluation de vos prestations du Régime de pensions du Canada. Tout ceci, vous pouvez le faire en ligne ou par correspondance. Vos plans prévoient-ils des prestations du Régime de pensions du Canada (RPC) à 65 ans, dès 60 ans, ou plus tard, à 70 ans par exemple? Quel sera votre pouvoir d'achat avec votre revenu de retraite? Est-ce qu'il sera

suffisant pour répondre aux besoins soulignés dans votre plan? Et sinon, comment pouvez-vous modifier votre plan?

Allez-vous devoir établir des priorités dans vos choix, ou avez-vous l'intention d'ajouter un autre revenu à votre rente de retraite? Il peut s'agir notamment du revenu tiré de votre épargne et de vos placements, de la fermeture de vos REÉER, de la transformation d'un passe-temps en une petite entreprise, ou d'autres occasions d'emploi. Étudiez toutes les limites aux possibilités d'emploi à la

retraite qui pourraient avoir un effet sur vos projets. Le Régime de retraite des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario impose des limites au nombre de jours de travail possibles pour les conseils scolaires publics et pour certains employeurs désignés, sans répercussions sur votre retraite.

Pour la plupart des retraités, le pouvoir d'achat atteint son niveau le plus bas dès le moment où ils prennent leur retraite, pour remonter à nouveau lorsqu'ils commencent à toucher les prestations du RPC ou de la

Sécurité de la vieillesse (SV). Si vous le voulez, vous pouvez utiliser notre gratification de retraite, si vous y avez droit, pour compléter votre revenu pendant les premières années. Vous devez songer à toutes ces possibilités de revenu complémentaire lors de vos discussions et de votre planification.

Il existe de très bons livres consacrés à la planification de la retraite. Comme par exemple, *The Canadian Retirement*

Planifier votre retraite,  
c'est aussi protéger  
votre famille et vous-  
même en préparant  
un testament et  
en planifiant votre  
succession

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*Guide*, de O'Donnell, McWaters et Page, et *Redefining Retirement*, par Hovanec et Shilton. Ces livres parlent à la fois de la planification financière et de la préparation de la retraite. Les sujets abordés dans ces livres, comme dans de nombreux autres, vous aideront à planifier et à discuter, en vue de prendre les bonnes décisions pour la phase de retraite de votre vie. Nous ne pouvons trop vous recommander de consacrer le temps qu'il faut à ce travail de recherche.

Les modifications apportées à la loi ont aussi un effet sur la planification de notre retraite. Les changements à la *Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu* permettent maintenant de partager le revenu de retraite provenant d'un emploi (mais pas du RPC ou de la SV) entre les conjoints au moment de préparer leurs déclarations de revenus. Ceci peut être avantageux, surtout si l'un des conjoints a un revenu imposable nettement inférieur à celui du retraité. Ainsi, le couple aurait à payer en tout moins d'impôts. Il est aussi possible de répartir entre vous et votre conjoint vos revenus de retraite combinés du RPC si vous décidez tous les deux de le faire. Il existe également des déductions d'impôt personnelles pour le revenu de retraite. Veillez à bien faire votre planification pour tirer parti de toutes les possibilités d'allègement fiscal.

Vous devrez aussi décider de la protection d'assurance (vie, biens, automobile, soins de santé) dont vous aurez besoin. Planifier votre retraite, c'est aussi protéger votre famille et vous-même en préparant un testament et en planifiant votre succession. Ces discussions et ces décisions doivent porter notamment sur les prestations de survivant de votre régime de retraite.

Peut-être déciderez-vous qu'il vous faut un conseiller financier pour certaines des décisions qu'il vous faut prendre. Il va vous falloir faire votre recherche pour trouver le conseiller qui vous convient le mieux. Les membres de l'enseignement et leur famille peuvent s'adresser à *OTG Financial* ou visiter son site pour voir à quels moments ils peuvent consulter sans frais les conseillers dans leur région.

Pendant votre recherche, n'oubliez pas de vérifier votre convention collective, pour voir si certaines dispositions s'appliquent à vous à la retraite. Vous trouverez aussi dans cette convention toutes les étapes que vous devez suivre, avec les dates, pour prendre votre retraite.

Une fois que vous aurez décidé de prendre votre retraite, et à quelle date, et de ce que vous voulez faire, vous devriez aussi vérifier auprès de votre régime de retraite les démarches à entreprendre pour commencer à toucher votre revenu de retraite.

OSSTF/FEESO organise des ateliers de préparation à la retraite pour les membres qui commencent à planifier leur départ. Vous en trouverez les dates sur le site d'OSSTF/FEESO, ou demandez à votre unité syndicale locale.

