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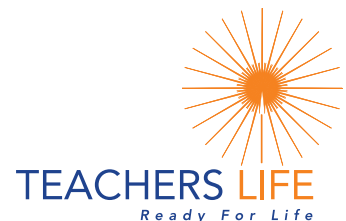
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Don't bother to read this magazine...

unless, of course, you care about public education

I suppose it is a bit risky to start a magazine column with a title like the one I have given this one, but I am hoping it might startle you a bit and make you wonder “why on earth would she say that?” and then read on.

The truth is, I think you should very definitely pick up this magazine and read it, especially if you care about public education and want to engage in a bit of professional thought. The editorial mandate, our mission statement if you will, for *Education Forum* says, “Authoritative feature articles and interviews explore the contemporary issues, events, trends and personalities that shape education. Columnists cover Ministry of Education initiatives, teaching methodology and new developments in educational research, while reviews offer informed criticism of professional books, educational software, media and classroom products.”

That sounds awfully dry, but that is exactly what this and every issue of *Education Forum* does, but does so in such a way as to provoke thought and perhaps stimulate debate, and to keep our members in the know about what OSSTF/FEESO is concerned about.

Our cover story, “On éduque en français” (“We educate in French”) by Daniel Morin, celebrates the 10th anniversary of our Francophone bargaining units. The inclusion of these units in our union has added to the richness of diversity in our membership, and because of that, to the strength of our union.

As a friend of mine, a former director of education, is fond of saying, “No one is as smart as all of us.” That is certainly true of the OSSTF/FEESO membership. Because this union has members who come from both panels (elementary and secondary), in all four publicly funded education systems (English, French, public and Catholic), as well as from the

university sector and even some private schools, OSSTF/FEESO is uniquely positioned to participate actively in all aspects of education in this province. Each of our bargaining units adds to the depth of understanding that OSSTF/FEESO has about what is necessary to help students succeed. Our “education team” approach

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speaks to the importance of collaborative problem-solving in order to determine what works best in education, and that makes OSSTF/FEESO a respected voice in education.

Clearly too, our articles spark professional debate, and this issue is no exception in that it contains a feature story

that was prompted by the article “School and the reading brain” (*Education Forum*, Fall 2008) which included the recommendation that the media strand be removed from the English curriculum. Barry Duncan and Carol Arcus rebut that idea in their article “Skills for surviving the 21st century: Media literacy is absolutely essential.” Duncan and Arcus argue that the study of the key concepts of media provides the “intellectual coherence and academic rigour” which make media literacy a vital component of education and overall literacy.

In addition, Rod Heikkila’s article “New media: New opportunities; Bringing the Internet Age into the classroom doesn’t have to mean compromising quality” asserts that we need to “make the best of the new and the well-established tools, whether they be technology or any of a wide variety of instructional methodologies,” to engage students and then help them to develop a deeper understanding of the various disciplines we teach.

“Common Threads IV: From Canada to Brazil” by Glen Hodgson tells the story of the trip that the OSSTF/FEESO team took to Brazil to research the issue of food and food security. With stories about the world food crisis appearing with increasing frequency in the media, this issue is certainly of interest to educators wishing to incorporate this contemporary social justice issue into their courses. Information about all of the Common Threads curriculum packages can be found in the advertisement on page 27.

This is but a sample of the “food for thought” that we offer you in this issue, along with additional articles, various reviews and notices of upcoming conferences. We hope you find something here to stimulate your intellectual taste buds. 🐦





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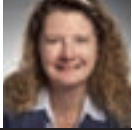
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JE suppose que c'est un peu aventureux de débiter une chronique dans un magazine avec un titre comme celui que je viens de lui donner, mais j'espère qu'il vous fera sursauter et que vous vous demanderez « comment diable dit-elle cela? » et qu'ensuite vous le lirez.

En vérité, je crois que vous devriez certainement prendre ce magazine et le lire, surtout si l'éducation publique vous tient à cœur et si vous voulez vous plonger dans une réflexion professionnelle. Le mandat de fond, notre énoncé de mandat, pour *Education Forum* indique que « les reportages et les entrevues dignes de foi examinent les tendances, les activités et les dossiers adaptés à la conjoncture moderne ainsi que les personnalités qui influencent l'éducation. Les chroniqueurs couvrent les initiatives du ministère de l'Éducation, les méthodes pédagogiques et les nouveaux développements en matière de recherche en éducation autant que les critiques présentent des jugements éclairés sur des livres professionnels, logiciels éducatifs, produits médiatiques et pour la salle de classe. »

Cela semble terriblement aride, mais c'est exactement ce que font cette publication et tous les autres numéros d'une manière qui suscitent la réflexion favorisent la discussion et gardent nos membres au courant de ce qui préoccupe OSSTF/FEESO.

Dans ce numéro, notre article-vedette « On éduque en français » de Daniel Morin souligne le 10^e anniversaire de nos unités de négociation francophones. L'inclusion de ces unités au sein de notre syndicat a ajouté une richesse à la diversité de notre effectif et, de ce fait, à la force de notre syndicat.

Comme un de mes amis, ancien directeur de l'éducation, se plaît à le dire, « Personne n'est aussi intelligent que chacun

de nous. » C'est assurément vrai pour les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO. Puisque nos membres proviennent des deux paliers, élémentaire et secondaire, des quatre systèmes d'éducation financée à même les deniers publics : anglophone, francophone, publique et catholique, ainsi que du milieu universitaire et même de certaines écoles privées, OSSTF/FEESO est particulièrement bien placé pour participer activement à tous les aspects de l'éducation dans la province. Chacune de nos unités de négociation ajoute à la connaissance approfondie qu'a OSSTF/

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FEESO de tout qui est nécessaire pour aider les élèves à réussir. Notre approche « d'équipe scolaire » dénote l'importance d'une résolution de problèmes faite en collaboration afin de déterminer ce qui fonctionne le mieux dans le domaine de l'éducation et qui fait qu'OSSTF/FEESO est un défenseur respecté en éducation.

Il est aussi évident que nos articles inspirent la discussion professionnelle et ce numéro ne fait pas exception, car il contient une chronique qui a été provoquée par l'article « *School and the reading brain* » (*Education Forum*, automne 2008) qui comprenait la recommanda-

tion que l'étude des médias soit retirée du programme d'études d'anglais. Barry Duncan et Carol Arcus réfutent cette idée dans leur article « *Survival skills for the 21st century: Media literacy is absolutely essential.* » Ils argumentent que l'étude des concepts-clés des médias offre une « cohérence intellectuelle et une rigueur théorique » qui fait de l'étude des médias un élément essentiel de l'éducation et des études en général.

De plus, l'article de Rod Heikkilä intitulé « *New media: New opportunities; Bringing the Internet Age into the classroom doesn't have to mean compromising quality* » soutient que nous devons « utiliser au mieux les nouveaux outils et ceux bien établis, qu'il s'agisse de technologie ou de n'importe lesquelles des nombreuses gammes de méthodes d'enseignement » pour éveiller les élèves et ensuite les aider à développer une compréhension plus approfondie des diverses matières que nous enseignons.

« *Common Threads IV: From Canada to Brazil* » de Glen Hodgson raconte l'histoire du voyage au Brésil qu'a entrepris une équipe d'OSSTF/FEESO afin d'étudier le dossier des aliments et de la sécurité des aliments. Grâce à des textes sur la crise alimentaire mondiale qui paraissent de plus en plus souvent dans les médias, ce dossier intéressera sûrement les éducateurs qui désirent inclure cette question de justice sociale moderne dans leurs cours. Les renseignements concernant les trousseaux du programme *Common Threads* se retrouvent dans la publicité à la page 27.

Il s'agit là de quelques « matières à réflexion » que nous vous offrons dans ce numéro en plus d'autres articles, diverses critiques et des avis sur les prochaines conférences. Nous espérons que vous trouverez quelque chose pour stimuler vos papilles gustatives intellectuelles. 🐦



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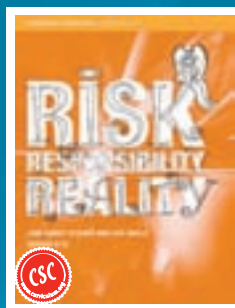
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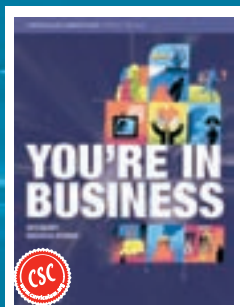
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One Life...Many Gifts



Education Minister Kathleen Wynne and students were present at the launch of the new curriculum resource *One Life...Many Gifts*

IT'S a basic fact of life. The bottom line. After all the striving and acquiring, you can't take it with you. Ultimately, we part with all of our possessions. We don't like to talk about the end. Death is not the usual stuff of dinner conversation, nor is it top of mind for the average teenager.

Jaynel White isn't an average teenager. When she was 15, her father David swiftly progressed from simply feeling unwell, to suffering massive heart failure, to joining the long list of 4,000 people who die every year in Canada waiting for organ donations. Canada's donor rate is one of the lowest in the world.

David had signed an organ donor card. By donating his pancreas, liver, lungs, kidneys and eyes, David has extended, or improved, the lives of six people, though he lost his own. Jaynel has come to realize that giving birth is not

the only way to give life, and that heroism takes many forms.

"Even though my Dad's gone, he's a hero," she said. "No, he didn't pull anyone out of a burning house, but he saved someone's life. He gave life to someone who needed it, and that, to me, makes him the biggest hero of all."

Jaynel's mission is to encourage people to talk with their families about what they want from life and, especially, what they would want if they met an untimely death.

Jaynel's is one of the compelling emotional experiences shared by donor families and organ recipients in the new curriculum resource *One Life...Many Gifts*. In a DVD and a series of 10 artistic, visually appealing booklets, the issues are brought to life for senior secondary students.

"The very worst possible time to have your very first discussion about something like this is in the waiting room

outside an intensive care unit, and this program aims to bring the discussion into the mainstream," said Cate Abbott of the London Health Sciences Centre and a team member of this project.

"This is one of the best things I've seen, and I've been teaching for over 20 years," said Cathy Chant, head of Health and Phys Ed and Dance at Sir John A. MacDonald, Scarborough.

"This is not talking about organ donation in a flat, depressing and simply scientific way. It's the heart of the program, presented in a really beautiful teenage-friendly way. Teachers who get the opportunity to work through this resource package are lucky teachers indeed, because they'll come out of it feeling like better people and better teachers. It's uplifting."

Survey results from 240 teachers in the 20 school boards involved in the pilot project echo Chant's enthusiasm. There is also support at Queen's Park.

"All Ontarians—including our students—are potential organ and tissue donors," said Education Minister Kathleen Wynne. "Teaching them in school about the importance of organ donation encourages healthy living now and could save a life in the future."

Dave Levac, MPP for Brant, has been publicly recognized for his contributions in community service and was a distinguished educator.

"We need to continue informing our youth about the importance of organ and tissue donation," he said.

Frank Markel, CEO of Trillium Gift of Life Network, is particularly proud of the collaborative partnership created with the London Health Sciences Transplant Program and the Kidney Foundation, which produced this innovative program.

"We won't measure success in the schoolroom directly by asking students

to register for donation. Very deliberately, our stance is to inform and educate the students. We're not trying to convince them they should be donors. We think that most people who take the time to learn about donation and transplant will willingly come to the decision to be donors. And ethically, we want to present this fairly and let people decide for themselves," said Markel.

Flexible and modular, the program is constructed to be easily incorporated into the existing curriculum; Arts, Canadian and World Studies, English, Science, Guidance and Career Education, Health and Phys Ed, and Social Sciences and Humanities. Teachers are asked to present the material from the introduction booklet and the section on ethics, and to show the video first.

"It's important for the kids to consider the social issues," said Joan Green, Educational Consultant and Program Advisor. "It covers the waterfront in terms of reflecting on your role as a citizen. What is it that we owe to each other, where does generosity make for a civil society and what are some of the moral issues?"

Teachers can pick and choose and develop a curriculum that works in their time frames, and the program is complete and ready to use. A variety of exercises are provided and there are opportunities to explore the careers associated with the field.

Transplant surgeon Dr. William Wall of London Health Sciences was on the team which first recognized the educational void around organ donation. He is

The architects
of *One Life...Many Gifts* hope that
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Dr. Wall would like
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totally convinced that educating young people is the answer to raising the donor rate, because students talk about it with their parents. Many people do not realize that transplantation has become one of modern medicine's most remarkable achievements. The educational process involves overcoming suspicion and superstition, and he's proud that London's donor rate is now more than twice the provincial average.

"It's the misconceptions that prevent people from wanting to be a donor. Many people think that transplantation is still experimental, that this was risky sur-

gery, that the results aren't very good and don't justify the expense of doing it. Many of them think somehow there would be a financial burden on the donor family. Some think that they can't have an open casket," he said.

Some are superstitious, thinking that signing a card would bring about their own demise. Some are suspicious that if they were ever seriously injured, and they were carrying a donor card, doctors would not do everything they could to save them.


"The donation side is separated entirely from transplantation," Dr. Wall states emphatically.

