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FORUM

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Exploring Finnish student success





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Union solidarity

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In the last several years, unions, both public and private, have come under ever-increasing pressure in North America, and indeed assault in several jurisdictions. Even Ontario is not immune. The recession and the resulting budgetary pressure mean that the upcoming round of bargaining will undoubtedly be extremely difficult. Fortunately, OSSTF/FEESO has the best negotiators in the province and so you can be sure the collective agreements that result will be the best that can be achieved. I urge you to read President Ken Coran's column "Last Word" in this issue carefully, as well as all future provincial communications related to negotiations, in order to stay informed throughout the process. Your support will be critical to reaching a successful conclusion.

Despite the trying economic circumstances, however, OSSTF/FEESO continues to monitor and analyze the educational trends that affect public education and our working lives, and to pursue public service and social justice initiatives.

Our cover story in this issue, "Five days in Finland" by Colleen Ireland, recounts her visit to Finland with other members from her district school board. Finland, whose students routinely do well on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, has an extremely high rate of union membership, and its education system is characterized by "absolute trust that educators know their subject, know their job and will take responsibility for their own professional development to enhance and improve their practice."

In contrast, Paul Bocking's article "Converging experiences, shared struggle" describes the complete opposite situation—the increasing workload, stress and distressing lack of trust in teachers and educators in Mexico and

many states in the U.S. as neoliberal forces attempt to privatize education through an over-reliance on standardized testing plus the introduction of charter and voucher schools and merit pay schemes. As shown in this article and in previous issues of *Education*

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Forum, far from improving education for students, these measures only serve to erode it and in the process public confidence in education.

That erosion is further explored by Sean M. Douglas in his article "Education through the looking glass." He argues that "[w]hen the emphasis of education is based around statistics and external perception, it is no wonder that students are not developing a sense of personal identity, citizenship and culture." The concept of citizenship is an important one in a caring society and one which OSSTF/FEESO embraces.

Neil Walker's article "A Congo literacy lesson" tells his story of obtaining and delivering a laptop computer and data projector to a poor literacy school in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa, where 70 per cent of men and about

80 per cent of women are illiterate. Bryan Smith's article "Falling in love with Peru" recounts his story of participating in a Solidarity in Action volunteer trip to Pacífico de Villa, near Lima, to help build an addition to a nursery school, teach English as a Second Language to teenagers and provide professional development to local teachers.

"Character education revisited" by Chantal Mancini continues the discussion begun by Dr. Stephen Anderson in his article "Moments of startling clarity" in the Fall 2011 issue. She argues that taking a moral position on violence against women "involves the acknowledgement of privilege and the possibility that we may have to give up some of that privilege in order to stop the oppression of others."

Finally, closer to home, Wayne McFarlane's article "Life on the short bus" explains that we all have a responsibility to combat the bullying of special-needs students in order to ensure they are able to thrive in our classrooms too. Reviews of two books, *15 Ways to Zap a Bully* and *Dear Bully*, also provide resources for preventing bullying.

International solidarity and social justice initiatives—whether those pursued by individual members or more formal ones pursued at the provincial level, such as our *Common Threads* curriculum resources, the fifth of which is currently in development and which focuses on addressing challenges faced by Aboriginal communities in Canada—form an important part of the work of many of our members. OSSTF/FEESO, as a professional organization, takes to heart the "public" aspect of being a public-sector union, because improving the lives and circumstances of others in society, whether our own or those in other countries, enriches all of our lives. ☺

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La solidarité syndicale

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AU cours de ces dernières années, les syndicats, dans le public comme dans le privé, subissent de plus en plus de pressions en Amérique du Nord et sont même victimes d'agressions dans plusieurs circonscriptions. La province de l'Ontario elle-même est touchée : la récession – et les restrictions budgétaires qui s'ensuivent – signifient que la prochaine ronde de négociations sera sans aucun doute extrêmement difficile. Fort heureusement, OSSTF/FEESO dispose des meilleurs négociateurs de la province et vous pouvez être certains que les conventions collectives qui en résulteront seront les meilleures possibles. Je vous recommande de lire attentivement l'article de notre président, Ken Coran, à la section « Le mot de la fin » de ce numéro, ainsi que toutes les communications provinciales à venir au sujet des négociations, de manière à vous tenir au courant du déroulement du processus. Votre appui sera fondamental pour aboutir à une conclusion satisfaisante.

Malgré la conjoncture économique difficile, OSSTF/FEESO continue de surveiller et d'analyser les tendances pédagogiques qui retentissent sur l'éducation publique et sur notre travail, tout en poursuivant certaines initiatives de service public et de justice sociale.

L'article-vedette du présent numéro, intitulé « *Five days in Finland* » et signé Colleen Ireland, relate la visite de l'auteur et d'autres membres de son conseil scolaire de district en Finlande. Ce pays où les élèves obtiennent invariablement de bonnes notes aux tests du Programme international pour le suivi des acquis des élèves (PISA) a un taux de syndicalisation extrêmement élevé et son système éducatif se caractérise par une « confiance absolue dans le fait que les éducateurs connaissent leur matière et leur travail

et se sentent responsables de leur propre perfectionnement professionnel pour améliorer l'exercice de leur profession. »

Par contraste, l'article de Paul Bocking, intitulé « *Converging Experiences, Shared Struggle* » décrit la situation diamétralement opposée caractérisée par l'augmentation de la charge de travail et du stress et par le manque cruel de confiance dans les

**OSSTF/FEESO
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enseignants et les éducateurs au Mexique et dans de nombreux États américains, alors que les forces néolibérales tentent de privatiser l'éducation en se fondant à tort sur les tests normalisés et en prônant l'ouverture d'écoles à charte et à coupons éducation ou la rémunération au mérite.

Dans son article intitulé « *Education through the looking glass* », Sean M. Douglas approfondit cette idée de l'érosion en faisant valoir son point de vue : « En matière d'éducation, quand on insiste sur les statistiques et les perceptions externes, il n'est pas étonnant que les élèves ne se fassent pas leur propre idée de l'identité personnelle, de la citoyenneté et de la culture. »

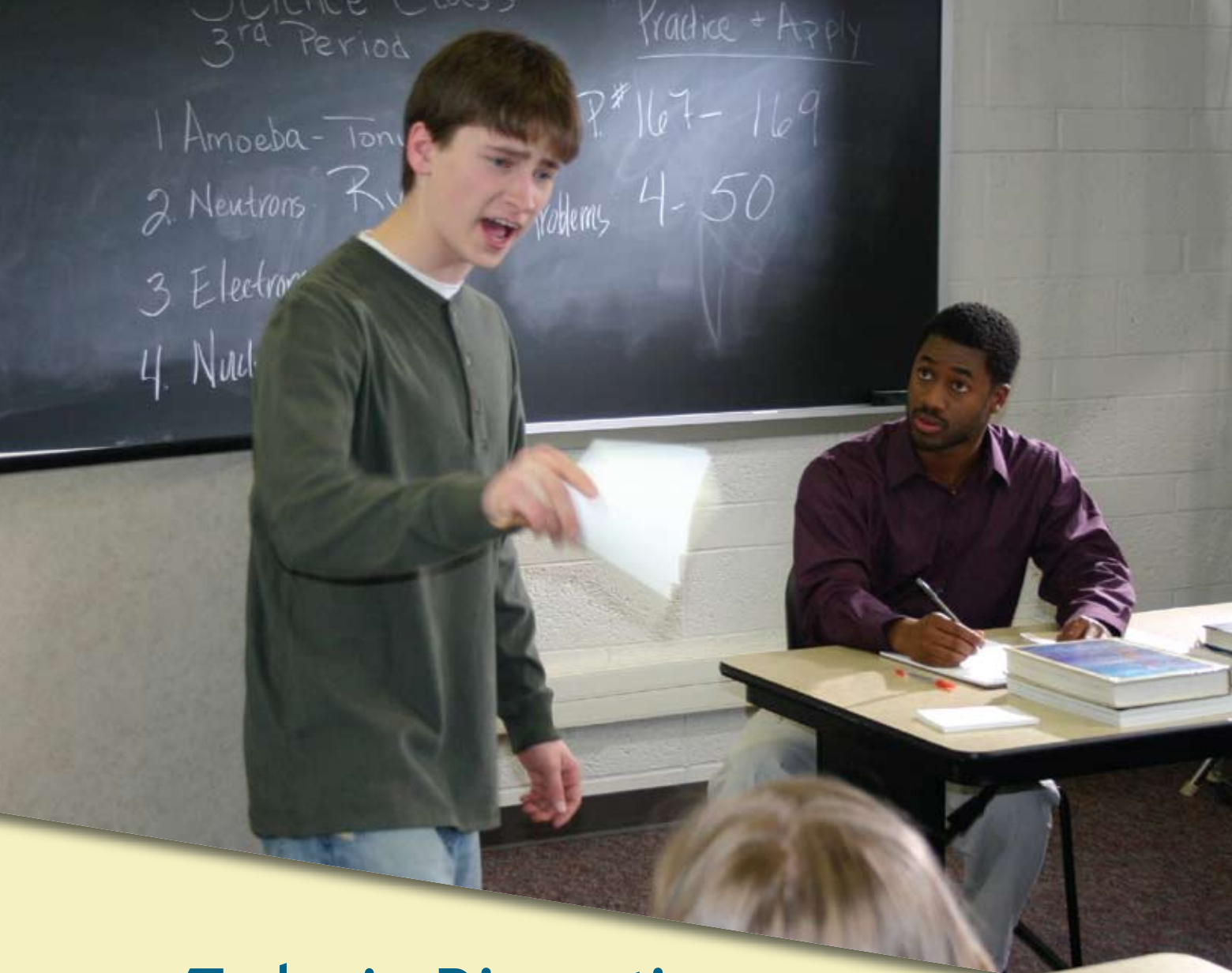
L'article intitulé « *A Congo literacy lesson* », signé par Neil Walker, raconte comment l'auteur a obtenu et livré un

ordinateur portable et un projecteur d'image-écran à une école d'alphabétisation d'une région pauvre de la République démocratique du Congo. Dans son article intitulé « *Falling in love with Peru* », Bryan Smith relate sa participation à un séjour de bénévolat organisé par *Solidarity in Action* à Pacífico de Villa, près de Lima.