C'est vous qui décidez ce que vous voulez et ce qu'il vous faut pour votre retraite. C'est vous qui personnalisez votre propre plan, et qui le modifiez en fonction de votre vie. Grâce à une planification bien pensée, vous pourrez tirer tout ce que vous voulez de la phase de retraite de votre vie. Que ce soit la danse du ventre ou un voyage en Antarctique, vos rêves de retraite se réaliseront grâce à une planification appropriée. Profitez-en bien! 🐧



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# Return to Bolivia

"These photographs were inspired by the travels of my parents, who lived in South America between 1947 and 1952," wrote Stewart Craven, a teacher at the Ontario Science Centre School. "During this time, my father worked as a consultant for a tin corporation based in the southwest corner of Bolivia. For the first eight months of my life, I lived in Telemayu, Bolivia, at an altitude of 4,200 metres. Last summer was my first opportunity to return to South America. My goal was to photograph places where I, or my parents, had lived or visited many years earlier. • 'Two images—Einstein's equations painted on the locomotive in the 'railroad graveyard' and the façades of dwellings—were taken in Uyuni. The photograph of the geyser was taken in Sol de Mañana, an exceptionally beautiful part of Bolivia near the Chilean border. The haunting photograph of the telephone pole with no wires was taken in an abandoned mining town called Quechisla.' • In October 2008, Stewart Craven will show photographs from this trip at the OSSTF/FEESO gallery at its headquarters in Toronto. 🐦





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# Student FAILURE

Another side of the story

BY BEN LEVIN

Over the past year, *Education Forum* has run a number of articles expressing concern that the integrity of credits in Ontario high schools is at risk because teachers are being pressed to give grades they feel the students do not merit. OSSTF/FEESO recently held a seminar on this topic that received substantial media attention.

Secondary teachers are right to believe that Ontario high school graduates should have earned that designation through the development of appropriate knowledge and skills. Nobody—whether a high school student or anyone else in our society—should receive credentials without having earned them. Public confidence in our education system depends on the belief that the credits and certificates we award have real value.

We also know that students' success in secondary schools is strongly affected by the work of teachers. We have plenty of evidence as to the difference good instruction and strong support from their teachers make to students' achievement and their lives. It's easy to find moving testimonials from students who talk about how a teacher changed, or even saved, their lives by extending that extra support at a key time. Indeed, the evi-

dence shows that with good teaching and good supports, virtually all students can successfully complete high school.

There is a real dilemma here in regard to public perceptions. On one hand, people rightly expect our schools to have high success rates. On the other, if grades or graduation rates go up too much, we hear that this must mean lower standards, that graduating is getting easier. One of my mentors, a director of education in Manitoba who has returned to teaching, used to tell the story of a conversation with his department head who was concerned that nobody had failed my friend's Grade 11 physics course. "Oh," he replied, "I'll try not to teach them so well next time."

So how should we regard the issue of standards and failure in our high schools?

Compelling evidence shows that failure, in every human activity, tends to generate less effort, not more, making people more reluctant to try again and diminishing future success. Studies in elementary schools show that retaining students in a grade has no beneficial effects when compared with promoting similar-performing students. In secondary schools, we know that failing one or more courses in Grade 9 is associated

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with a much lower probability of graduation, regardless of students' ability. The evidence supports that giving students failing grades is more likely to be demotivating than it is to result in their working harder. The lesson failure usually teaches is not "Try harder," but rather "Stop trying, because you can't do it."

Although we may hear otherwise, there is plenty of failing taking place in our secondary schools. Graduation rates in Ontario are still only about 75 per cent after five years, perhaps 70 per cent in the usual four years. Only about 70 per cent of Grade 9 students complete all eight credits in Ontario today, and fewer in many schools and boards. This means that many students are failing courses. It's a reasonable assumption that more than 30 per cent, and perhaps as many as 40 per cent or more, of Ontario students are experiencing at least one course failure during their high school years. It's hardly the case that all students are passing no matter what.

We also know that grades are not precise measures of student learning. Can we be sure that a mark of 48 per cent reflects a real difference in learning from a mark of 53 per cent? Research has shown that school assignments and marks are subject to error; they are not always well connected to key curriculum goals, or may put too much emphasis on recalling facts as opposed to learning concepts. Tests, exams and grades may also lack reliability—that is, students' marks would differ significantly if they did the same work on more than one occasion. Marks may be affected by teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes, and there is evidence that different teachers give different marks for the same work. Averaging marks across assignments may penalize students for improving their work, or for having a single bad performance. Given all these limitations, how confident can we be that the marks we give are true measures of student learning?

There is also ample evidence that people have more potential than their early learning results may indicate. Many studies and intervention programs have demonstrated that students who were failures in high school can achieve high levels of performance in demanding programs when given the appropriate supports. Over time, we have learned that people are almost always capable of more than we might think, as the achievements of students with disabilities—who were not so long ago denied access to regular schooling—have shown so clearly. To take another example, special access pro-

face criminal charges. Only in education do we somehow think that having many students fail is a good thing.

Moreover, other countries—and some Canadian provinces—do better than Ontario in this area. Several provinces have graduation rates above 80 per cent from four-year high school programs. Many countries have secondary school graduation rates of 85 per cent or more. Most of these countries—Germany, Norway, Ireland and Denmark, for example—fall well below Canada in the literacy and numeracy performance of students at age 15 on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). If Canadian students are among the very best in the world at age 15, should we not also expect to have one of the highest graduation rates in the world? Yet we don't.

Failure is also expensive, for the system as well as for students. The gross cost of each year of high school across Ontario is more than \$1 billion. If 25 per cent of students are taking an extra year to finish high school, the cost is in the neighbourhood of \$250 million each year, money that could be better spent on extra support for students in the first place, on smaller

class sizes, on better learning materials, instead of having students repeat courses or entire years. While many Ontarians continue to believe that the fifth year of high school is a good thing, every other jurisdiction in North America has managed for decades with 12 years of school (except Quebec, of course, which has only 11 years).