Many people also think, mistakenly, that their religion forbids organ donation. In fact, most major religions support it.

There is also the "yuk" factor. But most students quickly get past their initial squeamish "not me, no way, that's gross" reaction to the idea of transferring body parts. Once they become involved in the lives of recipients and donors, empathy and enthusiasm take over.

Green rates this resource at the very top of the materials she's encountered. "It's entirely authentic. Young people are generous by nature and when they are given the opportunity to explore a real possibility to make a contribution, they almost always want to reflect on it. There are many invitations here that are almost irresistible for students to become engaged."

Chant can't wait to have her colleagues teaching the program. The architects of *One Life...Many Gifts* hope that it will help to create a culture of donation in Ontario. Dr. Wall would like to see the concept become part of the fabric of Canadian values.

"It would be like celebrating a birthday or getting your license—you'd sign your donor card on your sixteenth birthday. If people understood that this is the right thing to do, to try to save the lives of others after we've died, we'd be as proud as any nation on earth as far as our donation rates." 

Marguerite Senecal is an award-winning video producer, journalist and communications coach.



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Creative arts club inspires and engages

Partnering to explore the beauty of batik



FISH by Tiana Robinson

Over the 15 years that Rose Egolet has been teaching, she noticed something about the at-risk youth with whom she was working: even though her students struggled with reading and writing, even though they often would not take notes or complete their homework, they were always drawing. They drew on their binders, their assignments, their agendas, in the margins of their papers.

Rose reflected on this propensity for drawing that her students exhibited. Despite having no background in the arts, Rose decided to focus on providing opportunities for students to obtain professional arts training. She started by attending a conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the fall of 2007, where she was challenged to look for resources in her community, both at home and at school.

Coincidentally, a short time later, Rose saw the work of batik artist David Kibuuka

at an open house in her community. She was astonished at the vibrancy and style of his work. "Most people associate batik with tie-dye t-shirts or scarves," Rose points out, "but this is different." Anyone who sees Kibuuka's artwork will immediately be impacted by the batik technique on a canvas medium. Rose wondered how she could tap into his skills in a school setting.

"I began to think about how to make opportunities for students," said Rose. "When I asked David if he could work with our students, he told me how much it would cost to workshop his technique..." she laughs, remembering her shock, "...well I knew I would have to think of something!"

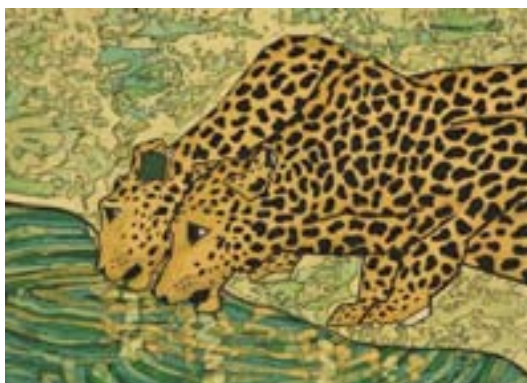
Her mind made up, the very determined Rose wrote grant proposals and obtained funds from the Ontario Arts Council; she secured space from JVS Toronto and, most recently, obtained money from the Bicentennial Fund.

Grant monies paid for the artist, enabling Rose to start a Creative Arts Club that partnered David Kibuuka with TDSB students at Emery Collegiate Institute. The students learned the batik technique and David's unique style. Since the fall of 2007 three cohorts of students have gone through the creative arts program and now with major funding from various partners, it has expanded to include students from other schools in the community. The current initiative, led by MircoSkills, is known as the Youth Express Project.

The high quality of the students' work is impressive, and is viewed enthusiastically, as was the case when Rose presented the pieces at a recent staff meeting. The reaction was similar at the OSSTF/FEESO conference, Stronger Together... Diversity in Education (October 2008), where Rose presented the students' work to colleagues from around the province at her workshop, Celebrating Cultural Diversity. Rose plans to continue sharing this success story.

The benefits of this program are innumerable, including the incredible rise in self-esteem in the students. However, "the students also realize the skills they have to work on," says Rose. In particular, they have to learn to be effective communicators, learn to make a professional portfolio and write a biography profile. "Now the students have a reason for writing!" Rose says with a big smile. This is the driving force behind Rose's plan to expand the program into the classroom by incorporating elements of literacy education.

"When I showed the students' artwork to a colleague and friend of mine, she immediately said, 'Everyone will see something different in this piece [a work called *Mask*]. Let's have students write about that!' We are hoping to present



BOLD DESIGN by Tiana Robinson, left; **THIRST** by Sannah Khan, right

a workshop at a diversity conference in April 2009,” notes Rose.

While the Creative Arts Club has been an unqualified success, there have been challenges along the way. Male and female students participated, though it was the females who remained engaged over the long-term, who were most consistent and dedicated and who obtained the highest skill levels.

Yet, for those students who have invested time and effort, their hard work

has been rewarded. Their artwork was showcased at Toronto’s City Hall (November 2008) in a exhibit entitled, “Modern Batik: 2008 Student Exhibition,” sponsored by MicroSkills Youth Services. A Modern Batik Art 2009 calendar was a great success and sold out. (The Emery CI batik calendar is available for \$5 from Rose Egolet.) Most amazing of all, one of the students who graduated from the program, Tiana Robinson, is in discus-

sion with the City of Toronto over the purchase of one of her paintings *Nation of Mothers*, possibly for several thousand dollars.

Not every student will become a professional artist or be as well compensated, but “students retain all copyright to their original work,” Rose says emphatically. “I tell students that this is an opportunity for them to become artists and make money from their work.” The possibilities have proven limitless—Robinson now runs a modern batik technique program at Emery CI. The student has become the teacher.

Students from all grades and all ethnic backgrounds attend the after-school program, providing yet another learning opportunity for some who, without Rose’s aspirations for them, might never have been exposed to this African art medium or have found a way to express their unique creativity.

A young Vietnamese student was hesitant to join the program, but with her teacher’s encouragement has attended diligently and has taken on a level of difficulty that surprised the instructor, and Rose. “I was very worried about the level of complexity of her batik,” Rose confesses. “But she is patient and committed.” This is all the more extraordinary because the student has a learning disability.

“We realize that, as teachers, we may be the only ones who might ever give a student an opportunity to experience a different world,” Rose tells audiences of fellow teachers. This world—of art, of expression, of creativity—can be a path for some students who are disengaged to re-engage in their education. Further, art empowers; it fosters imagination and innovation. Being an artist also requires discipline. And students who may not see academic success in a traditional sense, can be successful in a medium that both astonishes and inspires.

For more information on batik art programs, go to:
www.modernbatikartworkshops.com. 🐾

Tamara Massey is ACL of Literacy at Emery CI, Toronto DSB.

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In China, they called me ‘Teacher’



One of David Banks' classes in Shenyang, China

Teachers in Canada who think they have it bad should take a close look at the working conditions of their colleagues in China. There, teachers hired to work at a government-run, public school virtually become indentured servants. They cannot pack up at the end of the year and move on to another school, even with several months' notice. When a teacher is hired, he or she must give the principal a personal promise to make any sacrifice necessary for the betterment of the institution, including working nights and weekends whenever required. The school can refuse to release a teacher's records and work assessments and refuse to issue a letter of recommendation which would be necessary to be employed anywhere else. When I asked if teachers could leave the public system to work in a private school, I was told they would forfeit their pension. In addition,

they would have to face the principal who would be so absolutely furious at their disloyalty they could kiss any chance of promotion goodbye for life.

Chinese schools operate on the assumption that the day is for work and the only leisure time a student should have are short breaks at lunch and dinner and 10 minutes between each 40 minute class. Students have no optional courses and no 'spares.' They are either in class or participating in organized physical exercise. All students who live at school (that was 100% of the students where I was teaching in Shenyang, China) are awakened at 6:00 a.m. and are expected to be ready for class by 7:20 a.m. They are only allowed showers twice a week, on assigned days.

The students have 70 minutes for lunch, then return to class until 6:00 p.m., when they get 60 minutes for dinner, followed by more classes until 9:40 p.m. For-

eign teachers are finished by 3:00 p.m.; the rest of the classes are handled by the Chinese staff. The five Chinese teachers on staff covered two classes of students. Three leave at 4:30 p.m., but two stay on for dinner, supervision and teaching duties until the evening dismissal. After making sure the students are asleep, the teachers sleep in an assigned room in the same dorm. Next day, they are back at work and two different teachers stay on the next evening.

On weekends, students are allowed to go home on Saturday at 12:30 p.m., but must return to the campus on Sunday by 3:00 p.m. As a result, two teachers must be on duty on Saturday morning and two more Sunday afternoon and evening. With only five teachers, it means that each teacher has evening or weekend duty at least three times a week. In addition, the best teachers are sent out on recruitment drives, which adds to the workload of their colleagues. When new students request admission, they have to be tested and this can only be done on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning.

If you haven't yet gasped in disbelief, can you imagine doing all this for 1000 RMB (\$150 Cdn.) per month? Amazingly, the Chinese teachers never complain. It is their duty, no questions asked. They have no union and, basically, no rights. They do what they are told to do and they do it cheerfully. After all, they have a job that a hundred million people would be thrilled to have.

In my school, there is a no nonsense approach to discipline. Students are not allowed to have computers, cell phones or mp3 players. There are very strict dress codes and rules of behaviour. Students never skip classes, smoke or do drugs. Love affairs are forbidden though, naturally, crushes develop due to the students' close and constant proximity and



David Banks interacts with students in the hall and in one of his classes at the school in Shenyang where he taught Grade 10

loneliness. No freaky hairstyles or hair colours, no piercings or tattoos, no skirts or sexy clothing and no make-up. If the head teacher feels a girl's hair is too long, he tells her to have it cut when she goes home for the weekend, and she will.

One morning, I found four of my best boys standing silently in the hallway when they should have been in class. When I asked why, they said they had been caught playing chess in the reading room (no games allowed). When I suggested to the head Chinese teacher that chess was much better than video games, he replied that it was too noisy. (Chinese kids like to yell when they make a good move.)

One day as I climbed the steps to the cafeteria building, I saw one of my girls standing beside a Chinese teacher. When I asked why, she replied, "Caught running." Students are not allowed to run to the cafeteria so she was made to stand outside for 10 minutes, which meant that most of the food would be gone by the time she was released. She didn't run again.

In Canadian schools, it is not unusual to have several students absent on any given day. Not so in China. It is rare to have even one student missing; if someone is missing you simply have to ask a Chinese teacher where he or she is and you will be told. Nobody ever skips class.

When I noticed a few of my weaker female students showing great improvement on recent tests, I asked what they were doing differently. They told me they

had taken my advice and were studying together in small groups. "When do you do that?" I asked. "After midnight, when the hall supervisors go to bed, we sneak

Many problems
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in Canada do
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because of the
homogeneity
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education and
teachers

out of our rooms and meet in the washroom where we work until 4:00 a.m." If they were caught, they would have been in major trouble. My eyes welled up at their dedication and courage and so I assured them their secret was safe with me.

Many problems facing teachers in Canada do not exist in China because of

the homogeneity of the population and the universal respect for education and teachers. One of the most useful Chinese phrases I learned is "Wo se laoshe," which means, "I am a teacher." It never fails to bring forth friendly smiles of approval. Never once have I been sneered at for making that revelation. The second most useful phrase is "Wo se Janada ren," which means, "I come from Canada." This is often met with huge smiles and, from most people over the age of 40, the response is "Doctor Norman Bethune!" followed by a thumbs up. Canadians are, for the most part, highly respected guests in China.

Finally, I have to admit that the Grade 10 students I taught in Shenyang were the nicest, friendliest, most polite, happiest and hardest working kids I have ever taught. I went to school each day looking forward to seeing them and often went back to the school in the evenings to tutor them before tests, or just to talk about Canada and what our schools and universities are like.

In Canada, I would be called 'Mr. Banks' or 'Sir' but in China they called me 'Teacher.'

David Banks taught chemistry and junior science for the Scarborough DSB and the Ottawa Carleton DSB for a combined total of over 30 years. He retired in 2002 and now works occasionally as an English teacher in China.

Alma College

Rod Heikkilä's article about Alma College (*Education Forum*, Fall 2008) evokes many memories from that difficult time. While



Rod is lavish in his praise of OSSTF for all its support, it must be remembered that it was the Alma teachers and the former District 35, Elgin leadership who were the real heroes of this story.

As in every case, OSSTF provided financial assistance and staff support for bargaining, but it was the Alma teachers who risked everything in their attempt to organize and become part of OSSTF. When the college announced that it would close, rather than operate as a unionized workplace, the Alma teachers effectively lost their jobs and faced the prospect of moving from their community.

While we managed, through the help from sympathetic administrators in surrounding public boards, to find employment for the majority of these teachers, it does not take away from the fact that the Alma teachers put everything on the line in an attempt to organize Alma College.

The real Alma story should focus on the strength and courage of this small group of teachers who were truly "the edge of the wedge."