Dans son article intitulé « *Le développement du caractère revisité* », Chantal Mancini poursuit la discussion entamée par le professeur Stephen Anderson dans l'article « *Moments of startling clarity* », publié dans le numéro de l'automne 2011, au sujet de la violence faite aux femmes.

Enfin, plus près de chez nous, l'article de Wayne McFarlane, intitulé « *Comment ça va dans le minibus?* », explique que nous sommes tous chargés de combattre l'intimidation des élèves en difficulté pour faire en sorte qu'ils puissent réussir eux aussi en classe. La critique des deux ouvrages intitulés *15 Ways to Zap a Bully* et *Dear Bully* nous fournit des ressources supplémentaires pour prévenir l'intimidation.

Les initiatives favorisant la solidarité internationale et la justice sociale, qu'elles soient le fait de membres individuels ou soient, de manière plus officielle, menées à l'échelle de la province, comme les ressources pour le curriculum de notre projet *Common Threads* dont le cinquième est en cours d'élaboration et qui porte sur les défis que doivent relever les collectivités autochtones du Canada, forment une part importante du travail d'une grande partie de nos membres. En tant qu'organisme professionnel et syndicat du secteur public, OSSTF/FEESO a à cœur l'aspect « public » de son travail, car l'amélioration des conditions de vie d'autres personnes, qu'elles vivent ici ou ailleurs, est un véritable enrichissement pour nous tous. ☺



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Education through the looking glass

The erosion of the cultured citizen



“I have never let school interfere with my education,” wrote Samuel L. Clemens (also known as Mark Twain) as he considered his own understanding of the world. But how long before someone holds a mirror up to public education and realizes the reflection of the students staring back is not the one they thought they would see? It is a shame to glimpse Clemens’s fears become a reality as education becomes lost within the school.

While Ontario government statistics show that in the past six years, graduation rates for Ontario secondary students have risen dramatically, from 68 per cent to 81 per cent, due to Student Success programs, the question that rarely gets asked is: do these numbers truly reflect the students’ intellect, insight, understanding, values and citizenship or has the “Failure is not an option” mantra resulted in higher graduation rates with lower expectations?

Perhaps what first needs to be asked is: what should an education look like, versus what kind of learning is currently shaping the next generation?

One can hardly deny that education has changed since, say, the days of Socrates, and it is clear the age of texting and self-corrective technology has led to a decline in communication skills. While the decline of such proficiency is unfortunate, it will not be “the way to dusty death,” as Shakespeare put it. What is unfortunate is education’s digression from culture in the classroom, for it is through the process of being cultured that all skills follow. “Ay, there’s the rub!”

Ironically, however, what often brings culture to a standstill is what occurs in the school itself, the same institution that one would assume seeks to shape the hearts and minds of the future. Then again, the Ministry’s three objectives are: “focus on establishing high levels of

student achievement; reduce the gaps in student achievement; and ensure high levels of public confidence in public education.” When the emphasis of education is based around statistics and external perception, it is no wonder students are not developing a sense of personal identity, citizenship and culture.

Perhaps schools no longer know how to implement the values of culture effectively, for now that we have become so immersed in politics and so overwrought with tensions, our sensitivity and fear of being politically incorrect have eroded culture itself. One’s ability to teach classic literature, art, music, history, philosophy and theory is successfully being eroded, and it is these disciplines that are necessary for students to become cultured citizens.

We are at a point in time when what would most benefit society is a renaissance of culture. Instead, we have entered an age

where the priority for the arts and humanities has been overshadowed by what is commonly considered employable skills—the same skills that are quickly eradicating what it means to truly be human.

Education should challenge students to question, to seek, to reflect; education should inspire curiosity, share insights, admit that failure is a necessary part of success; education should drive students to study the thinkers, artists, writers and musicians of the past, to promote fading values and to instill an appreciation for

learning about the ideas that establish all we are and can be.

So what is it that has shifted within schools? What is the new model for the curriculum? Perhaps it may be argued that society has shifted its values away from bettering the person to bettering the profit, and that education now seeks to create a culture consisting of employable skills rather than a community of culture.

While on the surface, schools suggest initiatives that promote an individual's freedom to think critically, reflect, chal-

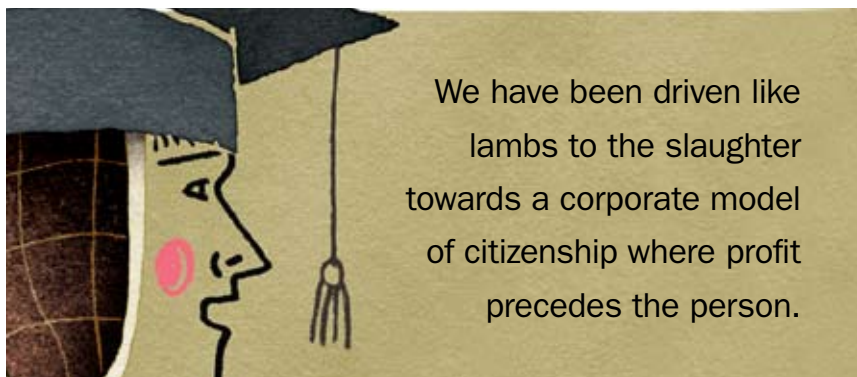
lenge and be challenged, the reality is that there is very little room for true criticism or reflection in the classroom. The focus of education is not on challenging students but rather on explicating absolute skills that can be translated into something that can be effectively numerated and explicitly bought. This is not suggesting that students do not need to develop skills necessary for the workplace, but it does imply that if a greater emphasis was placed on culturing students, these skills would naturally follow.

To be cultured is to encompass a greater understanding of people; culture allows one to appreciate the undertones that drive society and connect what it is that inspires and feeds the passions of the individual. Instead we are becoming a culture dictated by the values of material worth without having been taught the values of culture. Where once there was a desire to improve oneself through reading, music and art, now there is a desire to prove one's worth through the superficiality of those things that come and go without leaving so much as a lingering impression. We have been driven like lambs to the slaughter towards a corporate model of citizenship where profit precedes the person. And it is public education that has promoted this ideal.

Gone are the days when expectations were created to challenge, and one equated success with self-advocacy and the strength that came through trial and error, determination, hard work and consequence. Today expectations are written to emphasize there is no such thing as failure, personal realities are substituted with accommodations and culture has been replaced with conformity.

Now is the moment that public education must begin to look through the looking glass and realize that unless we want a country with no cultured consciousness, we need to focus on creating a community of culture. The time is now, the place is here. This is the moment that change must be made, for it is now that we must ensure school never interferes with education. ☺

Sean M. Douglas is at present on a leave from his teaching position in District 19, Peel, to pursue other ventures.



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A Congo literacy lesson

Overcoming extraordinary disadvantages



It is a simple but perplexing request from my eldest son, Joshua: could I pick up a projector or a laptop computer for about \$450? Sure, of course, no problem. Could I personally deliver it to the literacy school in Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai-Oriental, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)? Sure, of course, no problem. But there remains one problem. Not the trip to the Congo itself—that is a given. The problem is which item to take with me.

Which does the Mbuji-Mayi literacy school need more: the computer or the projector? Turns out, they need both. But which to take? Well, the computer is needed more, but the projector is also important. And their budget for the entire project is exactly \$200. So my son starts the soft sell. “Did you know that in Cilubà, the language of the Kasai provinces, your name is Shambuyi, father of twins? Yes? Well, do you realize that it gives you

more social freedom and licence to be vulgar in public, since you are considered more virile as the father of twins? Same thing for the very fertile Mwambuyi, the mother of twins.”

Clearly there is nothing else to do but to buy both projector and laptop if I am to live up to my name. A little investigating tells me the entire set would cost about \$1,600. So I turn to my friends and family to do my own soft selling. We raise the money and get everything: projector, laptop and software. Thus I set out for Kinshasa, my first stop in the Congo, with the laptop, software and projector, a substantial amount to be lugging around on one’s back even in Canada, let alone central Africa.

The school’s director, Patrice Kazadi, and Jean-Pierre, his son-in-law, meet me outside the Kinshasa airport where I deliver everything to them. We are careful to be discreet with the gear to avoid

lengthy explanations to security personnel about why this Canadian is carrying technological supplies. The result would be, at best, an immediate payment to the authorities or, at worst, confiscation of the equipment while they decide what to do with it, and with us. The transfer of goods accomplished, I am invited to visit the school the following week.

I have long accepted that education is a long-term, overwhelming force for democratic reform and economic security to lift people out of poverty and oppression. This literacy school in Mbuji-Mayi, *Alphabetisation et formation des adultes et des enfants défavorisés (ALFA)*, is a prime example. It has about 150 students at any given time. That does not include students at the 156 sites the school operates in the parishes of the villages in the Kasai region. The school teaches reading and writing Cilubà, one of the national languages in the DRC, at beginner and advanced levels

as well as one class of French, the official language of the Congo.