The story of falling standards is an old and familiar one. The same complaints from universities and employers about how students' skills are declining have been around for generations, if not centuries. Gerald Bracey has documented this fully in his paper "Why Can't They Be Like We Were" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 73, No. 2, pp. 104–17, October 1991). Every generation seems

The lesson failure usually teaches is not "Try harder," but rather "Stop trying, because you can't do it"



grams in Manitoba have graduated hundreds of students from such fields as engineering, law, medicine, teaching and social work—students who would not even have been admitted to university based on their high school grades.

High failure rates are not a sign of high standards. What enterprise other than education would think that a high failure rate was a sign of good practice? A hospital with 30 per cent reinfection rates (let alone 30 per cent mortality) would be subject to a public outcry, if not closed. A business with 30 per cent defective products, or services, would soon go bankrupt. An airline with 30 per cent late arrivals or lost luggage would have no passengers. A bank that paid the correct interest 70 per cent of the time would



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to feel that the next is not as good, and wants to blame the schools. But objective evidence does not support this claim, as Bracey also points out.


Unfortunately, when teachers express these concerns publicly they may be feeding public concern and cynicism about public education. In the case of the recent OSSTF/FEESO seminar, the excellent results Canadian students obtained in PISA 2006 were washed out in the media the very next day by the more extensive coverage of teachers saying that children were passing who did not deserve to do so. Bad news generally gets more media attention than good news, but such reporting does not inspire the public to want to spend more money on education and give more support to our public schools.

Some say that the world outside schools is a world of failure, and that if we don't teach our students that lesson we are doing them a disservice. But that is a fallacious line of thinking. Again, failure does not prepare people for any-

thing. It's the experience of success, of getting better at something, that builds perseverance in the face of obstacles. Our goal in schools should—must—be success for all students, where success means genuine accomplishment in meaningful work. Everything we do should focus on what it takes to support students in learning more, getting better, and becoming more confident in their own capabilities.

Teachers play a critical role in this process. We have plenty of evidence to show how powerful teachers' confidence and support are. Students, especially our most vulnerable, speak compellingly about how that extra belief and support from a teacher changed their lives, gave them courage to go on. When teachers work with students, understand them, reach out to them and support them—as many thousands of teachers do every day—it makes all the difference.

People become teachers because they believe that teaching can make a

positive difference in students' lives. With the pressures of daily life, it can be easy to forget that purpose. Sometimes students are their own worst enemies, making the job much harder than it needs to be. It is so tempting to feel that if only they would meet us halfway, things would be better, and if they won't do so they have to learn the hard way. But meeting us halfway is not, for myriad reasons, the reality for some students, who still need more educators' support than ever. As professionals, it is our job to continue to reach out and offer support, no matter what—because teachers can and do change lives, and there is no higher calling. 

**Ben Levin** is a former deputy minister of education who worked under Gerard Kennedy, Sandra Papatello and Kathleen Wynne. He is currently a professor in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

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Edited by Marianne Clayton

# Forum Picks

Exciting happenings at the ROM's Michael Lee-Chin Crystal



PHOTOS: COURTESY ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

The Michael Lee-Chin Crystal and the Bloor St. Plaza





## OUTINGS



**M**onth by month, gallery by gallery, the Royal Ontario Museum is coming to the end of its construction phase. The museum's renovation and expansion are considered to be one of the most challenging construction and engineering projects in North America. Experiencing the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal is in itself worth a trip to the ROM. It comprises five interlocking, self-supporting prismatic structures that coexist with but are not attached to the original museum building. The exterior is 25 per cent glass and 75 per cent brushed aluminium strips. Steel beams, ranging in length from one to 25 metres, were placed at various angles, resulting in complicated joints and sloped walls and ceilings. The galleries inside this exciting structure hold many surprises and delights for visitors this winter and spring. Here are a few highlights.

The dinosaurs are back, bigger and bolder than ever, housed in the new James and Louise Temerty Gallery.

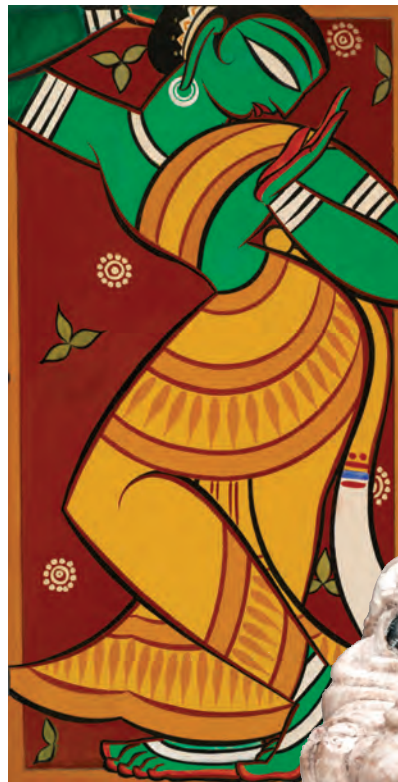
February 16, 2008, marks both the opening of the new Wirth Gallery of the Middle East, and the reopening of the Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery. These two compliment each other, showcasing artifacts from the Middle Eastern and South Asian collections. The area is earmarked for rotating exhibits from the ROM archives' once-hidden treasures.