Jim Ross
Former Director of
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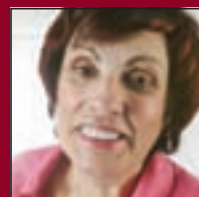
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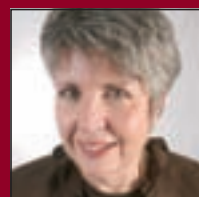
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On éduque en français

Si Harris avait su...

L'ex-premier ministre conservateur Mike Harris ne se doutait pas qu'avec la réforme de l'administration scolaire en 1997-1998, il ferait un cadeau à OSSTF/FEESO, en lui donnant les moyens de renforcer sa présence dans les relations de travail en éducation

Par Daniel Morin

Pendant les années noires où il était premier ministre de l'Ontario, Mike Harris n'a jamais été l'ami des syndicats. Pourtant, ironie du sort, c'est bien une décision de son gouvernement qui aura contribué indirectement à renforcer OSSTF/FEESO, en lui donnant l'occasion de représenter un grand nombre de membres œuvrant en français dans le domaine de l'éducation en Ontario.

En 2008-2009, OSSTF/FEESO célèbre en effet le 10^e anniversaire de la création de son premier district francophone, résultant en partie de la création des conseils scolaires de langue française en Ontario à la même époque. La genèse des districts francophones est une histoire riche en rebondissements et en coïncidences heureuses, mais qui témoigne aussi de la persévérance et du dévouement de personnes engagées à promouvoir le syndicalisme dans le monde de l'éducation en Ontario.

En 1997, on ne compte au sein de la Fédération qu'une poignée d'irréductibles Gaulois perdus dans une mer d'anglophones; ils sont 200 à peine à l'intérieur d'un mouvement syndical comptant plusieurs dizaines de milliers de membres. L'Exécutif provincial vient d'embaucher Pierre Côté pour gérer les services destinés à ce petit effectif et constate que pour offrir des services efficaces, OSSTF/FEESO doit trouver un moyen d'augmenter le nombre de francophones. L'objectif initial est de recruter au moins 500 membres.

Or, la conjoncture politique est tout à fait propice à la réalisation d'un tel projet puisque le ministre conservateur, John Snobelen vient de lancer une réforme qui prévoit la fusion des conseils scolaires ontariens pour en réduire le nombre, tout en remaniant de fond en comble la méthode de financement de ces nouvelles entités administratives. De ce fait, une douzaine de conseils scolaires de langue française vont aussi voir le jour le 1^{er} janvier 1998.

Tous ces changements vont provoquer des transferts importants d'unités syndicales et de groupes non syndiqués à l'intérieur des conseils scolaires. Ce transfert a lieu officiellement le 1^{er} septembre 1998. Quelque 200 membres francophones





We educate in French

If Harris had known...

Former Conservative Premier Mike Harris had no idea that his school administration reforms of 1997–1998 would be an absolute gift to the OSSTF/FEESO, providing it with the means to increase its presence in working relationships in the education field

By Daniel Morin

During the dark years when he was Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris was never a friend of unions. And yet, ironically, a decision of his government contributed indirectly to the strengthening of OSSTF/FEESO, specifically in giving it the opportunity to represent a larger number of people working in French in the Ontario education system.

In 2008–2009, OSSTF/FEESO celebrates the 10th anniversary of the creation of its first Francophone district, partially the result of the establishment 10 years ago of French-language school boards in Ontario. The origin of the Francophone districts is a story rich in breakthroughs and happy coincidences, but which also testifies to the perseverance and commitment of those involved in promoting organized labour in education in Ontario.

In 1997, the Federation could count only a handful of French-language “resistants” lost in a sea of Anglophones; barely 200 Francophones in a union movement with tens of thousands of members. The Provincial Executive had just hired Pierre Côté to manage services for this small group and to offer effective service, with the realization that OSSTF/FEESO also had to find a way to increase the number of Francophone members. The initial recruitment target was set at a minimum of 500 members.

The political climate was totally ripe for such a project because John Snobelen, then Conservative Minister of Education and Training, had just launched reforms intended to combine Ontario school boards to reduce their number, while completely changing the funding model for these new administrative entities. In the context of the same reforms, a dozen French-language school boards were created on January 1, 1998.

All these changes caused major transfers of union locals and non-unionized groups within the school boards. The transfer officially went into effect on September 1, 1998. Some 200 Francophone members of OSSTF/FEESO, who previously worked for English-language school boards, found themselves spread out over 10 of the 12 French-language boards.



d'OSSTF/FEESO, qui travaillaient pour des conseils anglophones, se retrouvent répartis au sein de 10 des 12 conseils de langue française.

En vertu du projet de loi 136 déposé par le ministre Snobelen, des votes de représentation doivent avoir lieu au sein des conseils pour déterminer comment seront formées les nouvelles unités de négociation et qui seront les agents de négociation.

Pour OSSTF/FEESO, cette nouvelle configuration des conseils scolaires est donc une porte grande ouverte au recrutement. La stratégie au départ est somme toute fort simple : au sein des conseils de Hearst et Prescott-Russell, la Fédération compte déjà une centaine de membres sur un total de quelque 750 employés francophones. « Le plan était d'aller les chercher, » précise M. Côté, qui est secrétaire général adjoint d'OSSTF/FEESO.

Déjà, en mars 1998, la Fédération avait créé un district francophone provincial de façon à mieux répondre aux besoins des nouveaux membres.

Mais voilà que les événements se précipitent! Pierre Léonard, alors directeur des ressources humaines du nouveau Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest (CSDCSO), veut procéder rapidement au vote de représentation. Cette région est loin d'être une terre de prédilection pour OSSTF/FEESO puisqu'elle n'y compte que six membres dans une unité comptant 136 personnes! Mais Carmelle Simon, présidente de cette petite unité (58), est une syndicaliste engagée et dynamique qui tient absolument à demeurer au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO.

Quelques mois auparavant, OSSTF/FEESO avait recruté une éducatrice de la région de Sarnia, Colombe Beauregard, pour l'appuyer dans l'organisation des votes. Les deux femmes vont rapidement se lier d'amitié et former une équipe du tonnerre.

Lors du vote de représentation, qui a lieu le 23 octobre 1998, OSSTF/FEESO remporte haut la main la majorité absolue dès le premier tour de scrutin, devant trois autres syndicats qui comptaient tous un plus grand nombre de membres. Victoire surprise? Oui et non.

Quatre facteurs principaux ont joué dans la victoire, précise M. Côté. « Nous avons été plus stratégiques que les autres syndicats ». Le Bureau provincial avait fourni toutes les ressources nécessaires et nous donnait carte blanche sur le plan stratégique. On avait un plan et on savait où on s'en allait. OSSTF/FEESO a pu compter sur le travail acharné de Colombe Beauregard et Carmelle Simon. « Carmelle se promenait d'école en école » pour parler à ses collègues tandis que Colombe « a fait deux fois le tour de toutes les écoles ».

Cette victoire nous a donné de l'adrénaline et le succès

s'est ainsi propagé puisque OSSTF/FEESO a remporté 10 des 12 autres votes tenus dans les conseils entre novembre 1998 et juin 1999, amenant ainsi 2 500 nouveaux membres francophones, soit cinq fois l'objectif fixé à l'origine.

Réjeanne Demeules se souvient qu'il n'y avait qu'une seule unité francophone à Hearst qui était affiliée à la Fédération. À son avis, il ne fait aucun doute que Colombe et Pierre ont mené la meilleure campagne. C'est leur présence et leur constance qui ont fait la différence.

Après le vote, les deux agents de liaison, Pierre Côté et son collègue, nouvellement embauché du Conseil 58, Pierre Léonard, « les deux Pierre », comme les appelle affectueusement Réjeanne, nous ont pris sous leur aile. Nous étions leur bébé; nous n'étions pas comme les autres. »

Par ailleurs on a aussi constaté très rapidement que le fait d'avoir regroupé tous les francophones au sein d'un seul district n'était pas sans causer certains problèmes : un nombre trop grand de membres ayant des intérêts divergents et éparpillés sur un vaste territoire géographique. À compter de 2000, on forme donc deux nouveaux districts : le 32 pour le Centre-Sud-Ouest et le 33 pour l'Est. Le District 31, dont Réjeanne Demeules a assumé la vice-présidence, conserve les unités francophones du Nord.

De part et d'autre, on souligne que la création d'une composante francophone a changé la dynamique au sein de la Fédération. « Leur arrivée a changé le syndicat pour le mieux en ajoutant un certain dynamisme parce qu'il y avait des choses à bâtir dans ces districts-là », affirme Pierre Côté.

Deson côté, Réjeanne Demeules précise que les anglophones ont fait preuve d'un grand esprit d'accueil et de beaucoup de respect envers les nouveaux membres. De fait plusieurs membres francophiles se sont chargés de guider les francophones dans leurs premiers pas au sein de la Fédération.

Aujourd'hui, précise Colombe Beauregard, « aucun autre syndicat en Ontario ne peut se vanter de représenter toute la gamme des employés en éducation aussi bien qu'OSSTF/FEESO ». C'est d'autant plus vrai depuis octobre 2007, avec l'arrivée de l'unité syndicale bilingue du personnel de soutien de l'Université d'Ottawa, soit environ 1 200 membres dont la majorité sont francophones. Une autre campagne de syndicalisation où Colombe Beauregard et Pierre Côté, avec l'aide précieuse de David Moss, auront joué un rôle primordial. 🐦

Daniel Morin est membre de l'unité de négociation du personnel de soutien de l'Université d'Ottawa, District 35 et membre du Comité des services en langue française d'OSSTF/FEESO.

Et que réserve l'avenir?

Selon Réjeanne Demeules, conseillère provinciale et membre du Comité des services en langue française, les francophones doivent encore poser certains gestes pour prendre toute la place qui leur revient au syndicat. « Nous devons con-

tinuer à demander nos services en français. » « Il nous faut être plus visibles au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO et ne pas hésiter à nous exprimer dans la langue qui est la nôtre. » Elle estime aussi qu'il faut obtenir un autre adjoint exécutif francophone, augmenter le nombre de conseillers pro-

vinciaux représentant les membres de langue française et travailler pour élire un francophone au sein de l'Exécutif provincial, tout en cultivant la relève syndicale parmi les membres qui travaillent en français.

Même après dix ans, il reste donc encore bien des défis à relever!

Under Bill 136, introduced by Snobelen, representation votes were to be held in the school boards to determine how the new bargaining units would be formed and which unions would be the bargaining agents.

For OSSTF/FEESO, this new configuration of the school boards opened a huge door to the recruitment of Francophone members. The initial strategy was actually quite simple: in the Hearst and Prescott-Russell boards, the Federation already had in the neighbourhood of 100 members out of a total of roughly 750 French-speaking employees. “The plan was to go get ‘em,” says Côté, now Associate General Secretary of OSSTF/FEESO.

In March 1998, the Federation created a provincial Francophone district in order to better respond to the needs of the new French-speaking members it expected.

But then things started to happen! Pierre Léonard, then director of Human Resources for the new Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest (CSDCSO), covering the French-language schools in the Toronto region and Southern Ontario, wanted to get on with the representation vote.

This region was far from a priority for OSSTF/FEESO because it had only six members in a bargaining unit of 136 people! But the president of this little unit (Board 58), Carmelle Simon, was an energetic and committed unionist who was absolutely determined to remain with OSSTF/FEESO. Moving to another union, nevermind becoming non-unionized, was simply not an option for her.

A few months earlier, OSSTF/FEESO had recruited an educational assistant in the Sarnia area, Colombe Beauregard, to support it in organizing the votes. Simon and Beauregard rapidly became friends and a dynamic duo. Côté said, “they became our secret weapon” in the fight to represent the support staff of CSDCSO.

During the representation vote on October 23, 1998, OSSTF/FEESO easily obtained an absolute majority on the first ballot, against three other unions, which each had more members. Surprise victory? Yes...and no.

Four main factors played a role in the victory, according to Côté. First and foremost, “we were more strategic (than the other unions).” Second, the provincial office provided all necessary resources and then “gave us carte blanche for the strategic planning.” Third, “we had a plan and knew where we were going.” And fourth, OSSTF/FEESO could count on the determined work of Beauregard and Simon. “Carmelle went round from school to school” to talk to her colleagues, while Colombe “went round all the schools twice.”

This victory was a real adrenaline boost for us and the victory grew because OSSTF/FEESO carried 10 of the other 12 votes in the French-language boards between November 1998 and June 1999, garnering 2,500 new French-speaking members, five times the original target.

Réjeanne Demeules remembers that there was only one local in Hearst affiliated with the Federation. In her opinion, there is no doubt that Beauregard and Côté led the best campaign. Their presence and their constancy made all the difference.


After the vote, the two liaison officers, Côté and his colleague Pierre Léonard, newly hired from Board 58—“the two Pierres,” as Demeules affectionately calls them—took us under their wing. “We were their baby, we weren’t like the others.”

And it wasn’t an easy job. For example, Demeules emphasized that there was sometimes a difference of \$10 an hour in the salaries of certain members after the merger. “It took us four years to standardize the salaries.”