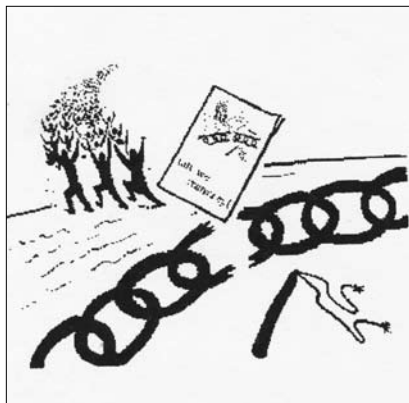
Arriving in Mbuji-Mayi the following week is a bit of an adventure that involves lengthy discussions with and requests for payment of semi-official “foreigner fees” by various authorities at the airport, even though I had arrived on a domestic flight.

Only in Mbuji-Mayi does this happen. The city is destitute. About two years ago, La Société Minière de Bakwanga (MIBA), the mining company, ceased production. Recently it has tentatively begun producing again, though not close to the levels of previous decades. And other artisanal mines around the city do not yield the quantity and quality of diamonds they used to. How are the people of Mbuji-Mayi faring? Poorly. People there had never been well off, but the downturn of the diamond economy has plunged the area into destitution. However, there is a promising development being spearheaded by Caritas, a Catholic non-governmental organization (NGO), providing a people’s market for vegetables and fruit at reasonable prices based on re-invigorated agricultural efforts in the surrounding area. Now that there are fewer diamonds to export, the area appears to be focusing on its secondary export of agricultural products.

Arriving at the front door of the school, I meet Kazadi. He ushers us into the entrance hall, where we walk into the midst of a class in session. You know how educators have a kind of radar that tells them they are in a successful school as they walk through the hallways, catch a few phrases from open classroom doors, see some staff and students in the hallway? This school exudes tangible enthusiasm from teachers and students. These students pay no tuition but value every moment of their classes. Their smiles, their engagement in the lesson, the smiles with which we communicate give me the shiver of recognition you get when you know you have come upon something extraordinary.

I learn from Kazadi that about 70 per cent of men in Congo and about 80 per cent of women are illiterate. Although the country contains trillions of dollars in minerals, the populace is poverty-stricken. The 2009 World Bank figure for

average annual income is US\$160, though World Vision puts it at US\$120. Thus ALFA offers its classes free of charge. Most of its students are women; there is some stigma attached to men attending a literacy school. Nonetheless, the slowly growing increase of male enrolment encourages Kazadi.



The school’s graphic emblem of a person running away from broken chains and a whip exemplifies the lust for learning among these determined Congolese.

ALFA operates as a part of the Catholic diocese of Mbuji-Mayi. The diocese contributes no money to the school, but being a part of the diocese gives the school some social and political status. A Belgian NGO provides the vast majority of its funding. However, as time goes by, the needs of the people whom the school seeks to serve are increasing and free classes are in danger—hence the school must seek a charitable donation for such things as a computer and projector. Graduates of the program are now asking for vocational training. Four donated sewing machines will soon provide the physical basis of a course to teach people the art and technique of sewing and tailoring.

As my visit continues, my initial impressions are confirmed. The teaching in

this school is first rate. The students are enthusiastic, involved, eager. Teachers use materials that follow best practices in literacy teaching; in fact, ALFA is a leader in its field.

After seeing and photographing the classes in action, I meet the support staff. One woman runs the computer, photocopier and a manual, one-book-at-a-time stapling machine. Seeing her handiwork in stacks and stacks of instructional booklets and newsletters inspires awe at her industriousness. Two men are making the teaching materials: wooden cases and racks, Masonite cards bearing Cilubà words and portable blackboards.

On the Saturday following my visit, after a thank-you luncheon, I try to remember the password I entered in the computer during the flurry of last-minute preparations in Toronto. The clue finally clicks for me and Joshua completes the set-up. Success at last—the end of a journey is now in sight.

There are a great many educational projects in the world that deserve support. This one demonstrates the best in human nature and the burning desire for learning. The school’s graphic emblem of a person running away from broken chains and a whip exemplifies the lust for learning among these determined Congolese. ☺

Neil Walker is a retired secretariat member of OSSTF/FEESO and was the editor of *Education Forum* for eight years, from 1990–1998.

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& DREAM!**

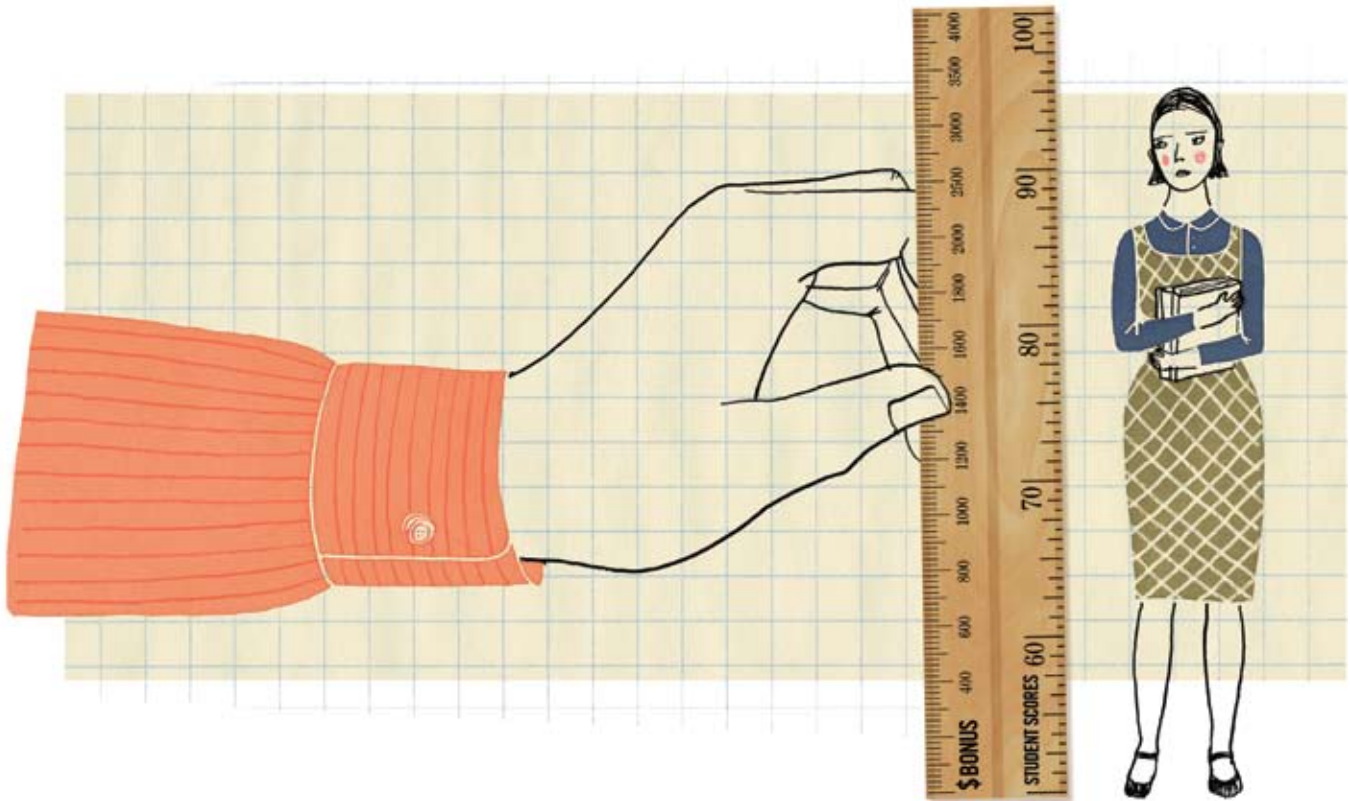
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Converging experiences, shared struggle

Resisting attacks on public education



With the onset of globalization and free-trade agreements in the '80s, workers in the manufacturing and resource-extraction sectors quickly discovered their fates were tied to those of other workers employed in the same industries, thousands of kilometers away.

Schools cannot be shipped overseas, but the employment conditions of Ontario's teachers and education workers may become increasingly determined by political events in other countries, including the United States and Mexico. The common denominators are the emergence of publicly funded, privately run charter schools, the use of standardized testing to determine school funding and teacher pay and laws intended to curb the power of education unions. In the current era of neoliberal austerity, these initiatives

are being justified in the name of budget crises. What is really occurring is a major transfer of wealth from the public sector and its employees and users to the private education industry and its shareholders.

Last July, I attended a conference in Chicago of education union activists from across the United States and beyond who were strategizing on how to resist the current attacks on public education. Event organizers arranged for me to stay with Dave, a retired steelworker, labour journalist and education activist.

"They're going to privatize as many schools as they can," Dave told me. He edits the school newsletter, which he distributes to local parents, encouraging them to enroll their children in the neighbourhood's public elementary school rather than the privately run charter school next door. It's an uphill battle. Approximately 15 per

cent of Chicago's 410,000 elementary and secondary students attend charter schools; in Washington DC, the number is closer to 40 per cent. "When Arne Duncan became the CEO of Chicago Public Schools in 2001," Dave said, "that's when the privatization really started."