The Wirth Gallery displays more than 1,000 artifacts from regions that include today's Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. The five sections—Arms and Armour, Arts in Life, Documents and Writing, Technology, and Ancient Spirituality and Religion—examine the regions' contributions to both eastern

and western civilizations.

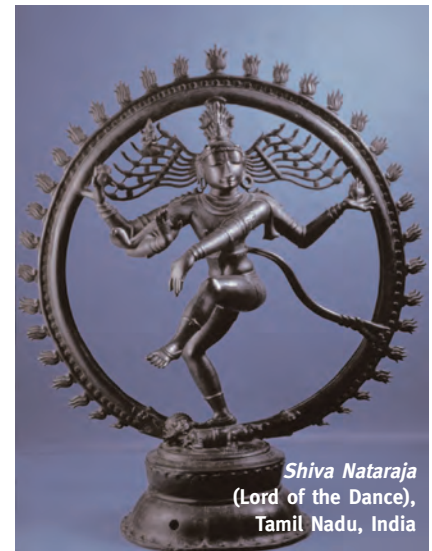
A few examples: Documents and Writing looks at the ancient Middle East, where the Phoenicians were the founders of the first true written alphabet. Arms and Armour shows the significance of both the invention of the bow and arrow and the introduction of horses to warfare. Ancient Spirituality and Religion explores the beginnings of faith through its collection of figurines, which date back to the fourth millennium BC, and winged spirits and demons from the first millennium BC. A Jewish ossuary and Christian and Islamic religious objects in Ancient Spirituality and Religion show the inception of three of the world's great religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery showcases over 5,000 years of artistic and cultural traditions in nine thematically organized exhibits. The outstanding collection of religious



**Above:** An untitled painting by Jamini Roy (1887-1972) depicts a dancing gopi. It is exhibited in the Ondaatje South Asian Gallery.

**Right:** In the Wirth Gallery of the Middle East is an ivory carved finial in the form of a lion's head, Northern Mesopotamia (Iraq).



*Shiva Nataraja  
(Lord of the Dance),  
Tamil Nadu, India*

objects, sculptures, paintings and textiles originates from such countries as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tibet.

Each section tells a story, allowing visitors to move easily through the displays to experience these stories. Material Remains highlights culture from 3500 to 1900 BC to the second century BC. Imagining the Buddha traces the birth and development of Buddhist art, while Passage to Enlightenment displays the colourful art of the Himalayan region, exploring concepts of Buddhism from the 15th century to the present day. The Cultural Exchange section shows the impact of the commercial interaction between the Dutch, the Portuguese, the British and South Asia between the 16th and







An elaborate reproduction of Charles Darwin's study

19th centuries, and how it changed the social, political and cultural order. Home and the World presents modern and contemporary art of South Asia and reflects issues of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Opening this spring is the most complete exhibit ever on the life, explorations and scientific theories of Charles Darwin. Darwin the Evolution Revolution will be on display at the Garfield Weston Exhibition Hall, also located in the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, from March 8 to August 4.

Visitors will be presented with the same evidence that led Darwin to realize that all life on earth evolved from common ancestors over millions of years. Some scientists of the 18th century speculated about evolution but did not understand how it worked, nor did they understand classification of species or how they were genealogically related. Most of the general population in England, as well as the scientists of the time, were aligned to the biblical story of creation. Darwin suspected that his theories would rock society, so he continued his research for an additional 20 years before publishing his essay. Darwin the Evolution Revolution illustrates the impact Darwin's work as a botanist, geologist and naturalist had on his day and how it continues into the 21st century.

For more information, visit [www.rom.on.ca./MC](http://www.rom.on.ca./MC)

## BOOKS



### THE SHOCK DOCTRINE: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism By Naomi Klein

Published by Alfred A. Knopf,  
Canada, 2007

662 pages, \$36.95

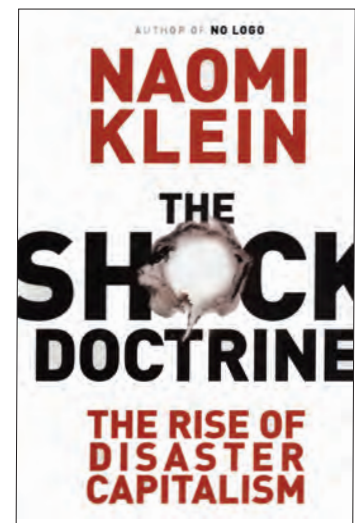
Reviewed by Larry French

When economist Milton Friedman, supported by his acolytes from the University of Chicago, was peddling his free-market idolatry in the middle years of the past century, he was, like John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness. Who would give allegiance to a doctrine that forced you, in order to reach the Promised Land, to give up living wages, social support, public education and health care—the underpinnings of a classic middle-class society? Economist Kenneth Galbraith pointed out tellingly that Friedman's economic fundamentalism led to "private affluence amidst public squalor."

How, then, do you impose policies destructive of their own best interests on unwilling populations? By shock treatment, states Naomi Klein in her latest book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Evoking

the CIA-funded electroshock therapy that Dr. Ewan Cameron of Montreal used on his patients to destroy their personas as a preliminary to rebuilding new, supposedly better ones, Klein shows convincingly how first General Suharto in Indonesia, then Augusto Pinochet in Chile, both with CIA backing, assassinated and tortured thousands of "subversives," such as unionists, teachers and public sector workers. Shocked and terrorized populations were unable to offer any resistance as their economies endured free-market makeovers.