We also quickly realized that gathering all the French-speakers in a single district was not entirely without its problems: too many members with diverging interests who were scattered over a vast geographical area. From 2,000 members, two new districts were formed: 32 for South-West Central, and 33 for the East. District 31, of which Demeules became vice-president, retained the Francophone locals in the North.

Both sides stress that the creation of a French-speaking entity changed the dynamic within the Federation. “The arrival of the Francophones changed the union for the better by adding a certain dynamism, because there was some building to be done in those districts,” says Côté.

For her part, Demeules states that the English members were most welcoming and respectful towards the new members. In fact, several members took it upon themselves to guide French-speaking members in their first steps in the Federation.

Now, says Beauregard, “No other union in Ontario can boast of representing all education workers as well as OSSTF/FEESO does.” This became even more true in October 2007, with the arrival of 1,200 bilingual members of a bargaining unit representing the support staff at the University of Ottawa, the majority being French-speaking—another organizing campaign in which Beauregard and Côté, with the invaluable assistance of David Moss, played a primary role. 

Daniel Morin is a member of the University of Ottawa Support Staff bargaining unit of District 35 and a member of the OSSTF/FEESO’s Comité des services en langue française.

What does the future hold?

According to Demeules, now a provincial councillor and member of the Comité des services en langue française, Francophones must still take some steps to assume their full role in the union. “We must continue to demand services

in French,” she says. “We have to be more visible within OSSTF/FEESO and not hesitate to express ourselves in our own language.”

She feels we need to hire another French-speaking executive assistant, increase the number of provincial council-

lors representing French-speaking members and work on electing a Francophone to the Provincial Executive, while doing some succession planning among the members who work in French.

Even after 10 years, there are still lots of challenges to face!



FOR SURVIVING THE 21ST CENTURY

Media literacy is absolutely essential

By Barry Duncan and Carol Arcus

Let's acknowledge at the outset the controversy over new media: the paradigm shift to digital, multi-sensory modes of communications has us in a tizzy. As Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan provocatively suggested, we "shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us." Converging technologies are re-shaping traditional definitions of reading and literacy that originated in a linear print world. As with the advent of the printed word, traditionalists are alarmed. Now, like Mark Bauerlein (*The Dumbest Generation*), they fear that "the digital age stupefies young Americans and jeopardizes our future" by turning out hyper-networked kids who can track each other's every move with ease, but are largely ignorant of history, economics, and traditional culture. In his article "School and the Reading Brain," (*Education Forum*, Fall 2008), Jon Cowans worries that kids are losing their ability to read the printed

word with comprehension and attention.

The 21st century child can be a thorn in the side of the 20th century educator. Nevertheless, visionaries such as Marc Prensky (*Don't Bother Me Mom, I'm Learning*) are bold enough to recognize them as "Digital Natives":

They have been adjusting or programming their brains to the speed, interactivity, and other factors in the [video]games.... Children raised with the computer—think differently from the rest of us. They develop hyper-text minds. They leap around. It's as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential. (*Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*)

This child of the iPhone, iPod, BlackBerry, MSN, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube is a voracious reader and prolific communicator, but in ways monumentally different than ever before. And what is she reading (and producing)? Websites,

emails, text messages, online fan fiction, videogame cheats, news online, MSN chat, social networking websites. Not to mention *Twilight*. And the *Harry Potter* books, which Professor Francesca Coppa remarks, "...is no longer simply a series of books by one author but an entire creative universe within which millions of people are writing, reading, discussing, reporting, analyzing, criticizing, celebrating, marketing, filming, translating, teaching, theorizing, and playacting" (*Writing Bodies in Space*). In 2005, the Pew Internet & American Life report "Teen Content Creators and Consumers" indicated that more than one-half of all teens have created media content, and roughly one-third of teens who use the Internet have shared content they produced.

The complex, active and dynamic nature of our students' digital experiences, therefore, interrogate traditional notions of reading and literacy, prompting researchers such as Kate Pahl and Jennifer



Rowse to link this multi-sensory, multi-modal, multi-literate experience to new notions of literacy and identity:

The new literacy studies...[make] us aware of our learners in relation to their identities. Literacy learners produce texts—bits of writing and other expressions of meaning, like drawing and talking. They become makers of texts and, as such, infuse their texts with their sense of identity and the everyday life things that happen to people. These include shopping and cooking and watching television and a myriad of other practices, all interwoven into the act of being literate. (*Literacy and Education*)

Henry Jenkins at MIT calls this multi-modal culture a participatory culture, [one] with “relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and...one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another” (*Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*). Don Tapscott, author of *Paradigm Shift*, has concluded that in fact Net Geners are smarter, quicker and more tolerant of diversity than their predecessors. They are more politically savvy, socially engaged and family-centred than society gives them credit for.

New cultural paradigms call for new proficiencies, which Jenkins says, “build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom.”

But we must be cognizant of the unique challenges that face the 21st century child: in sustained, comprehensive, critical reading skills; in organizational skills; and most importantly in the critical, reflective use of technology. This generation may surf the Net, but that does not mean they *think* about how, why and what they are doing. Jenkins reinforces this:

To say that children are not victims of media is not to say that they...have fully mastered what are...complex and still emerging social practices...[The] lais-

“[The] empowerment of people through information and media literacy is an important prerequisite for fostering equitable access to information and knowledge, and building inclusive knowledge societies.”

UNESCO



sez faire approach...does not address the fundamental inequalities in young people’s access to new media technologies. [It] assumes that children are actively reflecting on their media experiences and can thus articulate what they learn...

Marc Prensky agrees:

One of the most interesting challenges and opportunities in teaching Digital Natives is to figure out and invent ways to include reflection and critical thinking in the learning (either built into the instruction or through a process of instructor-led debriefing) but still do it in the Digital Native language.

It is here that the thoughtful teacher must enter the process. Traditionally minded educators have clung to notions of linear, book-based decoding skills, when the obvious and urgent challenge is to teach students to both decode AND cogently navigate the highly complex systems of new media. It is up to visionary educators who have thought deeply about 21st century citizens to design a 21st century curriculum to meet their needs.

But as leading media education researcher David Buckingham has noted in the introduction to his UNESCO Policy Paper, “[r]egrettably most formal and non-formal educational systems do little

to promote media education or education for communication. Too often the gap between the educational experience they offer and the real world in which people live is disturbingly wide.” Welcome to the global village.

Often when media education is adopted, it is wasted through misapplied pedagogy: teaching *through* the media, rather than *about* it. This approach ignores the complex contextual relationship between content and form. It is the equivalent of reading a haiku without making reference to its physical structure. Or showing the film version of *Hamlet* without asking how and why this different medium changes the meaning for its audience. Recognizing the difference is one thing; asking *why* it is different illuminates the distinction between mere identification and critical thinking.

However, when used astutely, media education can be a model of differentiated curriculum. Teachers from many disciplines can exploit the teachable moments which surface so readily from the immense territory generated by the convergence of popular culture and the new digital media—whether it is discussing 9/11, Katrina, Britney Spears’ meltdowns, debating the pros and cons of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt engaging in celebrity diplomacy in Africa, or their newest YouTube and Facebook posts.

Until recently, popular culture was always contrasted with “high” culture. Opera, Beethoven, Shakespeare and Michelangelo vs. Beyonce, Harlequin romances, blockbuster films and reality television. Academically, we need to recognize that in the last 20 years cultural studies departments have gained a strong foothold on North American campuses, offering rich, academic opportunities for students. Courses focus on the dynamics of gender, race and class and on the social, economic and political issues surrounding the media, including the importance of ownership and control of the media industries. This is reason enough to embed it solidly into secondary curriculum.

Teachers who lack the means or time for formal training in media studies can take heart in knowing that there are fundamentals they can apply easily to any

text or topic. Media education is concept driven and there is international consensus on the areas that need to be covered. These key concepts become the organizing elements that give this work the required intellectual coherence and academic rigour. Imagine discussing a Dove commercial, or the Obama campaign, or Facebook, with a class and applying the following key concepts:

- *Media Codes and Convention* are technical codes such as camera angles, visual design and how they shape the message.
- *Values and Ideology* concern a set of beliefs about the world. Typical questions: Who has power? Who does not and why? How are stereotypes used in this text?
- *Media and Industry* recognize the commercial implications of media and that most of the world's information and entertainment industries are owned and controlled by a handful of media conglomerates.
- *Media and Audience* are considered in two different ways: How we as consumers become target audiences, and how we as active participants make sense of the media.

Ontario has made important inroads into media curriculum: initially a “movement” of enthusiastic teachers in the 1980's, Canadian media education began to be taken seriously by education policy makers. In 1986, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in North America to make media literacy mandatory, from K–12. Following that decision, the widely acclaimed


Media Literacy Resource Guide was produced by the Ontario-based Association for Media Literacy (AML) and published in 1989. By 1997, the rest of Canada followed suit and media literacy was embedded in provincial policy guidelines for all English/Language Arts programs. The documents encourage a wide range of media activity, from the social significance of tabloids to the study of media conglomerates. It is also important to note that the expectations for Media Studies in Ontario are very different from those of Media Arts; the former soundly embraces critical thinking skills, the latter emphasizes hands-on creative expertise.

Regrettably, few teachers are adequately trained to teach media literacy, but as more teachers receive in-service training through Additional Qualification (AQ) courses, more schools will feel comfortable including it as an essential part of the curriculum. Media Studies AQ courses are offered at York University and the University of Toronto. Teachers from other parts of Ontario should lobby for their availability at other faculties of education. Alternatively, and as a stopgap measure, teachers accessing AML resources could conduct their own research. While only English teachers are required to include media literacy in the curriculum, there are some marvelous opportunities to infuse it into subjects such as history, geography, health, sociology and gender studies.

Ultimately, perhaps we are only tinkering with the old curriculum, for as

Marshall McLuhan suggested, “we see the world through a rear-view mirror, marching backwards into the future.” The institution of education has never been known for its vision in anticipating the needs of the next generation. Changes wrought by technology are not always the changes we like, but they are changes we, as educators, must address.

[R]ather than condemn or endorse the undoubted power of the media, we need to accept their significant impact and penetration throughout the world as an established fact, and also appreciate their importance as an element of culture in today's world. The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen's active participation in society. *Grünwald Declaration on Media Education, UNESCO*

The naysayers who decry the loss of *one* kind of reading, while abandoning the *many* kinds of reading skills that youth need in a complex multi-modal world, are failing those students utterly. 

Barry Duncan is a retired Media and English teacher. He is the founder and former president of the Association for Media Literacy. **Carol Arcus** is a Media Studies and English teacher at Unionville High School. She has served on the Executive of AML for 15 years.

GETTING STARTED

The Association for Media Literacy (AML)

A voluntary, non-profit organization with an international membership dedicated to promoting media education as a means of understanding the influence of the media, also the impact of rapidly evolving technology, on our culture. Annual fee of \$30 for online access. www.aml.ca

The Media-Awareness Network (MNet)

More than 300 teaching lessons K-12 are searchable by topic, grade or province, also learning outcomes and more than 100 essays on topics such as gen-

der, racial and Aboriginal stereotyping, media violence, online hate, electronic privacy and Canadian cultural policies. Web awareness resources include educational games with teachers' guides. www.media-awareness.ca

Media Education and Educating the Media

Our Schools: Our Selves (Fall 2007)
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Media Education: Literacy, Learning Contemporary Culture

(David Buckingham, 2003, Wiley). The best

general background book to address the numerous debates in media education, it covers all the hot topics, from ideology to using new digital media.

Media Literacy Resource Guide

Ministry of Education, Ontario (1989). Government of Ontario Book Store, 5th Floor, 880 Bay St., Toronto ON M7A 1N8 (\$7). Mailing address: 50 Grosvenor St., Toronto ON M7A 1N8 Office: 416-326-5300; Mail Order: 1-800-668-9938. (A bargain, buy it while it lasts!)



Common

“DID anyone else hear gunshots last night?” That was the topic at breakfast on the first day of our Common Threads trip to Brazil, and we began to wonder if the warnings in our guidebooks about the high crime rate in some of Brazil’s larger cities was something we should have taken more seriously.

Common Threads is OSSTF/FEESO’s international solidarity project. Common Threads IV, the 2008 project in which I took part, centred on food security, and saw a team made up of six diverse OSSTF/FEESO members travel to Brazil to learn more about the issue and develop a resource for use in Ontario classrooms. Unlike previous Common Threads projects, which involved sweatshops, HIV/AIDS, and water, we found our topic a little harder to define, and everyone on the team admitted that there was a lot to learn and we looked forward to what Brazil had to teach us.

Our first destination, Belo Horizonte, is a bustling metropolis in the Minas Gerais Province. Despite its status as the third-largest city in Brazil, few people have even heard of it, while even fewer have made it a destination of choice. Tourists are not a common sight and there was little in the way of attractions in the city, however, Belo Horizonte did excel in at least one important area—feeding its citizens.