Duncan was instrumental in the launching of this movement during his eight-year tenure in Chicago. His appointment as the U.S. Secretary of Education under President Obama gave him the base from which to support these efforts on a national scale. The Democratic and Republican politicians who support this initiative are bolstered by the emerging private-school lobby—financed by the likes of Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey. With other shareholders in charter-school consortiums like the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), they reap the

rewards as these schools grow by diverting funding from their shrinking public-sector competitors.

“Another key factor driving the push for charter schools is the slashing of salaries and job security of teachers through de-unionization,” Dave said. “While Chicago public teacher salaries start around \$50,000, their non-union charter

U.S. have led the way in bringing teachers without credentials into the classroom. Charter schools in Maryland, Illinois and other states frequently do not require teacher certification.

These developments are paralleled south of the border in Mexico. Private schools catering to the middle class have seen a rapid expansion since the 2009

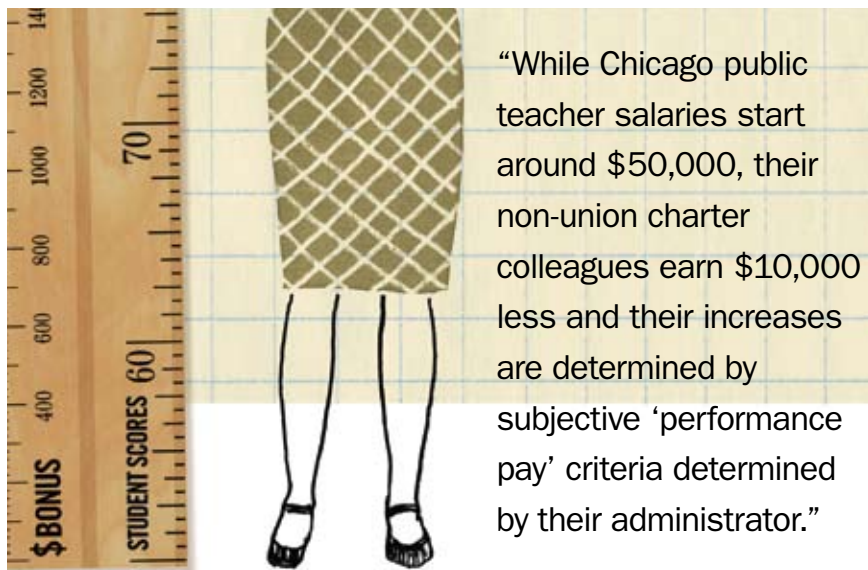
set of criteria that includes student test scores (50 per cent), two amorphous categories—professional development (30 per cent) and school leadership (10 per cent)—and finally seniority (10 per cent). Like the U.S.’s Race for the Top initiative, Mexico’s ACE provides for overall system funding to be contingent on student test scores.

Still, despite the movement towards privatization, important victories for teachers and public education are being won. In Chicago, some charter-school teachers are beginning to organize despite being prohibited by law from joining the union of their public school colleagues. The California Teachers’ Federation has also set out to reunite the burgeoning number of public schools converted to charters. Voters in Ohio recently overturned state laws and restored collective bargaining rights to teachers and other public sector workers.

In Mexico, successful strikes and political mobilization by education workers have led to several state governments agreeing not to implement particularly egregious elements of ACE. Last year, teachers in the Mexican state of Morelos negotiated additional funding to enable the elimination of all school fees for parents and students. Meanwhile, teachers in Wisconsin returned to school facing massive arbitrary changes to their working conditions in the face of laws that sharply curtail the legal rights of unions to file grievances and collectively bargain.

While in Ontario, around 95 per cent of students attend public (or publicly funded Catholic) schools, as with other workers the fate of Ontario’s teachers is becoming increasingly tied to the successes and defeats of our North American colleagues. Education policy appears to be moving towards a convergence across Mexico and the United States, and so there is room for concern on the potential of Ontario being pulled into this vortex. As teachers and educational workers, we must remain vigilant to prevent this from occurring. ☹

Paul Bocking is an Executive Officer with the Occasional Teachers’ Bargaining Unit in District 12, Toronto.



colleagues earn \$10,000 less and their increases are determined by subjective ‘performance pay’ criteria determined by their administrator.” According to Dave, “As a result of these conditions, charter-school teachers tend not stay at a school for very long,” in contrast to the more stable and experienced public school teachers presented in his promotional brochures.

Supporters of school reform in the U.S. frequently cite a need to improve “teacher quality” in order to improve learning conditions for students or, more specifically, their scores on standardized tests, which, for neoliberal reformers, is the only significant variable determining teacher quality. Launched in 2009 by Obama and Duncan, the Race to the Top competition offers significant funding bonuses for cash-strapped state education systems that implement merit pay schemes based on standardized tests.

Another part of the drive towards the privatization of education is the de-skilling of teachers. While simultaneously voicing a unanimous concern for “teacher quality,” charter schools in the

launch of a U.S.-style voucher program. Teacher certification requirements have also become much more lax. Signed into law in 2008, Mexico’s Alliance for Quality in Education (ACE) program could have been drafted by the U.S. Department of Education. Elementary and secondary teachers are no longer required to have completed a degree in education at a recognized post-secondary institution. With the necessary subject background, an applicant only need write an eligibility exam. Even this requirement can be negotiated, says Isaac Almanza, a retired teacher and long-time education activist from Morelos, Mexico. “With a strong letter of recommendation, the exam is only a formality.”

Many other recent neoliberal reforms to America’s education system find themselves eerily reflected in Mexico. Another key element of the ACE program is the imposition of a merit pay system that replaces the salary grid for Mexico’s 1.4 million unionized public school teachers and education workers. Determining teacher salary falls on a weighted



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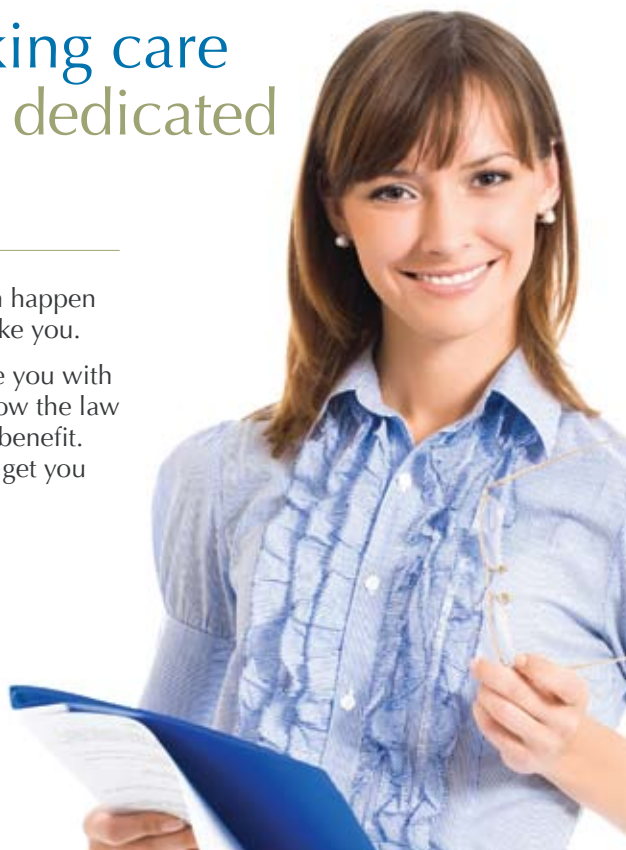
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International solidarity through volunteering

How could I not fall in love with Peru? After all, it has Peruvians, some of the most open and loving people I've met in my—excuse the bragging—world travels. It also has Incan architecture, Spanish culture, monumental churches, shantytowns.... Yes, you can fall in love with shantytowns. I did.

Pacífico de Villa, rising on the steep hills outside of the Lima suburb of Chorillos, is a community of shacks made out of plywood, tarpaulins, recycled political billboards, local stones, with tile floors in the living room but stamped mud in the areas only the family sees. It is perched close to the site of a drawn-

out historic, late 19th-century battle between Peru and Chile called the War of the Pacific and stands between Lima and a sewage-treatment plant. Why then, does the proposed main sewer going under this community not allow for sewage hook-ups? Why do the people use pit latrines and the sand hills when this is being dug beneath their feet?

As an OSSTF/FEESO member invited on a Solidarity in Action trip, I got to see Pacífico de Villa first hand on our first day in Peru. The women had decorated the community centre for the 18 volunteer participants. We were invited to dance. We received





By Bryan Smith

hugs from children and adults, hearty handshakes and smiles. On the soccer field, where we were invited to play, I noticed the teams were Peruvians versus Canadians. I switched sides: after all, this was Solidarity in Action, a group planning to work with, not for and certainly not against, the people.

Then I noticed our enthusiastic and skilled group of players, lined up facing me and the Peruvians, were all women. The Peruvian men mocked. Should I have played on the same team as the women, in solidarity with them? Apparently they didn't need my assistance. Jenn took the ball from one of the

astonished men. Katelyn seized control of the corner of the field, sending me flying in the process. Nathalie shot successfully on the net. Winded, I switched out, inviting a Peruvian to *cambiamos* (change), leaving me to admire the play. In our reflection later in the day, it became obvious that our society and theirs do not work by the same rules in terms of gender. Something to ponder.

Each Solidarity in Action volunteer has a choice to participate in various activities defined by the communities we work with. So I was faced with several decisions. Would I work in



the construction crew that was digging a foundation for a wall to support the addition to the nursery school being built so the children would have stimulation while their mothers worked to better the community or to gain money for their families? Would I assist in a school for children and young adults with

Ontario garden gone wild.