In Chile, Friedman was in his glory. Making a pact with the devil to further his doctrine, he and his "Chicago boys" helped Pinochet destroy unions, sell off state enterprises at fire sale prices, and cut wages and social benefits. Instead of prosperity, this economic shock treatment produced a deep recession: the economy contracted by 15 per cent and unemployment rose from three per cent, under Salvador Allende, to 20 per cent. But Chile was now a free-market society. Like My Lai in Vietnam, it had to be destroyed to be saved.



In her brilliant exposé, Klein shows that Chile was the template for the brutal economic transformation of countries from Central and South America to Russia and China, and, in the post-9/11 era, Iraq. And wherever this "disaster capitalism" feasts, there is a massive transfer of wealth from low and middle income sectors to the super-rich.

This is the ultimate legacy of our prophet of the free market.

**Larry French** is a Life Member of OSSTF/FEESO and a former legislative researcher and director of communications/political action.

**THE COURAGE TO TEACH:  
Exploring the Inner Landscape  
of a Teacher's Life**

**By Parker J. Palmer**

Published by Jossey-Bass

272 pages, \$27.95 US

Reviewed by Rod Heikkila

*The Courage to Teach*, by Parker J. Palmer, has just been reissued and updated as a 10th anniversary edition by San Francisco's Jossey-Bass. It comes complete with revisions, additions, a new foreword, and a CD featuring a (nearly) 80 minute conversation with the author and two of his retreat/facilitator friends and colleagues.

I did not want to like this book. Its style is inconsistent, it often slips into jargon, and to my Canadian sensibilities its cadences seem more associated with late-night American TV evangelist programming. Furthermore, the book and CD are an unmistakable and unabashed infomercial for the Centre for Courage and Renewal.

Nonetheless, I finished it, and I can say that I do like it. It's worth reading, and the CD is worth listening to, if you are willing to give the author the chance he deserves. There is an unmistakable sincerity in *The Courage to Teach*. It's clear the author has spent decades in the proverbial trenches of teaching. His anecdotes are illustrative. Any educational worker will readily identify with and perhaps gain new insights from his experiences.

Those who remember the dark days of the political protest of 1997 might more quickly embrace the spirit of *The Courage to Teach*, which was born in the same era as America's No Child Left Behind policies—"the inevitable outcomes of a mind-set that cares about weights and measures more than

meaning." The author, a strong advocate for public education, points out that he correctly predicted that society's "obsession with educational externals" would continue today. Though they are not mentioned in this American publication, Ontario's Common Sense Revolution and the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)—two children that *should* have been left behind—are fine local examples.

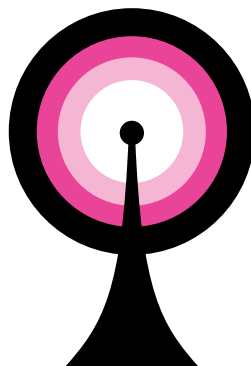
Anyone, from newly minted teachers to crusty old veterans like me, will

ing to revisit the reasons they entered teaching and to look inward in order to look outward, can take something from Palmer's book, which advocates practising neither teacher-centred nor student-centred pedagogy. He invites us instead to combine both to harness the energy of the often paradoxical inner landscapes of teacher and student, with the subject at the centre, "willing to take the risk of acting on their passion."

Despite the book's shortcomings, I found it refreshing to read, as I find

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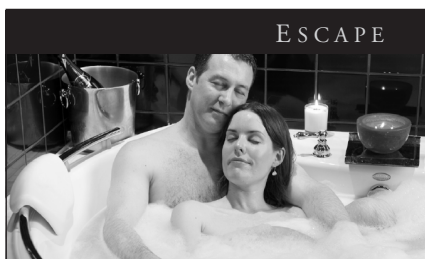
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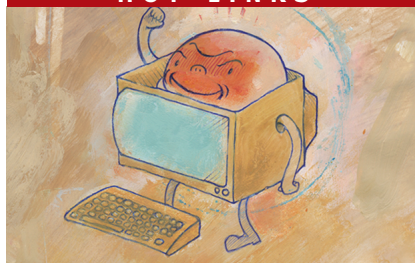
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other works by experienced people who are dedicated to inspiring teachers and who, through their organizations, try their best to promote a movement they believe can ultimately effect systemic change, while providing a safe space for teachers, administrators and students alike.

I am reminded of some other veterans, a group of principals who, upon their return from the real trenches, those of World War I, were faced with a similar challenge. To protect principal teachers and all of their secondary teacher colleagues in Ontario that they might have the courage to teach, in 1919, these veterans formed the OSSTF.

**Rod Heikkila** teaches at Parkside CI in St. Thomas with the Thames Valley DSB. He is also a long-time OSSTF/FEESO activist.

## HOT LINKS



## DVD

### IMAGINE A SCHOOL...

Produced by Canadian Education Association, 2006

\$49.95 (non-members)

\$39.95 (members)

Reviewed by Kevin McFadden

The DVD *Imagine a School...* and the accompanying user's guide are the result of the work of a dramatic collective of 27 students from three public high schools across Canada: one each in Vancouver, Toronto and Dartmouth. The students were asked to reflect on their school careers and to develop a repertoire piece showcasing the highs and lows of those experiences. The resulting 50-minute performance was shown at a 2006 symposium hosted by the Canadian Education Association called Getting It Right for Adolescent

Learners. The DVD includes the purpose of the project, the making of the production, the show itself, and the impact it created at the symposium.