We jumped right into the program by arranging an evening meeting with the local teachers’ federation on the day of our arrival. Though it was technically winter in Brazil, the temperature hovered in the high 20s and this, combined with jet lag, made the get together an exhausting experience. Yet the passion of the educators for their profession and their genuine excitement at having guests from so far away kept us go-

ing and launched us into our quest to define our issue.

As might be expected, the challenges facing Brazilian teachers closely mirror those of our members, and it was somewhat chilling to note that underfunding and privatization characterize public education even halfway around the world.

The next few days were a whirlwind of visits with city officials, including the mayor, and in-depth tours of the various components that made up the framework of a system that ensured that the people of Belo Horizonte were guaranteed access to fresh, healthy and affordable food.

The first, and perhaps most obvious piece of the puzzle was the lunch program provided at all public schools. While not unique to Brazil, the lunch program in the schools we visited differed in that lunch was prepared daily from fresh regional ingredients and was delicious. The students seemed genuinely happy with their meals. Not a bag of chips or a chocolate bar in sight. Most of the food came from local farmers, thus providing support for the local economy—what a concept.

Another innovative idea is the government-supported supermarkets, *Sacolaos* (big bag stores), which offer aisle upon aisle of local produce but ensure that a few staples such as tomatoes, cassava, etc., are provided at a subsidized rate. This



Threads IV

From Canada to Brazil **By Glen Hodgson**

guarantees that food remains affordable to the consumer, while ensuring a stable and marketable price for the farmer. Storeowners are happy since the subsidized produce draws a large crowd who then purchase many other products at the regular market price. The manager of the store we visited explained all this as he took our picture (tourists never come to the subsidized markets).

Our itinerary stated that on our final evening in the city we were scheduled to have dinner at the “Popular” restaurant. As we counted out our money we wondered why we were being taken to an upscale eating establishment, and, if we could afford it on our limited per diem. But our financial concerns were unfounded. A “Popular” restaurant in Belo Horizonte is a subsidized restaurant where a meal costs 1 Real (about .75 Cdn). The idea is to provide, to anyone who needs it, access to a healthy meal, no questions asked. The term “Popular” restaurant is used more in reference to the 400 or so people who line the walls waiting to be fed, than to the cost of the food. Once again, the food was plentiful, fresh and excellently prepared.

The mixed clientele seemed to enjoy the experience and one man we interviewed was amazed that Canada didn’t have such institutions. Because of the nature of the restaurant, the mix included the homeless, office workers and blue-collar types and nobody, not even our group, stood out. That is, until there was an announcement over the loudspeaker as to our presence. It seems tourists don’t come to these places either. We were beginning to sense a trend to our trip.

The next morning we rose early for a painful, 12-hour ride

by van into the interior of the province. Drivers in Brazil are a little more aggressive than drivers in Canada. We were seriously questioning the need for such a long drive and looking forward to arriving at our hotel when our Canadian liaison, Ryerson University professor Cecilia Rocha, sheepishly warned us not to be too upset if we saw large insects in our rooms that night. She neglected to mention the lizards. Lizards go where they can find food, i.e. where they can find insects. Yet the town of Arçuaí proved to be more than worth the time and trouble it took to get there. Again, we were a novelty because, you got it, tourists don’t usually visit here.

Arçuaí was our home base for several food-related side trips. With a climate and landscape similar to that of the American Southwest, the people of the region face the same struggle to make a living and produce food in conditions where the precipitation can be spotty and seasonal. Like many North American farmers, attempts to fight the weather by trying to grow different varieties of crops in a variety of ways have met with limited success. However, a recent program, in cooperation with teams from Ryerson University, has locals embarking on water conservation plans and the practice of permaculture. The visiting students, and Ryerson’s Centre for Studies in Food Security, helped launch several initiatives that were beginning to pay off. We visited communities where these successes were helping to cement solid Brazilian-Canadian partnerships.

By working with the land and growing crops in a more sustainable and diverse manner, both the people and the environment have benefitted. At a demonstration farm the lead farmer summed up the approach very nicely. He told us an anecdote as



we were gathered on the shores of a river, at the spot he was attempting to re-grow native tree species. His first attempt at the plantation had failed when ants had eaten his initial young seedlings. We naturally expected that he would continue with the story of how he exterminated the pesky little insects.

We were all surprised, and pleased, to learn that his solution had been to plant two types of trees—the original, intended species, and a second species that the ants would enjoy and that would provide them with a more viable food source. And they would leave the other trees alone. This simple, yet sensible approach attempted to accommodate and respect the ecosystem, not simply eradicate the problem.

On a visit to a rural school we were welcomed with singing and a line-up of students who tossed rose petals into the air. Our arrival in many remote areas became an event celebrated by the entire community and it was hard to get used to being treated as celebrities. For many of us, the experience was the first and probably only time that we were asked to sign autographs!

Despite an already tight schedule, we managed a brief visit to an aboriginal village whose citizens were in the process of implementing many of the permaculture techniques we had seen at the demonstration farm. We used some free time on a Sunday morning to visit a sugar cane farm, a stop of particular interest to me, as I wanted to investigate the implications of sugar cane biofuel production, which has seen heavy investment by the Brazilian government.

We peppered the local farmer, a transplanted German, with copious questions—trying to poke holes in his method of sugar cane production. He, like every other Brazilian we questioned, offered little that caused us concern over farming practices. Whether at the sugar cane field, the aboriginal village or the reclaimed lands, Brazilian farmers spoke a common language of co-existence, sustainability and conservation.

Of course, the trip wasn't all work. Evenings were spent at local restaurants that had been recommended by our ea-

By working with the land and growing crops in a more sustainable and diverse manner, both the people and the environment have benefited



Market scene in Araçuaí

ger self-appointed guide, a local Brazilian, whom we affectionately called "Uncle Milt." The penchant of Brazilians not to begin dinner until 9:00 p.m., and to continue to eat until midnight, left us struggling to meet our daily schedule.

This was further complicated by the locals' love of a cheap and plentiful, highly potent alcohol called Cachaca, which our newfound friends were only too willing to share with their Canadian brothers and sisters. With a demanding workday facing us each and every morning, most of the team opted for pop, coconut water or mango juice while graciously agreeing to the occasional toast. When we learned that the name Cachaca, loosely translated, means "fire water," it was easier to pass up. I do admit to developing a taste for it after a couple of days, which delighted the local Brazilians.

We ended our time with a quick stopover in Rio de Janeiro to play tourist for a day or two before heading back to Toronto, though some of the group and much of the luggage stayed behind in Miami after a difficult connecting flight didn't quite work out. Eventually the team arrived safe and sound in Toronto and so did our luggage, albeit a couple of days after we did. My bag contained a highlighted form from Canada Customs politely pointing out that the Cachaca contained therein exceeded the limit I was allowed to carry back to the country. It seems that the generosity of our Brazilian friends and the gifts they bestowed were not appreciated by everyone.

As for the gunshots on our first night? Just a matter of us being within earshot at the wrong time, wrong place—it can happen in any big city. The rest of our trip, although certainly not uneventful, was free of any violent incidents.

Brazil turned out to be a welcoming host and a willing teacher and the Common Threads IV team arrived back in Toronto with a hundred new questions and a thousand warm memories. 🐦

Glen Hodgson is the Teachers' Bargaining Unit president of OSSTF/FEESO District 4, Near North.

PERMACULTURE is an approach to designing landscapes that works with nature rather than against nature, in an effort to create beautiful living systems that provide food (and other essentials) in sustainable ways. Permaculture was started in Australia by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in the 1970's. The intent was that, by rapidly training individuals in a core set of design principles, those individuals could design their own environments and build increasingly self-sufficient

human settlements—ones that reduce society's reliance on industrial systems of production and distribution that Mollison identified as fundamentally and systematically destroying the Earth's ecosystems. Permaculture combines age-old indigenous wisdom with new insights emerging from movements for sustainability around the world and is based on the ethical principles of care of the earth, care of the people and sharing the surplus.

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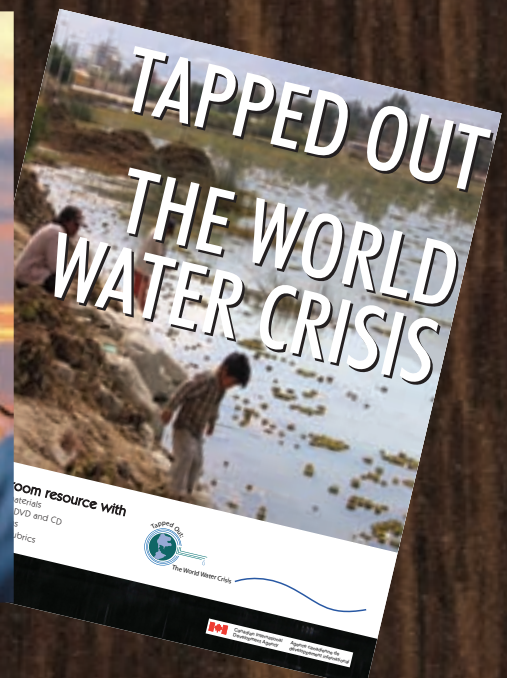
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The Myth of Ability

Careful work and persistent effort
lead students to success

By Jon Cowans

John Mighton is an academic version of the triple-threat man. He's a prize-winning Canadian playwright, an elite mathematician and a philosopher of education. Make that a quadruple-threat man: he's also the founder of JUMP Math, an alternative program for teaching mathematics for Grades 1 through 8. Established in 1998 as a tutorial service, JUMP soon proved so successful, especially in disadvantaged communities, that Mighton converted it into a classroom program, complete with grade-compatible textbooks. JUMP's rapid growth has brought it close media attention. The title of an article by *Globe and Mail* columnist Margaret Wente, "Any Kid Can Learn Math" (Nov. 8, 2008), neatly sums up the JUMP principle: given the right instruction, all children have the potential to become competent students, not just in math but in any subject. JUMP was, and remains, a charitable organization to which Mighton, in spite of a busy professional schedule, freely contributes much of his time.

ILLUSTRATION: GREG MABLY



Though well established in public schools in British Columbia and the United Kingdom, JUMP has just begun to take hold in Ontario where it faces some resistance. The opposition centres around two main objections: that JUMP

considered to have high ability) and the unsuccessful (those considered to have low ability). Typically, the latter may turn defeatist and defiant, coming to believe the reason for their failure is their lack of ability or, just as bad, the irrelevance

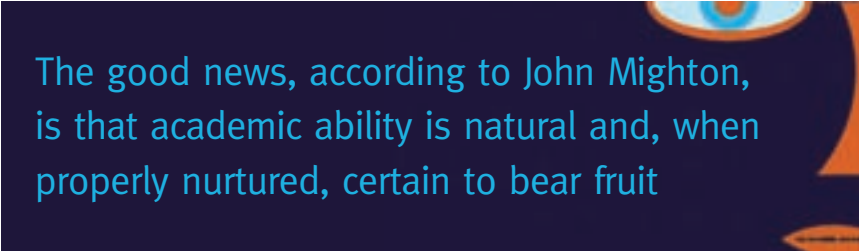
estimation of universal academic ability is unrealistic. For support, they might turn to Charles Murray's 2008 bestseller *Real Education*. A prominent American sociologist, Murray argues that since IQ scores, that measure underlying academic ability, correlate with academic achievement, academic ability is essentially fixed. Although school plays an important role in realizing that ability, school cannot essentially alter it:

In large groups of children, academic achievement is tied to academic ability. No pedagogical strategy, no improvement in teacher training, no increase in homework, no reduction in class size can break that connection.

Why exactly academic ability is fixed, Murray does not say, but presumably, if it isn't environmental, it must be biological or genetic, a taboo subject in discussions of general intelligence. For Murray, the view taken by Mighton, that student potential is plastic, constitutes a harmful delusion:

Call it educational romanticism. We have idealized images of the potential that children bring to the classroom and of our ability to realize that potential. When the facts get in the way, we ignore them.... Schools that ignore those realities are doing a disservice to all their students.

But Mighton is no "educational romantic," nor is he afraid to discuss the biology of intelligence. His belief in universal ability assigns a prominent role to both nature and nurture. Mighton confesses to having "shown few signs of innate talent" as a writer when he was young. But in university, he was encouraged to write after reading the letters of American poet Sylvia Plath, who taught herself the craft of writing through a combination of "sheer determination" and the careful study of its forms. She wrote imitations of poems, studied meter and poetic devices and memorized literary passages. Out of this process, Plath's talent gradually emerged and she went on to become one of the greatest writers of her generation. Encouraged by her example, Mighton pursued



The good news, according to John Mighton,
is that academic ability is natural and, when
properly nurtured, certain to bear fruit

fails to acknowledge that students have different levels of ability and rates of learning; and that JUMP stresses drill over discovery, and procedure over understanding. Mighton believes that these two claims are based on an incomplete knowledge of the JUMP program, and are invalidated by his own educational writings, JUMP literature and independent research. But the two issues involved—the nature of ability and the methodology of teaching—go far beyond JUMP and reach to the very core of North American education. Mighton's two books on JUMP, *The Myth of Ability* (2003) and *The End of Ignorance* (2007), deal as much with these larger issues as with the program itself.