Elsewhere, there were other challenges. For a week, the women of our Solidarity group had been working on digging the wall's foundations, digging it back out after a cave in, carrying the four-by-eight forms down a steep mountainside to the nursery school,



Teaching the toothbrushing song



Pacífico de Villa

mental disabilities, run totally without government support? Would I go to the orphanage to work on a photo project with Calyn, one of the leaders? Would I work with a team giving English as a Second Language (ESL) lessons for teens prepared to give up their holidays to learn more English? Or do ESL with local teachers who spent their mornings on pedagogy but who told us they wanted more of “EVERYTHING”—that was how they wrote it—in afternoon sessions when they could be at home with their families?

I chose mostly to teach English at the nearby school in Chorillos, a 15- to 20-minute ride by bus, attended by many of the children from Pacífico de Villa. There I worked with 11- to 15-year-old students intent on becoming superheroes. Originally, they had planned to learn English. Little did they know that after finding a second, secret identity with heroic purposes, I would invest them with superpowers they could use for the good of their fellow Peruvians. Later, one of their super-heroic acts was to spend a day in Pacífico working with the cement crew, rolling loads of sand, mixing it with cement powder, stirring in the water and, along with a chain of women, passing bucket loads to the forms for the steadily rising wall for the nursery. Not wanting to appear a shirker, I challenged the brawniest of the teens—who, with the aid of two of his friends, had managed to put most of the wheelbarrow load of sand into the pile to mix with cement—by picking up the next load and wheeling it onto the pile, alone. Announcing, in broken Spanish, “*El viejo hasta mas fuerza que jovenes! No es posible!*”—roughly, “The old guy is stronger than you teens! Can’t be!”—I laughed and showed them the technique mastered after two weeks of wheelbarrow work in a rampant

shovelling sand and cement and heavy, wet mix. This had not gone unnoticed. My wife, a former OSSTF/FEESO member, now retired, reported that, on the day the Canadian women had begun their manual labour, a community leader called out on the loudspeaker that “*los gringos*” were here and the village must show it was united and strong in wanting a nursery school for their children by helping in its construction. When, one evening, a large batch of cement lay waiting as supper time drew near, she again called on families to postpone supper and lend a hand. The Canadian women, and the one man in the construction team, were not, she said, to be allowed to do all the work. Later that night, one of the women from Pacífico de Villa, told us, “You have taught us that women can do anything.”

Apparently the men took notice. When I arrived with my merry band of largely male students and superheroes, there were only women at work. When I next arrived, after the female crew had erected one half of the wall, there were men with wheelbarrows at work. One leaned towards me and said in a conspiratorial male voice, “The women aren’t strong enough to manage the wheelbarrows.” Apparently he thought he needed to talk loudly to the gringo so I would understand. However, a Peruvian woman overheard, took up his challenge, grabbed the next wheelbarrow full of wet cement and trotted it, with a smile of accomplishment, to the second portion of the wall. Round One soccer: men 6, women 2. Round Two cement: women won.

All work and no play make Bryan a dull old guy, but there was nothing dull about the work in Lima. Teamed with an intermediate teacher in a francophone school, I worked with

adult teachers. Paired with Katelyn, a documentary filmmaker, I led them in discussions of their talents and abilities, their aspirations for themselves and their communities, and listened to stories of new superheroes they invented. On a visit to el Mirador, a restaurant overlooking the beautiful Pacific Ocean,

afternoon English sections; I thought I could have them tell me why American tourists are unfortunately not always well loved in places around the world. “Oh, no,” replied one of the teachers, “even if one was rude, we’d try to help him.” Others nodded assent, adding, “And if one was really rude, we’d

Solidarity in Action

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Construction of the retaining wall for the nursery school addition

I sampled Peruvian specialties. Not to be outdone, the ladies of Pacífico made samples of foods from various regions of Peru—ceviche, lemon-dressed raw fish from the sea, pachamanga, the fruits of the earth associated with the inland culture of the Incas, roasted in the ground and, from south of Cuzco, Asado Arequipeño, a plate of roasted meat with bright red tomatoes and a ball of ubiquitous rice on leaves of lettuce.

During the placements, we learned solidarity with one another and with the Peruvians. During the meals and reflections, we understood how a day in a nursery setting could fill you with joy and weariness at the same time. At day’s end, we were elated and exhausted, falling into our beds after a full day at an amusement park, some of it in pursuit of three little Miss Squiggly Wiggles, as they were baptized. In Cuzco, the ancient Incan capital, I viewed the still solid foundations of the Temple of the Sun upon which the Spanish had built a church. Subsequent earthquakes shook parts of the church off the more stable, 14-sided interlocking stones of the Inca. It was a lesson in humility for those of us who might think our technology superior, our way of life better, our thoughts somehow more important. Peruvians, despite the little they have, enjoy life, and enjoy watching their North American friends adapt to it.

An anecdote to show how kind the Peruvians are. In a short story in *Prairie Fire* magazine, a Canadian traveller tells about meeting a stereotypical ugly American tourist who was yelling in a restaurant at breakfast time for “Eggs, eggs! Doesn’t anyone here speak English.” I tried to engage the Peruvian teachers in a discussion before reading this passage in their

never judge all people by one person’s example.” Sighing as that pre-reading strategy, a sure-fire winner in other cultures including our own, went out the window, I realized I’d been shown a true value of their society: friendship.

Near the end of our stay in Peru, we wondered among ourselves if we could sustain the level of excitement and help Pacífico finish its nursery project. A slab floor still needed to be laid but we had used up our time, and so the community, with the help of the next rotation of SIA volunteers, would have to continue the work. OSSTF/FEESO members can help too. By visiting the Solidarity in Action website you can find more information about how to get yourself invited on similarly inspiring projects in Peru and Ecuador. By donating, OSSTF/FEESO members can sustain the work. By participating, you can learn the famous tooth-brushing song created to teach children in Pacífico about dental hygiene—or even make a new one! You can mix cement while mixing with wonderful, grateful and energetic people. You can help people in need and, in an act of selfish altruism, help yourself to broader understandings on a personal level.

There is much more to Machu Pichu than meets the eye when you visit it in person. But Peru is much, much more than Machu Pichu, and, though I dread saying so, after working alongside the people of Pacífico, the fabled ancient monuments will fall away from your memory. Instead, you will experience, over and over in each retelling, the warmth of the people of Peru and the rewards of accomplishment. ☺

Bryan Smith is a teacher and human rights activist at College Avenue Secondary School in District 11, Thames Valley.





LIFE ON THE “SHORT BUS”

For some, not great, but
educators can help change that

By Wayne McFarlane

In the film *The King's Speech*, there is a scene where Bertie goes to his brother, King Edward, and warns him of his responsibilities as a king. Edward does not respond with reason but instead mimics his younger brother's stutter: “B-B-Bertie.” Sadly, the film accurately reflects the experience of many identified students who are being bullied because of a special education exceptionality.

Students who have dyslexia might have to put up with sarcastic comments such as “So you finally passed a test!” or “You’re really going to go far spelling like that!” or “How is life on the short bus?” These comments can come in the middle of a discussion and they belittle the identified

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LA VIE SUR LA «MINIBUS»

Pour certains, pas fort, mais les
éducateurs peuvent changer la donne

par Wayne McFarlane

Dans le film *Le discours d'un roi*, il y a une scène où Bertie s'approche de son frère le roi Édouard pour lui rappeler ses responsabilités en tant que souverain. Édouard ne répond pas de manière raisonnée, mais se met à imiter son jeune frère en bégayant « B-B-Bertie ». Ce film traduit précisément l'expérience de bien des élèves identifiés comme étant en difficulté et qui sont victimes d'intimidation à cause d'une anomalie dans l'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté.

Les élèves dyslexiques peuvent par exemple être gratifiés de commentaires sarcastiques comme : « Tu as enfin réussi un test! » ou « Tu vas vraiment aller loin en épelant comme ça! » ou « Comment ça va dans le minibus? » Ces commentaires peuvent surgir au beau milieu d'une discussion et rabaissent

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student, as well as having nothing to do with what was being talked about.

These comments don't always come from your stereotypical, six-foot-two, black-shirted bully. They may also come from straight A students who believe they are superior. This is not the type of bullying we talk about very much but it too is every bit as hurtful and needs to be addressed.

What was the ride on the short bus really like? Well, speaking from personal experience, I can tell you that it was two-and-a-half hours a day of discomfort. On really cold Ottawa mornings, we special-needs kids would be greeted by a bus driver saying, "Don't talk and don't touch the windows." The windows would fog up because the heaters on the bus were on full blast, but we were not allowed to wipe the windows clean because that would be touching them. The heat was uncomfortable because we were also not allowed to take off our winter coats.

"Short-bus" comments are not just an insult but also a reminder of the unpleasant journey identified students often endure every day. However, identified students also get called not-so-hidden insults. The best example I can think of is "retard," as in the popular phrase "f--in' retard." For some bullies, calling someone a retard is not mean enough; they have to add the F-word to make sure it really hurts the victim.

As a student, I was once called a "f--in' retard" by a female player whom I'd bumped into while chasing down a ball in a basketball game. But the other reason she insulted me was that she knew I had a learning disability. As soon as those two words came out of her mouth, the gym instantly went quiet. One of the reasons the gym was deadly quiet was that Miss-Straight-A-I-Can't-Take-a-Bump's father was a teacher at the school we both attended and where we were playing basketball. I knew at that moment I was in a no-win situation so I took a seat on the bench.