The DVD and user's guide need to be considered from two perspectives, that of an educator seeking professional development and that of an educator seeking resource material for classroom use.

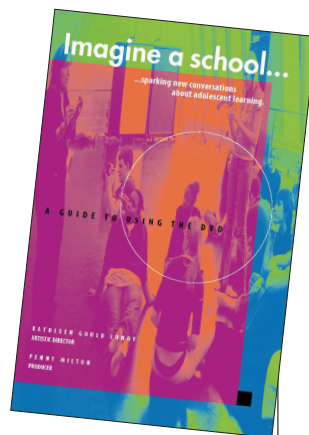
As a source of professional development, the DVD is interesting in that it explores 10 basic tenets of education. These, from the mouths of the students themselves, are idealistic and wishful, encouraging in their hopefulness, but established without any solid guidelines or structure for implementation, nor any method for evaluating the effectiveness of implementation. The 10 key messages, however, are valuable for educators to remember from year to year.

As a resource for classroom use, the DVD has more potential. It is a very solid exemplar for Grade 12 dramatic arts production work, and a fine illustration of how collective performance can function. The user's guide includes extension questions that are useful for classroom applications, segmented into smaller scenes that comprise the entire performance.

My assessment is that, overall, the DVD and user's guide are valuable as a whole, as a reminder of some of the elements necessary for exemplary teaching and, in portions, for the examples of student achievement.

*Imagine a School...* is available from the CEA. Online: [www.cea-ace.ca](http://www.cea-ace.ca). Tel: 416-591-6300. Fax: 416-591-5345. E-mail: [publications@cea-ace.ca](mailto:publications@cea-ace.ca).

**Kevin McFadden**, a teacher at Thomas A. Stewart SS in Peterborough, is chair of the OSSTF/FEESO Educational Services Committee.



## CONFERENCES



### March 28

#### Call for Presenters

The provincial OSSTF/FEESO Educational Services Committee hosts its next biennial conference *Stronger Together...Diversity in Education/ Tous ensemble...La diversité en éducation* at the Markham Hilton Suites and Conference Centre, in Markham, October 22–24, 2008. All educational workers and related professionals are invited to apply to present a workshop. Conference topics include: educating students to appreciate individual, religious and cultural diversity; educating students

about anti-racism, anti-homophobia, sexism, violence and other forms of injustice; accepting and integrating educational workers of diverse cultures, religions and languages, showing tolerance of individual personal backgrounds; working and communicating with parents of diverse individual, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds; inclusive education; and aboriginal education. Workshop applications, available at [www.osstf.on.ca/diversity](http://www.osstf.on.ca/diversity), must be submitted no later than March 28. Contact Karen Metherall. Tel: 416-751-8300, ext. 320, or 1-800-267-7867. Fax: 416-751-7079. E-mail: [diversity@osstf.on.ca](mailto:diversity@osstf.on.ca)

### April 18 to 20

The 8th Tri-national Conference in Defense of Public Education NAFTA created new links between Mexico, the US and Canada in 1994, and since then education union activists from these countries have

worked together in mutual support of public education. One effort is the conference held every two or three years to deepen the understanding of the impact of the neoliberal policies exemplified by NAFTA on public education. This year's conference, in Los Angeles, is hosted by United Teachers Los Angeles, which represents education workers from Kindergarten to Grade 12. For more information, visit [www.trinationalcoalition.org](http://www.trinationalcoalition.org).

### April 20 to 22

*Synergy: Connecting for Tomorrow* The Delta Meadowvale and Conference Centre, in Mississauga, is the location of the Ontario Co-operative Education Association conference. It will provide delegates the opportunity to network and connect with educators, attend a variety of workshops and carousels and learn about new initiatives. Register on-line at [www.ocea.on.ca](http://www.ocea.on.ca).



## LAW DAY CONTEST 2008

High school social studies, civics, history and law students are invited to answer the question:

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The multi-media program Try Judging™, accessible without cost to any teacher or student at [www.tryjudging.ca](http://www.tryjudging.ca) or [www.essayezdejuger.ca](http://www.essayezdejuger.ca), provides the information upon which students may base their entries.

Entries will be judged by three judges.  
3 winners will be announced on Law Day April 17, 2008.  
3 winners and their teachers will be flown economy class to Ottawa May 11-13, 2008.

The winners and teachers will enjoy a dinner hosted by the Chief Justice of Canada, a visit to the Supreme Court and Museum of Civilization, and a tour of Canada's Parliament Buildings.

### Entries are to be submitted no later than March 31, 2008 to:

**Law Day Contest**  
Canadian Superior Courts  
Judges Association  
203 - 4 Beechwood Ave.  
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### April 21 and 22

#### Kaleidoscopes and Rainbows: A Celebration of Success

All those working with students at risk will be interested in the Ontario Association for Students at Risk conference at the Marriott Toronto Airport Hotel, featuring keynote speakers Dr. David Wolfe, Ron Cross and Margaret Trudeau. For more information, contact Barb King. Tel: 519-376-6050, ext. 454, or go to [www.oasar.org](http://www.oasar.org).