Mighton sees the current view of academic ability—that some kids have it and others don't—as a social myth. In language reminiscent of Marx, he lays out the troubling effects of this assumption and the need to change it:

Historically, societies have always been divided by myths of difference: between peasants and nobility, slaves and slave owners, or minorities and majorities. Today, the most pervasive and enduring of those myths—the myth of ability—is being challenged. (*The Myth of Ability*)

As a microcosm of society, the school tacitly accepts the myth of ability and imposes it upon the classroom. It does so primarily through a hierarchical assessment method by which children are ranked according to achievement. Predictably, the process ends up dividing students into two distinct groups: the successful (those

of school itself. The myth of ability thus serves as a debilitating and self-fulfilling prophecy, as Mighton explains:

We will never foster emergent intelligence or abilities in weaker students until we remove the psychological and pedagogical barriers that create artificial hierarchies in our schools and prevent weaker students from succeeding. And teachers will never make the effort to remove those barriers until they have seen evidence that emergent intelligence can appear in weaker students. So the hierarchies persist. (*The End of Ignorance*)

Acting as an original 'social' sin, the myth of ability may ultimately be responsible for "humanity's most persistent problems, including poverty, inequity, and the destruction of the environment." (*The Myth of Ability*)

The good news, according to John Mighton, is that academic ability is natural and, when properly nurtured, certain to bear fruit:

I believe that children who are educated according to their potential could do well in every subject. I am not claiming that all children will be exactly the same, or that they will all reach the same level of achievement or enjoy every subject equally.... But I believe there is a standard in every subject—well above the one we now expect of competent students—that almost all elementary students could easily achieve. (*The End of Ignorance*)

Not a few readers will challenge Mighton on this point, and argue that his

a similar course. Ten years later, he had won the first of two Governor-General's Awards for his plays.

Mighton admits that it is counter-intuitive to believe that close and methodical study of a subject can spark a creative result:

It seems inconceivable that anything original or inspiring could originate in things that are themselves mechanical or derivative, but the abilities of experts often emerge from exercises that involve a great deal of practice and copying of the styles and ideas of others. (*The End of Ignorance*)

Academic achievement, it turns out, is primarily a matter of careful work and persistent effort, not raw ability, a fact born out repeatedly, according to Mighton, in the development of scientific expertise:

At this level, sheer intelligence is almost secondary. In the sciences, factors such as passion, confidence, creativity, diligence, luck, and artistic flair are as important as the speed and sharpness of one's mind. (*The Myth of Ability*)

This view is supported by other observers. In *The Learning Gap* (1992), a comparison of American and Asian education practices, authors Harold Stevenson and James Stigler point out that,

The Asian disregard for the limitations imposed by an ability model offers children a more optimistic view of the possible outcomes of their efforts than does the model held by most Americans. Through step-by-step training, Asian elementary school children gain a level of skill and confidence that typically exceeds American children's.

The authors point out that when Asian students are unsuccessful, it is understood to result from a lack of effort, not ability, and they are encouraged to keep working till they succeed. A similar view is taken in Malcolm Gladwell's most recent book, *Outliers*, where he posits "The 10,000 Hour Rule": expertise emerges only after that amount of time has been spent on a discipline. Gladwell cites,

among others, the case of the Beatles. Before becoming famous, the Fab Four learned their trade in Hamburg, Germany performing at the Star Club assiduously over a two-year period, eight hours a day, seven days a week. (Or was that eight days a week?)

As for the assumed relationship between biology and ability, Mighton points out:

A growing body of evidence in the study of cognition now shows that the vast majority of children are born with the ability to learn anything and that the brain is plastic until much later in life than scientists previously believed.... The brain can acquire new abilities that emerge suddenly and dramatically from a series of small conceptual advances. (*The End of Ignorance*)

The latter phenomenon gives rise to Mighton's concept of "emergent intelligence," something he has routinely observed in JUMP classrooms, where the study of math is carried out in small, step-by-step increments until the student suddenly "gets it." This has led Mighton's detractors to claim that JUMP is based on rote learning. Mighton counters that JUMP uses a multifaceted approach to instruction that he calls "guided discovery," combining the best of both pedagogies: the progressivist technique of learning by exploration, and the traditionalist technique of learning by procedure. To prefer one method to the other, he argues, is a false dichotomy. Mighton cites:

...that if students are taught how to perform a mathematical operation rather than discovering the method on their own, they are unlikely to ever understand the concepts underlying the operation...a reasonable idea that has simply been stretched too far. (*The End of Ignorance*)

Ultimately, student success depends not only on the right instruction, but also on the right attitude. Students need to feel confident in their ability and proud of their achievement, but these must be legitimately earned through hard and, sometimes, repeated effort:


I will sometimes let them struggle

more with an exercise. They need to learn eventually that it's natural to fail on occasion and that solving problems often takes a great deal of trial and error. (*The End of Ignorance*)

Unfortunately, says Mighton, the progressivist view that "kids will discover things on their own without careful guidance has prevented us from appreciating the degree of rigour that good teaching requires." (*The End of Ignorance*) But if the excitement of the JUMP classroom is any example, then there is no reason, he contends, why school cannot be both fun and rigorous; another false dichotomy.

If all students have the ability to succeed, the class can and should be taught as a whole, since, "engaging the collective is not simply a matter of fairness; it is also a matter of efficiency" (*The End of Ignorance*). Working as a unit, the class actually learns faster. JUMP's critics warn this does not recognize students' special needs. Mighton's response, "it is possible, through rigorous instruction, to teach the whole class roughly the same things at the same time" (*The End of Ignorance*), thereby largely avoiding the problem in the first place. For those who work somewhat faster or slower than the rest, appropriate strategies are available both in and out of classroom. Keeping the class progressing as a unit prevents the separation of students into the successful and unsuccessful. This is further strengthened by its assessment method whereby, as much as is possible:

All students would receive roughly the same marks. There might be two marks—for instance, A and possibly A+ for students who have done extra work—and a class would not move on until all, or virtually all, the students had received a satisfactory mark. (*The End of Ignorance*)

If Mighton insists that all students achieve mastery before moving on, it's because he believes all students have the ability to do so. Do we? 

Jon Cowans, a recently retired teacher from the Durham DSB, is a frequent contributor to *Education Forum*.



NEW

Media Opportunities

Bringing the Internet Age into the classroom doesn't have to mean compromising quality

By Rod Heikkila

"[P]eople are getting their information in increasingly different ways and while newspapers are trying to help older readers and will continue to deliver news in traditional ways, we cannot ignore new technology and lifestyles...I won't go on about that today, as I know it is cold comfort to many of you who may miss Sunday."

—Paul Berton, Editor-in-Chief, *London Free Press*,
explains why the Sunday paper has been cut. December 27, 2008

AS it is for those in journalism, anyone in education will have noticed there are significant changes in how people experience information today. The information highway of the 1980s has become a virtual world in which many live almost exclusively. Not surprisingly then, students seem less engaged than ever from many aspects of traditional education.

"Engagement" is the latest buzzword as teachers struggle to make their disciplines relevant. Furthermore, today's youngest educational workers scarcely remember a time before the virtual world.

Ironically, in an era of unprecedented educational potential, two invaluable educational tools—technology and assessment—could become ends in themselves and thereby actually limit learning. In the name of engagement and of accountability, we risk creating a future dominated by legions of magnificently fast idiot savants monitored by equally foolish and self-satisfied sophisticate generals of accountability.

ILLUSTRATION: VIRGINIE EGGER



learn



Jeff

The digital generation has come of age

Every educational worker over the age of 31 should read Don Tapscott's *Grown Up Digital*. The rest of us, and our students, are already members of what he calls "Net Geners" (those born between January 1977 and December 1997). Tapscott lays out, very effectively, the characteristics of a generation he sees as perhaps the smartest generation yet, largely because of the digital world that formed them. They are, he points out, savvier, more creative, more diverse, more collaborative and more adaptable than preceding generations. Former US vice-president, now environmental activist, Al Gore, and Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, endorse his book.

His insights are invaluable, but he seems out of touch with the contemporary high school classroom: he exhorts educators to "alter their traditional sage-on-the-stage approach to instruction once they see how inappropriate it is for Net Gen learners." He blames "Industrial Age education models" for dropout rates. High schools, he thinks, focus on teachers instead of students, on lectures instead of promoting student interaction, deliver one-size-fits-all instead of individualized learning, and isolate students where they should be encouraged to collaborate, however in most high schools, this hasn't been the case for years.

Nonetheless, his "Eight Net Generation Norms" are relevant to education. Perhaps we have been experiencing the increasing tension between Net Gen "norms" and the demands of teaching for 20 years. It might partially explain the latest mania for "engagement," wherein teachers age 31 and under build interactive technology into lessons, while teachers over 31 do their best to do the same, sometimes questioning their own "Industrial Age" relevance. Might the subject discipline itself be diluted by engagement, however, when engagement becomes a euphemism for mere entertainment, when technology is employed for its own sake? As explained in "Sir, I Can Read Just Fine, But I Hate books" (*Education Forum*, Spring 2008), one of the casualties of the latest trends could be literature itself.

The pitfalls of engagement

Guitar Hero and *Rock Band* are engaging many today. As a pre Net Gen who plays guitar and has been in many rock bands over the years, I have to admit that the digital experience is wonderful and engaging in its own right. Anyone can play. The first time I played *Guitar Hero*, the 13-year-old who destroyed me was amused that she could whip an old school rocker so soundly. I've improved, but I'll probably never beat her at that game. She, however, will probably never take up a real guitar or play in a real rock band, and so will never know the difference. While the game seems to be an approximation of the actual act of playing in a band, it is not much like it at all. In

interesting and growing more interesting by the minute. The digital age provides unprecedented tools to explore and contribute to, but *not* replace them. I play guitar better after stealing just a handful of licks from Muddy Waters, Hank Williams and Synyster Gates on YouTube, but I won't replace my real, interactive, six-string electric guitar with a push-button Fender Stratocaster from *Guitar Hero*, no matter how engaging the game.

The pitfalls of assessment and accountability

One reaction to the astronomical potential of education has been, ironically, to rein it in. Perhaps it's human nature to strive to make the nearly incomprehensible tiny

"News websites can adorn their pages with videos, slide shows, blogs and myriad forms of interactivity, but they're no better than the quality of the journalism they begin with.... All the rest is merely packaging, technological enhancement, or what Salon.com writer David Weinberger calls a culturally deafening 'echo chamber.'"

—Larry Cornies, London writer, defends traditional journalism.
December 27, 2008

fact, I'd say that the more you've actually played the real thing, the more you must overcome to succeed at the game. *Guitar Hero* is a wonderful game; playing a musical instrument is a discipline. The former is candy, the latter a three-course meal.

In our rush to engage students of the digital age, we must remember the disciplines we are entrusted to teach. We need to remember that our disciplines are, in themselves, engaging. Shakespeare, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Robert Munsch aren't good because I find a way to make them interesting; they actually *are* good. The study of DNA or of mitosis isn't good because I find a way to make it interesting; it actually *is* good, in itself. They are not candy. Physics, drama, mathematics, carpentry, poetry, geography, physical education, foods, sociology, Latin, French, biology, literature and every aspect of every discipline passed down to us *are* already

enough for us to understand easily. Galileo was forced by the Inquisition to recant his proof that the earth rotated around the sun; he spent years under house arrest. That tendency might, in part, account for our enthusiasm for measurable things.

John Ralston Saul's *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason*, shows how western society has embraced the creation of systems to perform certain tasks. Systems (from sewage management to education) have been hugely successful. However, says Saul, we can forget what a particular system was designed to do. We then begin to serve the system itself instead, sometimes at our peril (the military build-up that led to World War I, for example). Reason, Saul points out, is another powerful tool, but not an end in itself. That one can apply reason to something does not necessarily make it right, or even desirable (fascism, for example).

A byproduct of our enthusiasm for systems, he argues, is the rise of the nearly invisible, but powerful manager he calls the *technocrat*. Saul cites Robert McNamara, who served as US Defense Secretary during the Vietnam War. Like so many briefcase-carrying technocrats in suits, he could say goodbye to his family after breakfast, order the illegal carpet-bombing of Cambodia after lunch, and be home by suppertime.

The wartime examples are extreme, but those of us in education know something about systems and technocrats. Saul helps explain why governments regularly overhaul the educational “system” in the false hope of achieving pedagogical perfection. Curiously, educational workers themselves are often portrayed as resisters to change.

Another example of our enthusiasm for systems is the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). It feeds a technocratic hunger for measurable “success” and “failure” like the little running scores on the *Guitar Hero* game. The allure of such scores for governments and for school administrators is understandable. Scores promise something reasonably tangible in a world where a school’s greatest successes—like actual student engagement in subject disciplines, tone of the school or caring learning environments—are essentially intangible. The temptation of test scores is great. Tens of thousands of lessons are lost so that children and their schools will measure up when it comes to writing a bogus newspaper article based on a specific black and white photo, or to learning to spot the distracter multiple-choice answer based on some subway schedule.