Maybe this is another thing we as teachers and educators have to think about: the student who is struggling may believe the teacher will favour the students who are getting good marks. It

may seem to the identified student that the teacher relates better to the straight A student. Therefore, in the mind of the identified student, the teacher may take the side of the straight A student. We need to show them that we care about all students, regardless of ability.

We also have to consider that identified students may not report a bullying incident right away because he or she is embarrassed, still very angry or cannot find the opportunity to do so without other students looking on. How many times does a student let such moments go by without reporting them?

Then there are those who wonder why identified students are so quick to anger. I would like to ask Canada's quick-to-anger expert, Don Cherry, whether calling another person a "f--in' retard" is a good reason to drop the gloves?

The above comments cut deeply into a student with a learning disability. These unfair and unwanted comments come to students when they are trying to figure out what abilities they do have. They are trying to figure out what it means for them to have a learning disability. They are wondering how it is going to shape their future. They may be thinking about how the students around them see them. Is the bully just saying what everyone else is saying behind the bullied student's back?

Students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities may already be down on themselves, working long hours to complete assignments or having a difficult time reading and getting low marks.

Jackie Stewart, the great auto racer who also has dyslexia, explains how hard school was for him in an anecdote in his autobiography *Winning Is Not Enough*. His favourite part of the school day was walking home, but even this was ruined when someone pushed him down and kicked him in the head.

I have been astonished that when we talk about bullying, some people ask, "What did the victim do to bring attention to himself or herself?" In the case of someone with dyslexia, he or she might have mispronounced a word, had difficulty reading aloud, done well on an assignment when other students thought

/CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

"Short-bus" comments are not just an insult but also a reminder of the unpleasant journey identified students often endure every day.



l'élève identifié comme étant en difficulté sans rien avoir en commun avec le sujet de la discussion.

Ces commentaires ne proviennent pas toujours du stéréotype de l'instigateur de l'intimidation de 6 pieds 2. Ils peuvent tout aussi bien provenir d'élèves obtenant des « A » qui se croient supérieurs. Ce n'est pas le genre d'intimidation dont on parle souvent, mais elle est tout aussi nuisible et mérite qu'on y mette fin.

À quoi ressemble vraiment le trajet à bord d'un minibus adapté? Eh bien, d'après mon expérience personnelle, je peux vous dire que cela équivaut à deux heures et demie de désagrément par jour. Par une matinée glaciale à Ottawa, nous, les élèves en difficulté, on pourrait tout aussi bien être accueilli par un chauffeur qui nous assène : « Ne parle pas et ne touche pas les vitres! » Les vitres s'embuent parce que les chaufferettes sont poussées à fond, mais on n'a pas le droit de les essuyer, car cela signifierait les toucher. La chaleur nous incommode parce que nous aussi, nous ne pouvons pas enlever notre manteau d'hiver.

Les commentaires sur le minibus adapté sont non seulement une insulte, mais aussi un rappel du trajet désagréable que les élèves identifiés comme étant en difficulté doivent endurer jour après jour.

Ces élèves sont aussi parfois la cible d'insultes bien plus flagrantes. Le meilleur exemple dont je me souviens est « débile », comme dans l'expression populaire « espèce de débile ». Pour certains auteurs d'actes d'intimidation, taxer quelqu'un de débile n'est pas suffisant et ils y ajoutent une insulte pour être sûrs que cela blessera la victime.

En tant qu'élève, une joueuse m'a taxé un jour d'« espèce de débile » parce que je l'avais heurtée en cherchant à rattraper une balle lors d'une partie de basket-ball. L'autre raison pour laquelle elle m'adressait cette insulte était qu'elle connaissait mon trouble de l'apprentissage. Dès que ces mots sont sortis de sa bouche, le gymnase est devenu silencieux. L'une des raisons en était que le père de Mademoiselle « la bonne élève qui ne supporte pas qu'on la pousse » était enseignant à notre école à tous deux, là où nous jouions au

Les commentaires sur le minibus adapté sont non seulement une insulte, mais aussi un rappel du trajet désagréable que les élèves identifiés comme étant en difficulté doivent endurer jour après jour.

basket-ball. À ce moment, j'ai su que je perdrais la partie et ai préféré m'asseoir sur le banc.

Peut-être est-ce un autre point auquel nous, en tant qu'enseignants et éducateurs, devons réfléchir : l'élève en difficulté peut penser que son enseignant favorise les élèves qui obtiennent de bonnes notes. Il peut lui sembler que l'enseignant s'accorde mieux avec les élèves qui ont régulièrement la meilleure note. Par conséquent, dans son esprit, l'enseignant se met du côté du bon élève. Nous devons montrer aux élèves en difficulté que nous nous soucions de tous les élèves, quelles que soient leurs capacités.

Nous devons par ailleurs envisager le fait que les élèves identifiés comme étant en difficulté ne signalent pas les incidents d'intimidation tout de suite parce que cela les embarrasse, qu'ils sont encore très en colère ou ne trouvent pas le moment opportun sans risquer de se faire remarquer par d'autres élèves. Combien de fois l'un de ces élèves a-t-il laissé passer ce genre d'incidents sans le signaler?

Ensuite, il y a ceux qui se demandent pourquoi les élèves identifiés comme étant en difficulté sont si prompts à se mettre en colère. Je me permets de demander à « l'expert canadien prompt à se mettre en colère », Don Cherry, si le fait de taxer quelqu'un d'« espèce de débile » est une bonne raison d'en venir aux coups de poing?

Les commentaires mentionnés ont des répercussions profondes sur les élèves qui ont un trouble de l'apprentissage. Ces commentaires injustes et non souhaités

leur sont assénés lorsqu'ils tentent de déterminer de quoi ils sont capables, qu'ils tentent de savoir ce que cela signifie pour eux de souffrir d'un trouble de l'apprentissage et se demandent quelles seront les répercussions de cet état de fait sur leur avenir. Ils peuvent aussi se demander comment les autres élèves les perçoivent. L'auteur des actes d'intimidation traduit-il tout simplement ce que tous les autres pensent sans oser le dire?

Les élèves dyslexiques ou qui souffrent d'autres troubles de l'apprentissage peuvent d'ores et déjà avoir une faible estime d'eux-mêmes, travailler avec acharnement pour terminer leurs devoirs ou avoir des difficultés à lire et obtenir de mauvaises notes.

Dans une des anecdotes tirées de son autobiographie, intitulée *Winning is Not Enough*, Jackie Stewart, le grand pilote automobile qui est aussi dyslexique, raconte les difficultés auxquelles il a été confronté à l'école. Le moment de sa journée d'école qu'il préférerait était le retour à la maison; ce moment lui a toutefois été volé quand quelqu'un l'a jeté à terre et l'a frappé à la tête.

Je suis effaré quand, en parlant d'intimidation, certains demandent : « Qu'a fait la victime pour attirer l'attention sur elle? » Dans le cas d'une personne dyslexique, il se peut qu'elle ait mal prononcé un mot, ait éprouvé des difficultés à lire à haute voix, ait bien réussi un devoir alors que d'autres élèves auraient pensé qu'elle n'y parviendrait pas ou ait bénéficié d'aménagements pour qu'elle puisse réussir.

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We can be the ones modelling encouragement to ensure learning disabilities are not barriers to student success. We can be the ones who deal with the unfair and unwanted comments.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22/

he or she would not or been accommodated so he or she could be successful.

So, as teachers and educators, what can we do to help identified students

with their bullying problems?

In *The King's Speech*, just before Bertie, now King George, leaves to broadcast his speech to the nation announcing the coming war, it is Winston Churchill who gives

him words of encouragement that help him with his task. As teachers and educators, we too can be the voice of reason. We can be the ones modelling encouragement to ensure learning disabilities are not barriers to student success. We can be the ones who deal with the unfair and unwanted comments.

There is now more information out there about dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Asperger's Syndrome and many other learning disabilities. There are great websites that give lots of information such as Totally ADD (totallyadd.com) or LDonline (ldonline.org). There are more and more books about students who are identified. Checking into these websites or reading a book about learning disabilities can be an important part of a teacher's or educator's Annual Learning Plan.

With background knowledge about learning disabilities, we can be like Winston Churchill. He could sympathise with King George trying to communicate to the masses. Churchill never read any speeches; he memorized them because it was too difficult for him to read. He had dyslexia. ☹

Wayne McFarlane completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education despite a learning disability, and is a teacher at Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.

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Nous pouvons montrer comment dispenser des encouragements pour que les troubles de l'apprentissage ne constituent pas des obstacles à la réussite des élèves. Nous pouvons être ceux qui empêchent les commentaires injustes et non souhaités.

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En tant qu'enseignants ou éducateurs, que pouvons-nous faire pour aider les élèves identifiés comme étant en difficulté à résoudre leurs problèmes d'intimidation?

Dans *Le discours d'un roi*, juste avant que Bertie, maintenant le roi George, fasse son annonce radiodiffusée à la nation pour annoncer la guerre imminente, Winston Churchill lui a donné quelques mots d'encouragement, ce qui l'a aidé. En tant qu'enseignants ou éducateurs, nous pouvons nous aussi être la voix de la raison. Nous pouvons être ceux qui encouragent les autres afin de s'assurer que les troubles de l'apprentissage ne constituent pas des obstacles à la réussite des élèves. Nous pouvons être ceux qui s'occupent des commentaires injustes et non souhaités.