### May 2

#### Beauty and the Beast

The spring conference of the Ontario Association for Geographic and Environmental Education, in Hamilton, gives delegates two options. One topic covers the changes, both positive and negative, that have taken place in Hamilton Harbour. This option includes a boat tour of the harbour, followed by a hike along the south shore to Cootes Paradise. The second option covers the impact the newly constructed and controversial Red Hill Valley Expressway has had on Hamilton. This option includes a walk along the expressway with local experts, including Dr. Walter Peace of McMaster University. For more information, visit [www.oagee.org](http://www.oagee.org).

### May 2 to 4

#### It All Starts Here

The goal of the Ontario Society for Environmental Education spring conference at Bark Lake Leadership Centre, near Haliburton, is to inspire and empower educators to start, or find new ways, to incorporate environmental education into lessons. For more information, visit [www.osee.org](http://www.osee.org).

### May 8 to 10

#### The Path Is Made by Walking

The Ontario Association for Mathematics Education annual meeting is at the Sheraton Parkway North Hotel in Richmond Hill. For more information, visit [www.oame.on.ca/MC](http://www.oame.on.ca/MC)





## You reap what you sow

Fortunately, it is not too late  
to sow better seeds

**O**SSTF/FEESO, in its 1993 brief to the Royal Commission on Learning, defined the full-service school as “one which meets the needs of the community and lifelong learners. It must have strong leadership, sound curriculum, and caring student-teacher relationships. Professional student support services, including those to address health, social support and special learning needs, must be provided to meet the growth and career aspirations of all students and to ensure equity of opportunity.”

In 1993, the province was grappling with an economic recession and the government of the day had begun to implement cutbacks in public education, which ultimately resulted in the social contract. However, those cutbacks paled in comparison to the devastating cuts to public education perpetrated by the Conservative government during its mandate from 1995 until its defeat in 2003.

Although political action has been a part of the objects of OSSTF/FEESO's constitution since 1974, that object was amended in 1990 specifically to include public education, and so it now reads “to promote political action to ensure that legislation regulating educational structures and policies is in the best interests of members, public education, students and the community.” As such, the messages and policies of OSSTF/FEESO with regard to the full-service school, now referred to as the education team, have underscored all of our communication to the public, the government, and the media.

In almost any brief, submission, speech or media release, you will find the underlying theme that to best meet students' needs and to improve public education, schools must be properly staffed and resourced; and that the failure to do so will have a detrimental affect not only on education but on the community and, ultimately society.

At every turn, as the Conservatives foisted cut upon devastating cut onto public education, resulting in fewer teachers and fewer support staff in the schools, OSSTF/FEESO repeatedly warned of the consequences of those actions: that by undermining the learning and working conditions in the public school system, the quality of public education and the safety of students and staff were being compromised; that students' growing needs could not be met under such conditions; and that society would be the poorer for it.

Sadly, those dire predictions have proven true. In the past

## Vous récoltez ce que vous avez semé

Heureusement, il n'est pas trop tard pour  
planter de meilleures graines

**EN** 1993, dans son mémoire à la Commission royale sur l'éducation, OSSTF/FEESO a défini l'école multiservices comme « en étant une qui répond aux besoins de la communauté et des étudiants à vie. Elle doit avoir une direction forte, un programme d'études complet et des relations enseignant-élève humaines. Les services professionnels de soutien aux élèves, y compris ceux qui s'occupent de la santé, du soutien social et des besoins spéciaux d'apprentissage doivent être offerts pour soutenir la croissance et les aspirations professionnelles de tous les élèves et pour assurer l'égalité des chances. »

En 1993, la province luttait avec une récession économique et le gouvernement de l'époque avait entrepris des compressions dans le domaine de l'éducation publique qui ont finalement entraîné le contrat social. Cependant, ces réductions paraissaient dérisoires comparées à celles encore plus désastreuses faites à l'éducation publique par le gouvernement Conservateur durant son mandat de 1995 jusqu'à sa défaite en 2003.

Bien que l'action politique fasse partie des buts des statuts d'OSSTF/FEESO depuis 1974, ces derniers ont été modifiés en 1990 pour ajouter spécifiquement « l'éducation publique » et se lisent désormais « de promouvoir l'action politique afin d'assurer que toute législation affectant les structures et les politiques scolaires soit dans le meilleur intérêt des membres, de l'éducation publique, des élèves et de la collectivité. » À ce titre, les messages et les politiques d'OSSTF/FEESO concernant l'école multiservices, aujourd'hui qualifiée d'équipe scolaire, ont été soulignés dans toutes nos communications avec le public, le gouvernement et les médias.

Si vous jetez un coup d'œil à tous les mémoires, présentations, discours ou communiqués de presse, vous verrez que le thème sous-jacent est que, pour mieux répondre aux besoins des élèves et améliorer l'éducation publique, les écoles doivent avoir le personnel et les ressources nécessaires sans quoi il y aura des conséquences préjudiciables non seulement pour l'éducation, mais aussi pour la communauté et en fin de compte pour la société.