Ask any teacher why he/she went into teaching and I doubt very much that the words “assessment” and “accountability” will appear in any answer. More likely, the answer will speak of the mutual joy experienced when a student understands a concept, or of the desire to share the love of learning. Few will answer, “to help raise the grade 9 EQAO mathematics scores” or “to help make sure that more students pass the EQAO grade 10 literacy test.”

So where to now?

Technology and measurement for their own sake are antithetical to learning. We can use the myriad tools of the digital age to seek the deeper, often intangible magnificence of the disciplines we have inherited. There are worlds of knowledge that require exploration. Student-centred learning must not be students merely centred on themselves through technology.

One possible consequence of superficial speed over substance is that people may no longer value or master the demands of our respective disciplines or respect those who teach them. To illustrate, the press release from McGraw-Hill Ryerson promoting Don Tapscott’s excellent book, *Grown Up Digital* is printed on semi-gloss paper with beautiful fonts



and graphics, but its sentence structure is terrible. Capitalization and punctuation do not follow established English conventions. They have even used the unintentionally comical metaphor “hotwired” (as in to have short circuited something, for instance, in order to steal a car) presumably instead of “hardwired,” to describe the brains of young people. The \$30.95 product is then billed as “a handbook for educators to understand how best to teach.”

A second example comes from Joe O’Shea, a high speed Net Gen Rhodes Scholar mentioned in the book. He dismisses the value of books and sees himself as the epicentre of relevance, sense and skill: “I don’t read books per se... I go to Google and I can absorb relevant information quickly. Some of this comes from books. But sitting down

and going through a book from cover to cover doesn’t make sense. It’s not a good use of my time as I can get all the information I need through the web. You need to know how to do it—to be a skilled hunter.”

Surely one needs to be able to read efficiently and also to read critically. It isn’t, nor should it be, limited to one or the other.

While generalizations risk oversimplification, there does seem to be a tension of extremes; Net Geners seek instant gratification, traditionalists mistrust new technology and the latest “edufad,” politicians crave demonstrable success at low cost and want it yesterday, and broader society expects it all, all at once. As with most things, the extremes are often where the troubles lie.

In “It’s not what we teach; it’s what they learn” (*Education Week*, Sept. 10, 2008) author and education scholar Alfie Kohn wrote: “The fact is that real learning often can’t be quantified, and a corporate-style preoccupation with ‘data’ turns schooling into something shallow and lifeless. Ideally, attention to learning signifies an effort to capture how each student makes sense of the world so we can meet them where they are.”

Perhaps there is a way to access the best of all worlds. We can make the best of the new and the well-established tools, whether that might be technology or any of a wide variety of instructional methodologies to draw in the students. Then, we can dive in, ever deeper, rather than splashing about upon an ever-expanding surface. Critical awareness will increase as students develop a greater understanding of the disciplines being taught. Once that happens, assessment and accountability will, or should, take care of themselves.

We need to remember that even though students might be fast, their knowledge is not yet very deep; they’re too young to have thoroughly explored anything worthwhile; that’s why they need us and why their children will need them. 🐦

Rod Heikkila is a long-time federation activist, teaching for the Thames Valley DSB.



Life on the street

Jerry Apanasowicz spent a week in Cuba during March break 2008. He and two friends, Cuban locals, stayed at a 'Casa Particular' (bed and breakfast) while they explored the streets of Cienfuegos, Trinidad and the Valley de los Ingenios. His digital photos capture daily life in a country which, in Jerry's opinion, has stood still for 50 years. • Jerry, now retired, taught for 25 years at Saltfleet HS, Hamilton-Wentworth DSB. 🐦





Edited by Ronda Allan

Forum Picks



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

OUTINGS



THE AGO UNVEILED

After much anticipation, the newly renovated Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) was unveiled to Toronto and the world on November 14, 2008. Celebrations included three days of free admission.

Almost six years earlier to the day, on November 19, 2002, the AGO launched the *Transformation AGO* project with the announcement of Ken Thomson's donation of both his art collection of 2,000 works and \$70 million towards the Gallery's expansion. The public then anxiously waited and watched as world-renowned architect Frank Gehry's redesign took shape.

The expansion enlarged the gallery by 97,000 square feet and increased its exhibition space by more than 47 per cent, but more importantly, integrated groundbreaking ideas about the many ways that art and people can connect for powerful experiences. Now one of the most distinguished art museums in North America, the AGO has set the highest standards for accessibility to all facets of the artistic experience by providing unparalleled access to art display, programming, conservation, storage, creation and research. Visible walkways, extensive use of glass and views of the city and Grange Park connect the city to the activity of the Gallery.

The total project cost, a mere \$276





million, was used in part to add thousands of works to the AGO's collection, including signature works by Canadian artists such as Paul Kane, Tom Thomson, Cornelius Krieghoff and Lawren Harris; Gian Lorenzo Bernini's magnificent sculpture, *Corpus*; European art featuring medieval, Renaissance and Baroque sacred and secular works; as well as an extraordinary collection of 18th- and 19th-century European portrait sculpture. An added highlight is Peter

Paul Rubens' recently rediscovered early 17th-century masterpiece, *The Massacre of the Innocents*.

The multi-purpose David Milne Study Centre, also designed by Gehry, is a centre for contemporary art, donations of landmark collections of photography, and recent acquisitions of outstanding collections of historical African and Australian Aboriginal art. It also contains the Fick-Eggert Archive of more than 300 works on paper and documents from the



circle of early 20th century artists who comprised the avant-garde Cologne Dada group.

Gehry's vision also serves up a multitude of design delights showcasing the AGO's street presence, among them:

- Dundas Street entrance—aligned with Walker Court (the historic heart of the AGO), and The Grange (the Gallery's first home),
- glass-and-wood façade—rises 70 feet above street level, spans 600 feet along Dundas Street (from McCaul Street to Beverley Street) and is scaled to respect neighbouring houses on Beverley and Dundas streets,
- sculpture gallery—extends 450 feet along the north side of the building and enables visitors to see out onto Dundas Street and passers-by to see into the Gallery,
- social gathering place at the corner of McCaul and Dundas streets—offers direct access from the street, operates at independent hours from the Gallery, contains the two-level gift and book shop, a fine dining restaurant, a casual café, the Jackman Hall lecture theatre, members' lounge and free contemporary art space for new projects by emerging artists,
- four-storey tinted titanium and glass south wing—overlooks Grange Park and houses a centre for contemporary art (it is one of the most beautiful event spaces in the city and features the inventive cuisine for which the AGO is already acclaimed),
- extensive glazing on north and south façades—offering up cityscape views from the Gallery interior.

The now light-filled interior has innovative displays of works of art with dynamic links to the Gallery's extensive collection of artists' archives. A sculptural staircase soars from the second floor, linking the Walker Court to the new centre for contemporary art and the new event space. A glass roof over the Walker Court brings natural light into the core of the building and the walkway around its upper perimeter.

For more information, go to:
www.ago.net/RA



BOOKS



DR. KARYN'S GUIDE TO THE TEEN YEARS: UNDERSTANDING AND PARENTING YOUR TEENAGER by Dr. Karyn Gordon

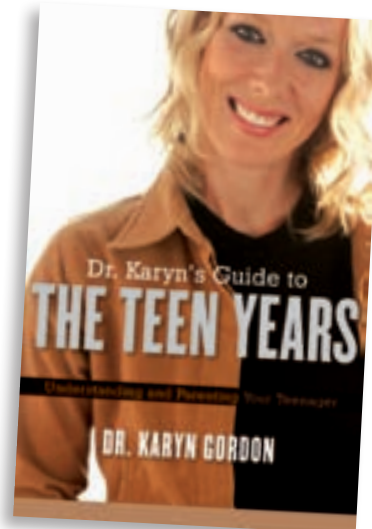
Published by Harper Collins Canada
240 pages, \$21.95
Reviewed by Rod Heikkila

Dr. Karyn's Guide to the Teen Years: Understanding and Parenting Your Teenager, by Karyn Gordon, is worth reading. I would like to have read this book 18 years ago when my eldest daughter, now in university, was born. Unfortunately, the book was just published last year. Fortunately, I have it to refer to it now and again as my youngest daughter

approaches the age of 13. As a teacher, I could have benefited from this book back around the time the author herself was first learning to write essays, well before I had my own children.

There are some minor shortcomings such as a few typographical errors that editors should have picked up. Off-the-cuff remarks such as, "so much of high school curriculum is covered through lectures and discussion, many of the remaining 90 per cent of learners may feel stupid, frustrated or unmotivated" suggest an incomplete understanding of current secondary education, despite the author's concise summary of different learning styles. The cover and the website it promotes made me feel well outside the demographic target group, but still, one ought not to judge a book by its cover.

Gordon's book not only lives up to its own billing as "a guide that every parent should read," but it is also one all educational workers can take something from. It is well laid out; every chapter contains



headings, subheadings, easy-to-access lists of concepts and questions with bullets, and is punctuated with poignant case studies from the author's own practice. (Gordon is a teen coach, and a parent.) She explains and illustrates the practical against a background of the theoretical in terms that are clear and almost free of jargon. Lists, useful charts

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and boxes abound. She also provides ample sources, online for the most part. Her consistent focus on “Inside-Out vs. Outside-In Parenting Styles” is at the core; that general concept has relevance to any classroom. Gordon spends a lot of time on the language and behaviours that appeal to teens and how to avoid linguistic and physical cues that alienate them.

There is advice on how to deal with everything from what to do when you don’t like your teens’ friends, to well-presented ideas about suicide and practical concerns for families experiencing divorce, all in accessible English.

As with any good book, there are parts any reader might be inclined to disagree with, yet I suggest that if all parents were to read, and at least to consider, what Gordon’s book lays out, secondary teachers and educational workers would face fewer problems where in fact, the root cause is in the home—how children are being raised. Clearly, elementary colleagues would benefit as well. I am reminded of wise words shared with me by a more experienced teacher when I was brand new to the job. She felt that becoming a parent made her a better teacher. When she first started teaching high school, students seemed like younger versions of her. Once she had her own children, she began to see students as older versions of them. I understand that.

That’s not to say, of course, that everyone must be a parent to be a teacher or educational worker. Rather, Gordon’s book for parents is an excellent resource for anyone who works with young people. It allows the reader to explore the inner workings of teen and child behaviour, to shed the kind of light that all who seek to defeat the darkness of ignorance can appreciate. Its insights could also prove invaluable to those who manage a classroom each day. It seeks to promote more centred-child learning than child-centred learning, if I might be forgiven for coining jargon of my own. After all, Ontario law requires teachers to act “in loco parentis,” and every teacher is obliged to act as a “kind, firm, and judicious parent,” whether or not we ourselves are parents. Gordon’s book

might be the proverbial missing manual for raising children—our own, or those with whom we have been entrusted, for a time.

Rod Heikkila is a long-time federation activist teaching for the Thames Valley DSB.

KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE AND HEALTHY FROM PRE-K THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

by Albert David with David Farcy

Published by Abey World Press

100 pages, \$17.95

Reviewed by Mike Bettiol

Keeping our Children Safe and Healthy From Pre-K Through High School bills itself as the “first A–Z emergency guide for educators and parents.” This



reference book by journalist Albert David and emergency physician Dr. David Farcy provides valuable, easy-to-access information on a number of risk factors and situations faced by students at all levels of education. In addition to responses to emergency situations, the book suggests preventative measures that can be used to prepare children for the challenges of everything from bullying to alcohol abuse. The guide is aimed at both the school and home, offering suggestions to both education professionals and parents.

Keeping our Children Safe and Healthy is organized into three chapters: Golden Rules of Prevention, How to Respond in an Emergency Situation, and

Life-Threatening Situations and Natural Disasters. Within the chapters, topics are arranged alphabetically, making the information readily accessible. Suggestions within the topics are identified in terms of what to do and what not to do with the use of green arrows and red crosses, respectively. At the bottom of each page is a tip on prevention related to the topic.

For example, the first topic in chapter one is alcohol abuse. The topic begins with a definition of alcohol, its effects and the symptoms of abuse. This is followed by a section on the associated dangers and risk factors related to alcohol abuse. Then there is a list of suggestions of what to tell children about alcohol and drinking. There is a table included in this topic on how long it takes to eliminate alcohol from the body. Prevention tips under this topic are on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and social issues associated with alcohol abuse. The remaining topics are organized in a similar fashion.

The book’s one drawback is that, being a US publication, some of the examples and suggestions do not apply directly to us here in Ontario. However, the majority of the book is generic and most educational professionals should be able to compensate for the differences. Overall, this is a valuable reference for both school and home. 🐾

Mike Bettiol teaches at Lorne Park SS in Mississauga with the Peel DSB. He is a member of the OSSTF/FEESO provincial Educational Services Committee and a presenter for the OSSTF/FEESO Beyond Bullying and CALM Workshops.

HOT LINKS



HAVE YOU MET TED YET?
(www.ted.com)

Reviewed by Catherine Renfrew

I was first introduced to TED when a colleague suggested, "Check out Sir Ken on TED" as we parted after a meeting. Since that day I have met with TED regularly. TED—Technology, Entertainment, Design—is an annual conference held in Long Beach, California that invites 50 fascinating people to present an 18-minute talk to 1,300 thinkers and doers.