Vous trouverez aisément de plus amples renseignements sur la dyslexie, l'hyperactivité avec déficit de l'attention, le syndrome d'Asperger et bien d'autres troubles de l'apprentissage. D'excellents sites Web vous fourniront toute l'information souhaitée, comme les sites *Totally ADD* (totallyadd.com) ou *LDonline* (ldonline.org). Les élèves qui sont identifiés comme étant en difficulté font l'objet de plus en plus d'ouvrages sur le sujet. Consulter ces sites Web ou lire un livre sur les troubles de l'apprentissage peut être un élément important du plan de perfectionnement annuel de tout enseignant ou éducateur.

Une fois les connaissances de base sur les

troubles de l'apprentissage acquises, nous pouvons suivre l'exemple de Winston Churchill, lui qui pouvait sympathiser avec le roi George lorsqu'il tentait de communiquer avec son peuple. Le premier ministre Churchill n'avait quant à lui jamais lu de discours. Il les mémorisait, car il lui était trop diffi-

cile de les lire, étant donné sa dyslexie. ☞

Wayne McFarlane a obtenu un baccalauréat ès arts et un baccalauréat en éducation malgré son trouble de l'apprentissage. Il enseigne au Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East, dans le District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.



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CHARACTER EDUCATION REVISITED

Confronting privilege in the classroom

By Chantal Mancini

Reading Dr. Stephen L. Anderson's article, "Moments of startling clarity," in the last issue of *Education Forum* left me with much to ponder. I totally agree with his premise that the current approach to so-called character education is shallow and does not ask students to ask the hard questions required to determine their own moral position or how they arrived there. Anderson writes: "You cannot teach a morality without talking about the cultural, philosophical and ideological viewpoints that *make sense* of morality itself."

It is this very statement that caused me to consider further analysis of what happened in Dr. Anderson's class the day he presented the photo of Bibi Aisha to his students. This analysis must focus on the politics of gender as they intersect with race. I begin this by arguing that all modern cultures are framed by patriarchal notions of gender, one in which women are valued less than men to varying degrees. Aisha's photo could be replaced by one of Hannah (not her real name), a woman I met several years ago at a meeting of a women's committee. She had been shot in the abdomen by her former husband, who had also beaten her so severely that her face was permanently disfigured. She could not reveal her real name for fear of her ex-husband finding her and killing her and her children. He had served a short sentence and then was released from jail. Hannah was born and raised in small-town Ontario.

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LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DU CARACTÈRE REVISITÉ

Remettre en question les privilèges en classe
par Chantal Mancini

La lecture de l'article de Stephen L. Anderson, intitulé : « *Moments of startling clarity* » et publié dans le dernier numéro d'*Education Forum*, m'a donné matière à réflexion. Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec sa prémisse selon laquelle l'approche actuelle du prétendu « développement du caractère » est vide de sens et ne permet pas aux élèves de se poser les questions ardues requises pour déterminer leur prise de position morale ou la manière dont ils y sont parvenus. Selon S. Anderson, « on ne peut enseigner la moralité sans parler des points de vue culturels, philosophiques et idéologiques qui *donnent tout son sens* à la moralité. »

C'est cette affirmation qui m'a poussée à analyser plus finement ce qui s'est produit dans la classe de S. Anderson le jour où il a montré la photo de Bibi Aisha à ses élèves. Cette analyse doit porter sur les préjugés liés aux sexes en ce qu'ils interagissent avec la race. Je présuppose ici que toutes les cultures modernes sont cloisonnées par des notions patriarcales sur le sexe dont l'une d'entre elles veut que les femmes soient inférieures aux hommes à divers degrés. La photo d'Aisha aurait pu être remplacée par celle d'Hannah (un nom d'emprunt), une femme que j'ai rencontrée il y a plusieurs années de cela, lors d'une réunion d'un comité du statut de la femme. Son ancien mari lui avait tiré une balle dans l'abdomen et l'avait également si rudement battue que son visage en était défiguré pour toujours. Elle ne pouvait révéler son vrai nom de peur que son ex-mari la retrouve et la tue, ainsi que ses

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My point is that one doesn't need to travel to Afghanistan to find women who have been disfigured due to the actions of violent family members. However, it is far easier for us to "otherize" violence against women by pointing it out in cultures not our own, or make the racist assumption that it is somehow brought to Canada by newcomers to this country. It is far easier for us to compartmentalize violence, to see it as an action in itself and to ignore the connections between gender-based violence and other facets in our society.

In order for students to take a moral position on violence against women, they must first recognize its existence in their own culture. They need to understand that it exists because women have yet to achieve equality in *any* society, including ours. Canadian women still earn less than men and are grossly underrepresented in politics, business and other professions that generally have the power to make the rules. Women currently make up under 25 per cent of all Members of Parliament in the current federal government; *The Globe and Mail* article "Appointments of female judges slump under Harper's Tories" (November 11, 2011) recently outlined that the percentage of women judges appointed to the Federal judiciary has dropped steadily since 2006, with only eight women compared to 41 men appointed by the Harper government this year. Students need to be taught how to deconstruct advertising that makes violence against women sexy and teaches girls that their primary value lies in their bodies. Most importantly, students need to be able to reflect on how these things inform their judgement and sense of privilege, and learn to speak up and speak out.

Dr. Anderson's students simply could not do this because our current curriculum doesn't go there. They could not recognize their own society has conditioned them to think that essentially, violence against women is okay because women are valued less than men; and for female students, this state of being worth less is internalized. If we are not morally outraged by our own state of affairs, why would we be by someone else's? If, instead, we believed that violence against women in any circumstance was abhorrent, would we not see all violence against women as an absolute violation of human rights? Would we not collectively demand changes in Canadian law to ensure that men like Hannah's ex-husband would never be given the opportunity to hurt Hannah and her children, or anyone else, again?

It was far easier for these students to justify Aisha's ordeal by attaching it to her culture rather than locating it in the politics of gender. I, like Dr. Anderson, don't blame these students. It is likely that most of the adults in their lives don't teach them to confront critically their own assumptions and the deeply embedded systems of power that frame them. In fact, everything around them teaches just the opposite: that standing up to challenge these systems of power could leave them in a less privileged position. For example, a boy who refuses to conform to society's notion of masculinity is likely to find himself the victim of homophobic bullying.

I believe that the reason character education does not challenge both ourselves and our students to critically deconstruct how we form moral positions is because this sort of analysis is extremely difficult and complex work. It involves an admission that fundamentally, we live in a sexist, racist and heterosexist society. It involves the acknowledgement of privilege and the possibility that we may have to give up some of that privilege in order to stop the oppression of others. It points to each of us as we squirm uncomfortably in our chairs and tells us that if we are silent, we are complicit.

Character education within a social-justice framework would look very different than what is currently offered today. It would be far more than the platitudes Dr. Anderson so rightly cites; it would serve to challenge just about everything we have been taught, and for educators, how we teach. It might even have challenged students to look at that photo of Aisha and, rather than justify what happened to her with nebulous moral judgements, realize we all share in the responsibility for her plight. ☞

Chantal Mancini is the Teachers' Bargaining Unit President for OSSTF/FEESO District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth. She holds a Masters of Education in Cultural Studies.



If we are not morally outraged
by our own state of affairs,
why would we be by
someone else's?

Si notre sens moral ne s'indigne pas de notre propre situation, pourquoi le serions-nous de la situation d'autres personnes?



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enfants. Après avoir été brièvement emprisonné, cet homme a été remis en liberté. Hannah est née et a été élevée dans une petite ville de l'Ontario.

Selon moi, nul besoin de se rendre en Afghanistan pour trouver des femmes défigurées par des membres de leur famille qui ont développé un comportement violent. Par contre, il est nettement plus facile pour nous de nous distancier de la violence faite aux femmes en faisant remarquer qu'elle appartient à d'autres cultures que la nôtre ou en supposant, de manière raciste, qu'elle est importée au Canada par les nouveaux arrivants au pays. Il est bien plus facile pour nous de cloisonner la violence pour se la représenter comme une action en elle-même et d'ignorer les connexions entre la violence fondée sur le sexe et d'autres facettes de notre société.

Pour que les élèves prennent moralement position sur la violence faite aux femmes, ils doivent tout d'abord reconnaître son existence dans leur propre culture. Ils doivent comprendre qu'elle existe parce que les femmes ne sont les égales des hommes dans aucune société, y compris la nôtre. Les Canadiennes continuent de gagner moins que les Canadiens et d'être nettement sous-représentées en politique, dans les affaires et dans d'autres professions où le pouvoir de décision est roi. Pour l'instant, les femmes représentent moins de 25 pour cent de l'ensemble des députés du gouvernement fédéral actuel. L'article du *Globe and Mail* intitulé « *Appointments of female judges slump under Harper's Tories* » (11 novembre 2011) faisait remarquer dernièrement que le pourcentage de femmes juges nommées au corps judiciaire fédéral baissait régulièrement depuis 2006, avec seulement huit femmes par rapport aux 41 hommes nommés par le gouvernement Harper cette année. Il faut enseigner aux élèves à déconstruire la publicité en

tant que forme de violence quand elle prône les femmes « sexy » et apprend aux jeunes filles que leur principal atout est leur corps. Les élèves doivent surtout pouvoir déterminer comment ces stéréotypes influent sur leur jugement et leur notion des privilèges pour apprendre à les exprimer et à les combattre.