À tout instant, alors que les Conservateurs imposaient l'une après l'autre des compressions désastreuses à l'éducation publique, si bien qu'il y avait moins de personnel enseignant et moins de personnel de soutien dans les écoles, OSSTF/FEESO a sans cesse mis en garde contre les conséquences de telles mesures, soit qu'en minant les conditions de travail et d'appren-



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

few months, with the release of *The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety*, headed by Julian Falconer and the public spotlight on safety in schools, we can see all too clearly what society has reaped from the seeds of devastation sown by the Conservative government: namely, that too few teachers and support staff to address students' needs has resulted in far too many at-risk youth.

Although the current Liberal government has been taking steps to undo that damage, it could not be fixed overnight or even over the past four years of its first mandate. And although this government has committed to continuing to address the shortcomings and to improve the lives of students, much remains to be done, and the speed at which it is done must be accelerated.

The OSSTF/FEESO *Students First Plan* contains the blueprint for ensuring Ontario's students will be successful and safe. It is no surprise to us that many of the recommendations of the Falconer commission report mirror those of the *Students First Plan*. However, our recommendations must be

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acted upon immediately, not over the course of the next four years of the Liberal mandate.

The government needs to provide more funding to school boards now, to enable them to staff their schools with more adults and to provide more programs to support students, to ensure that they can learn in a safe, healthy and inclusive environment.

OSSTF/FEESO has always put students' best interests at the forefront of all of its policies, because to do so means that our positions at the bargaining table have integrity. OSSTF/FEESO continues to lobby the government to ensure that it is well aware of, and understands, our deep commitment to public education.

As we move into the largest round of collective bargaining yet, you can be sure that your provincial and district leaders are well prepared to make this message heard loudly and clearly. Through negotiations, OSSTF/FEESO will again lead the way to ensure that the learning conditions of Ontario's students are improved by the strengthening of working conditions for their teachers and education workers.

As we do so, I ask you once again to stay informed, to get involved at your local branch or bargaining unit, and to support your local leaders and bargaining teams. Together, we can truly advance the cause of education in this province, and in doing so ensure the success of all of our students. 🐦

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

tissage du système d'écoles publiques, la qualité de l'éducation publique et la sécurité tant des élèves que du personnel seraient compromises; qu'on ne pourrait pas répondre aux besoins grandissants des élèves dans de telles conditions et que la société s'appauvrirait.

Malheureusement, ces terribles prédictions ont été confirmées au cours des derniers mois par la publication du rapport « *The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety* » par Julian Falconer et l'attention portée par le public sur la sécurité dans les écoles. Nous pouvons tous nous rendre compte avec précision de ce que la société a récolté des graines de destruction semées par le gouvernement Conservateur. Autrement dit, le petit nombre d'enseignants et de personnel de soutien en éducation pour traiter les besoins des élèves s'est soldé par un trop grand nombre de jeunes à risque.

Bien que le gouvernement Libéral ait entrepris des mesures pour redresser ce tort, il ne peut pas être réparé du jour au lendemain ou même durant les quatre dernières années de son premier mandat. Et puisque le gouvernement s'est engagé de continuer à aborder les lacunes et à améliorer la vie des élèves, il reste encore beaucoup à faire et on doit accélérer le rythme.

Le *Programme de priorité aux élèves* d'OSSTF/FEESO est un plan détaillé pour s'assurer que les élèves ontariens seront en sécurité et qu'ils réussiront. Nous n'avons pas été surpris que plusieurs des recommandations du rapport de la Commission Falconer reflètent celles du *Programme de priorité aux élèves*. Toutefois, on doit réagir immédiatement non pas au cours des quatre prochaines années du mandat Libéral.

Le gouvernement doit fournir immédiatement davantage de fonds aux conseils scolaires afin de leur permettre d'embaucher plus d'adultes et d'offrir plus de programmes d'appui aux élèves pour qu'ils apprennent dans un milieu inclusif, sain et sécuritaire.

OSSTF/FEESO a toujours eu les intérêts fondamentaux des élèves au premier plan de toutes ses politiques, car de cette façon nous assurons l'intégrité de nos positions à la table de négociation. OSSTF/FEESO continue de faire des pressions auprès du gouvernement afin de s'assurer qu'il soit pleinement conscient et comprenne notre engagement profond à l'éducation publique.

Puisque nous entrons dans la plus grande ronde de négociation collective jamais vue, soyez assuré que les dirigeants provinciaux et de districts sont bien préparés pour que ce message soit très bien entendu. OSSTF/FEESO sera à nouveau le chef de file pour garantir l'amélioration des conditions d'apprentissage des élèves par l'augmentation des conditions de travail du personnel enseignant et des travailleurs en éducation, grâce aux négociations.

Et pendant ce temps, tenez-vous informé, participez au sein de vos unités de négociation ou de votre district et appuyez vos dirigeants locaux et vos équipes de négociation. Tous ensemble, nous pourrions vraiment faire progresser la cause de l'éducation et, de ce fait, assurer la réussite de tous nos élèves. 🐦



# There's safety in numbers

Having watchful, concerned adults in our schools is what keeps students safe. Secretaries, custodians, educational assistants and other staff know who belongs in our schools, keep an eye out for students, and maintain clean and safe facilities.

**We know that the more adult employees a school has, the safer it will be.  
When it comes to investing in our schools, it makes sense to invest in people.**

Visit [ontariostudentsfirst.ca](http://ontariostudentsfirst.ca) for more ways we can make schools safe and successful.







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