The TED organizers felt they had "ideas worth spreading" and developed TED.com as a vehicle for sharing the best talks and presentations from the conference. Access to the website is free and videos can be shared and reposted. Teachers are encouraged to share TED talks with their students to initiate discussions and to augment curricula.

Some of the speakers may be familiar—Jane Goodall, Bill Clinton, Malcolm Gladwell, others less so—Sir Ken Robinson, Zach Kaplan, Keith Schacht, E.O Wilson, Cameron Sinclair. The topics are enthralling. Sir Ken Robinson presents a thought-provoking look at the direction education needs to go if we are to meet the needs of our students in the 21st century. He maintains that instead of creating "good workers," we need to nurture students' creativity and create "good thinkers."

Some of the most interesting talks are those given by TED Prize winners. Since 2005, TED has given three individuals the opportunity to make one wish that would change the world. Each recipient receives \$100,000 and the opportunity to present their wish to the TED audience. Many conference participants have the power and/or resources to make things happen. The online audience is also invited to assist in fulfilling these dreams.

One of last year's winners, Dave Eggers, author of *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, talks about bringing writers he knows together with students in the community who needed assistance with their literacy skills. He describes the success that students experience when the community works together to support their education. His wish, "Once Upon a School," is that 1,000 people will engage directly in their local public school, that the stories of these activities will become part of a

website and that the stories will then inspire others to become involved.

TED.com is a fascinating collection of talks given by some of the most talented, engaged and innovative people from around the world. The website is user-friendly and the video clips are easy to access. The quality is excellent and can easily be presented in larger formats. For a thought-provoking and entertaining way to spend 20 minutes, go meet TED.

Catherine Renfrew is a temporary Executive Assistant at the OSSTF/FEESO provincial office who is currently working in the Educational Services Department.



April 2 to 4

Live Well, Laugh Often, Teach Brilliantly/Vis, ris, enseigne avec passion Doubletree by Hilton, Toronto Airport Discover the latest in strategies and resources for language teachers from workshop presenters and exhibitors from across Canada and from keynote speaker Kathy Gould-Lundy. Kick up your heels at the Friday night Mardi Gras and find out why everyone is talking about "Frenchstock." Discover how you and your students could win \$500. For contest and conference information and to register go to www.omlta.org.

Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association/Association ontarienne des professeurs de langues vivantes (OM-LTA/AOPLV)

April 23 to 25

Work, Live, Play! River Garden Inn, Stratford Keynote speaker Susan Ludwig will address the topic "The importance of social intelligence for success in the community." There will be a variety of speakers and workshops related to the

field of developmental education. For more information and to register go to www.oade.ca.

Ontario Association for Developmental Education (OADE)

April 26 to 28

Reflecting on Practice: Designing for Success—A Showcase of Best Practices for Success Through Cooperative Education and Experiential Learning The Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto As an educator, administrator, student success leader or community partner, you will definitely want to attend OCEA's spring conference to network with other professionals interested in educating our youth. Learn more about innovative program models, effective teaching methods and unique program ideas that help students succeed through experiential learning. For more information go to www.ocea.on.ca.

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May 7 to 9

It's Elemental—Shaping our World
University of Ontario Institute of
Technology, Oshawa

This conference will include speakers from government ministries of Environment, Natural Resources, and Education; university research efforts; industry experts and your fellow teachers. David Phillips, Environment Canada weather expert is keynote speaking on Climate Change and Weather. There will be curricular and cross-curricular sessions, practical classroom materials, elementary, secondary and general focus sessions, hands-on activities and exhibits. For more information go to www.osee.org.

Ontario Society for Environmental
Education (OSEE)

May 13 to 16

Balance: Finding the Right MMIX
Carleton University, Ottawa

You are invited to join K–12 mathematics educators at OAME 2009, the Annual Conference of the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education. The theme of this year's conference is Balance: Finding the Right MMIX and the program will offer over 100 sessions on a range of mathematics-related topics including Student Success and Technology. For more information and to register go to www.oame2009.ca.

Ontario Association for Mathematics
Education (OAME)

May 21 to 23

Unpacking the New Curriculum
Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston

With the newly revised Grades 9–12 Technological Education curriculum just out, and the revised Grades 1–8 Science and Technology curriculum in its first mandatory implementation year, what a great way to network with colleagues and subject leaders from across the province—through our many subject and grade specific workshops. For more information and to register go to www.octe.on.ca.

Ontario Council for Technology
Education (OCTE)





Not just leading the way, but raising the bar

When the very first meeting of the organization that became the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation was held on December 30, 1919, it was held in secret. At the time, teachers and principals could be fired for joining a union. And yet, such was their conviction that, even knowing this, the 62 men representing schools from all over the province met anyway in order to develop bargaining strategies to improve their salaries and to gain job security.

Now, 90 years later, our membership consists of more than 60,000 members who work with students from pre-kindergarten to post-secondary in the public English and French as well as Catholic school boards, in the university sector and even in some private schools. We have strength and we have diversity. We certainly don't have to meet in secret anymore, but the protection of members is still the first priority of OSSTF/FEESO.

At Summer Leadership 2007, I shared my "recipe for success" for the massive round of bargaining that would occur as 120 of 135 school board contracts expired on August 31, 2008. In essence, our plan was based on five principles: proper planning, careful preparation, widespread involvement, successful execution and completion and evaluation.

In the fall of 2007, the planning and preparation began. Local bargaining units surveyed their members about local priorities, which were then used to develop the negotiating briefs. At the provincial level, the Protective Services Department developed a comprehensive bargaining strategy. In the spring and fall of 2008, a team of provincial negotiators, advised by the Collective Bargaining Committee and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committees representing bargaining units across the province, participated in provincial discussion tables to lobby for the funding necessary for successful local bargaining to occur. The presidents and chief negotiators were brought to several meetings in Toronto to keep them apprised of developments; following each meeting, *Staff room raps* were sent to workplaces to keep the membership informed. The negotiations of the respective provincial frameworks began only following all-member votes for approval to do so.

In September, an agreement was reached for a Support Staff provincial framework and, in late November, an agreement was

Être non seulement un chef de file, mais relever la barre

LE 30 décembre 1919, la première réunion de création de ce qui s'appelle aujourd'hui la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario a eu lieu à huis clos. À ce moment-là, les directions d'école et le personnel enseignant pouvaient être congédiés s'ils adhéraient à un syndicat. Et malgré le risque, leurs convictions étaient si fortes que les 62 hommes qui représentaient des écoles de partout en province se sont réunis quand même afin d'élaborer des stratégies de négociation en vue d'améliorer leurs salaires et obtenir la sécurité d'emploi.

Aujourd'hui, 90 ans plus tard, notre effectif se compose de plus de 60 000 membres qui œuvrent auprès des élèves du jardin d'enfants au postsecondaire dans les conseils scolaires publiques anglophones et francophones ainsi qu'au sein des conseils scolaires catholiques, du milieu universitaire et dans certaines écoles privées. Nous avons la force et la diversité. Nous n'avons plus à nous rencontrer à huis clos, mais la protection de nos membres est encore la première priorité d'OSSTF/FEESO.

À l'occasion du Leadership d'été 2007, j'ai partagé ma « recette du succès » pour l'imposante ronde de négociation qui allait se dérouler, puisque 120 des 135 conventions collectives avec les conseils scolaires venaient à échéance le 31 août 2008. Notre plan était fondé essentiellement sur cinq principes : une planification adéquate, une préparation minutieuse, une implication considérable, la réalisation ainsi que l'aboutissement et l'évaluation.

À l'automne 2007, la planification et la préparation ont débuté. Les unités de négociation locales ont consulté leurs membres sur les priorités locales qui ont ensuite été utilisées pour élaborer les requêtes de négociation. À l'échelon provincial, le Secteur des services de protection a préparé la stratégie détaillée de négociation. Au printemps et à l'automne 2008, une équipe provinciale de négociateurs, conseillée par le Comité de négociation collective et par les comités consultatifs spéciaux qui représentaient les unités de négociation à travers la province, ont participé aux tables provinciales de discussion afin de faire des pressions pour obtenir les fonds nécessaires à la réussite des négociations locales. Les présidences et les négociateurs en chef se sont réunis à plusieurs reprises à Toronto dans le but de les tenir au courant des progrès. Après chacune de ces

Last Word *continued*

reached for a Teacher/Occasional Teacher provincial framework. I am happy to report that every support staff contract between a school board or authority and an OSSTF/FEESO bargaining unit was successfully negotiated and ratified, and I am hopeful that by the time you read this, every OSSTF/FEESO teacher and occasional teacher contract, including that of the Provincial Schools Authority Teachers, will have been successfully negotiated and ratified.

To say the least, it has been a very long and busy six months as your local bargaining teams, assisted by their assigned provincial negotiators and provincial executive members, hammered out contract after contract. In many cases, as the bargaining sessions neared completion, and the “deal” was in sight, they worked far into the night and, on occasion, well into the next day. And in every single case, the collective agreements reached have included and improved upon the provisions of the provincial framework and have included provisions that were local bargaining priorities.

Together we have proven,
yet again, that OSSTF/FEESO
not only leads the way
in member protection, but
also raises the bar

Once this round of school board bargaining has successfully concluded, we will evaluate how things went in order to be able to refine the process for next time. Even though actual bargaining does not begin again for three or four years, the planning and preparation begins now.

In addition to the school board negotiations, collective bargaining continues for some of our private school bargaining units, and for our two newest bargaining units, the University of Ottawa Support Staff and the Royal Conservatory of Music, so these members need our continued support.

I am proud of our local negotiating teams, our provincial negotiators, the provincial executive, the various committees, the rest of the provincial office staff who held things together back at Mobile Drive while the negotiators and executive fanned out across the province and, of course, the entire membership. Together we have proven, yet again, that OSSTF/FEESO not only leads the way in member protection, but also raises the bar. I want to thank each and every one of you for your support of your local bargaining teams, and for your hard work and dedication to public education.

This is one union which lives its motto: Let us not take thought for our separate interests, but let us help one another. 🐦

Mot de la fin *suite*

réunions, des Causeries des employés (*Staff room rap*) ont été envoyées dans les lieux de travail afin d’informer les membres. La négociation des ententes cadres provinciales respectives a débuté seulement après un vote favorable de tous les membres à cet effet.

En septembre, une entente a été conclue sur le cadre provincial pour le personnel de soutien et, à la fin du mois de novembre, c’était le tour de celle du personnel enseignant/enseignant suppléant. Je suis très heureux de vous apprendre que toutes les conventions collectives du personnel de soutien entre un conseil scolaire ou une autorité et une unité de négociation d’OSSTF/FEESO ont été négociées avec succès et ratifiées. J’ai bon espoir que lorsque vous lirez ces mots, chaque convention collective du personnel enseignant et enseignant suppléant d’OSSTF/FEESO, y compris le personnel enseignant des écoles provinciales, aura aussi été négociée avec succès et ratifiée.

Le moins que l’on puisse dire, c’est que les six derniers mois ont été très longs et très occupés pour les équipes locales de négociation assistées de leurs négociateurs provinciaux assignés et que les membres de l’Exécutif provincial ont fini par conclure une convention après l’autre. Dans plusieurs cas, au fur et à mesure que les séances de négociation approchaient de la fin et que le mot « entente » était dans la mire, ils ont négocié tard dans la soirée et à l’occasion jusqu’au lendemain matin. Dans chacun des cas, les conventions collectives conclues comprenaient et amélioraient les dispositions de l’entente cadre provinciale en plus de dispositions concernant les priorités locales de négociation.

Une fois que la présente ronde de négociation avec les conseils scolaires sera terminée avec succès, nous évaluerons le déroulement afin de pouvoir peaufiner le processus pour la prochaine ronde. Même si la négociation ne débutera pas avant trois ou quatre ans, la planification et la préparation devront quant à elles commencer aujourd’hui.

En plus des négociations avec les conseils scolaires, la négociation se poursuit avec certaines de nos unités de négociation des écoles privées et avec nos deux nouvelles unités de négociation, le personnel de soutien de l’Université d’Ottawa et le *Royal Conservatory of Music*; ces membres ont besoin de notre soutien continu.

Je suis fier de nos équipes locales de négociation, de nos négociateurs provinciaux, de l’Exécutif provincial, des divers comités, du reste du personnel du Bureau provincial qui s’est serré les coudes à Mobile Drive pendant que les négociateurs et l’Exécutif étaient déployés à travers la province et, bien entendu, je suis fier de l’ensemble de nos membres. Nous avons prouvé encore une fois qu’ensemble OSSTF/FEESO a non seulement été le chef de file dans la protection des membres, mais qu’il a relevé la barre. Je désire remercier chacun d’entre vous pour votre soutien à vos équipes locales de négociation, et pour votre travail acharné et votre dévouement à l’éducation publique.

C’est un syndicat qui met sa devise en pratique : Ne pensons pas à nos intérêts personnels, mais plutôt à nous entraider. 🐦

Let my fun never end



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