Les élèves de S. Anderson n'ont tout simplement pas pu le faire, car notre curriculum actuel ne se penche pas sur cette question. Ils n'ont pas compris que leur propre société les avait conditionnés à accepter la violence faite aux femmes parce qu'elles sont considérées comme inférieures aux hommes (pour les étudiantes, cet état de fait est intériorisé). Si notre sens moral ne s'indigne pas de notre propre situation, pourquoi le serions-nous de la situation d'autres personnes? Par contre, si nous étions convaincus que la violence faite aux femmes, quelle que soit la situation, est répugnante, ne considérerions-nous pas tout acte de violence fait aux femmes comme une violation absolue des droits de la personne? Ne demanderions-nous pas collectivement de modifier la loi canadienne pour faire en sorte que les hommes comme l'ex-mari d'Hannah ne puissent jamais lui faire du mal, à elle et à ses enfants, ou à qui que ce soit d'autre?

Il est bien plus facile pour ces élèves de justifier le supplice d'Aisha en le reliant à sa « culture » plutôt que de l'associer aux préjugés liés aux sexes. Tout comme S. Anderson, je ne blâme pas ces élèves, car il est fort probable que la plupart des adultes avec qui ils vivent ne leur enseignent pas à critiquer leurs propres suppositions ni les systèmes de pouvoir profondément ancrés qui les sous-tendent. En fait, tout ce qu'on leur enseigne leur apprend justement le contraire : s'élever contre ces systèmes de pouvoir pourrait bien les priver de certains de leurs privilèges. Par exemple, il est probable qu'un garçon qui refuse de se conformer à la notion de masculinité communément acceptée par la société soit victime de pressions homophobes.

À mon avis, la raison pour laquelle le « développement du caractère » ne nous met pas au défi, nous et nos élèves, de déconstruire et de critiquer notre manière de former un point de vue moral, tient à la difficulté et à la complexité de ce travail. Il nous faut en effet admettre que, fondamentalement, nous vivons dans une société sexiste, raciste et hétérosexiste. Il nous faut convenir de nos privilèges et envisager la possibilité de nous défaire de certains d'entre eux pour mettre fin à l'oppression d'autres personnes. C'est alors que, mal à l'aise, nous nous sentirons visés et saurons que si nous restons silencieux, nous sommes également complices.

Dans un cadre de justice sociale, le développement du caractère serait totalement différent de ce qui est proposé aujourd'hui. Il irait bien plus loin que les platitudes que cite avec justesse S. Anderson, car il servirait à remettre en question tout ce qu'on nous a appris et, pour nous en tant qu'éducateurs, notre manière d'enseigner. Il pourrait même mettre les élèves au défi de regarder à nouveau la photo d'Aisha et, au lieu de justifier ce qui lui est arrivé par des jugements moraux nébuleux, de réaliser que nous avons tous une part de responsabilité dans sa situation. ☹

Chantal Mancini est la présidente de l'unité de négociation du personnel enseignant, District 21 d'OSSTF/FEESO, Hamilton-Wentworth. Elle possède une maîtrise en éducation en études culturelles.

5

DAYS

Exploring Finnish student success

By Colleen Ireland

In May 2011, I had the opportunity to accompany a York Region District School Board (YRDSB) group visiting Finland for five days. Key interests for me were the role of the union in Finland, reasons for such high PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) scores in that country and approaches to education that might serve us well in Ontario, given the opportunity and the will to adopt them. Recent accolades by international journalists and education pundits made the opportunity to do some hands-on observations all the more appealing.



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Clockwise from top left: Panorama of Helsinki, entrance in the Sveaborg sea fortress in Helsinki, ordnance caches, Sveaborg sea fortress

The YRDSB has had a working partnership with the Finland educational authorities for some time but this was the first occasion that plant managers and union representatives were also invited by the Board to travel to Finland to share ideas with our Finnish colleagues. My goal was to look at union and school system structures as well as school environment and curriculum practices that might explain and inform such success on the PISA.

Our delegation visited nine schools in the municipality of Espoo, just west of Helsinki. We all visited the first school together to give us an opportunity to experience a comprehensive school. Subsequently, we were able to select schools, facilities or organizations that reflected our particular interests. I visited five schools with the secondary administrators and

other YRDSB personnel who were interested in specific school programs.

UNION RELATIONSHIPS AND SYSTEM STRUCTURE

In Finland, teachers and administrators are in the same union, and while membership is voluntary, 96 per cent of teachers opt into the organization. Those who do not join have no protection such as seniority, support during conflict or other work-related conditions. Principals belong to both a teachers' union and their own dedicated administrators' union.

Finnish schools are divided into Comprehensive Schools (Grades 1-9) and Upper Secondary Schools (Grades 10-12). It is noteworthy that none of the schools I visited has a student population over 500, with only one projected to have 750 students in the next couple of years.

In Finland, administrators are hired by Boards and teachers are hired by principals. Quite unlike our process, the teachers' union is part of the interview process. Teachers must work a minimum of 24 hours per week with an additional three hours of mutual meeting time for peer planning and discussion. Every effort is made by system principals to ensure the requisite number of hours are available to permanent contract teachers. This can result in educators needing to travel between two to three schools. Principals work together to find spots for staff if their subject area is not chosen by enough students. There is no wholesale abandonment of staff if their courses are not chosen but the root cause will be examined and ways will be found to increase the attractiveness of a course.

Municipalities own the schools and



allot monies for running them. Custodial, secretarial and maintenance support for facilities are, in general, contracted out to private companies, with this becoming the norm throughout Finland. Principals have the autonomy to set the particular theme for a school and receive money from the municipality for various initiatives.

In every school I visited, it was made clear that principals and school officials view teachers as facilitators and knowledge workers. The concept of five-year Teacher Performance Appraisals such as we have in Ontario seemed counterintuitive to both administrators and teachers. To quote one administrator, “Why create such a bureaucracy?” We should not assume from this that expectations are low in Finland—in fact, quite the contrary. Obviously the Finnish PISA scores indicate educators must be doing something right, with the support of school boards. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that there is an inherent and absolute trust that educators know their subject, know their job and will take responsibility for their own professional development to enhance and improve their practice.

Random testing is done every five years with students, though, as several administrators pointed out, “No one, teachers and students, really enjoys testing.” The testing is done primarily for diagnostic purposes to inform curriculum practice. Individual principals may choose to test all or just a portion of the student body. Notably, while lacking the rigidity of Ontario testing purportedly designed to improve achievement and increase accountability, the Finnish system still manages to show the highest achievement of most countries.

At the root of the faith and trust in teacher competence is the teacher education process. At the very least, teacher candidates attend five to seven years of educationally focussed university. Prospective teacher candidates must write an entrance exam and, if selected for the second phase, they must take part in a group interview and demonstrate they possess group leader skills needed for the classroom. Elementary candidates can choose to go directly into an education degree, which takes about five to

six years. Supports are in place for new teachers who struggle with classroom management, communications with parents or working with colleagues in planning units. As one leader put it, “The passion for teaching is there, but the knowledge of how to handle day-to-day upsets may not be there.” Those interested in teaching secondary school may take a subject-specific degree and then select the stream in education they prefer. There is no tuition fee for any post-secondary schooling.

While taxes are very high in Finland, we were told the citizenry understands the need. They prefer to have high-quality health care, child care and educational services than lower taxes, but there are those who lobby against such a high level of taxation. Daycare costs approximately 100 Euros (\$130) per month, with students up to age six attending child-care day programs and after-school programs based at schools. At age seven, students may attend school and/or go part-time while attending a daycare outside of school. At the other end of the spectrum, students between 16 and 18 years of age must participate in one year of compulsory military service.

Every child, at every level, receives a hot lunch, with vegetarian, gluten-free, vegan, lactose-free and any other option readily available. There is a five-week rotating menu that is available in every school in the country. The simple reason given is that we all know children learn best on a full stomach and if they cannot get a hot meal at home, they are assured of one at school.

OTHER KEY DIFFERENCES

A second key difference is the fact that schools in Espoo offer common schedules, enabling students to move between schools if a desired course is not available at one school.

The third major difference is the fact that administrators remain in the union and many are teaching principals for at least one period per day. They may also supervise clubs. As mentioned earlier, principals also belong to their own union.

A fourth key difference is evident with the segregation of students with special needs. While consistent supports exist

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within the segregated schools I visited, there appears to be a strong desire to learn from our experiences in meeting needs of special-needs students. Whether that means the Finnish system will adopt all our strategies remains to be seen, but there is a keen interest in serving students with special needs effectively and in integrating students into all schools. In addition, with the current increase in

immigration there is an ever-increasing need to support new Finns and their acquisition of language skills.

Religious studies courses are treated very differently in this largely Lutheran country. Some schools hold faith-based classes and only if a student/family expresses concern will the student be excused from the class. In other schools, the matter of faith is treated as a World Reli-

gions course, which examines the philosophy of all faiths. However, the concept of accommodating various faith requirements in schools did not seem to hold any interest for municipal leaders.

All Finnish schools utilize an attendance/communications system called WILMA. This is a real-time program that allows teachers to log into the system and report student attendance immediately, period by period. There is various colour coding that assists parents/staff in identifying the cause of an absence. Every effort is made by staff and the school administration to communicate effectively with parents who do not own computers or do not have easy access to technology. And it was clear upon questioning that all efforts are made to protect students' and families' privacy when using this program.



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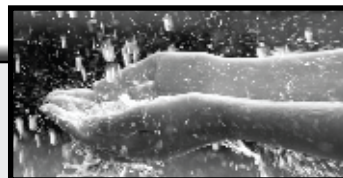
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Upper Secondary is rare. Some examples of methods (which may sound familiar) are listed below.

- **Looping** of elementary classes, whereby students may have the same teacher for two to three years. Problematic if there are personality conflicts, but every attempt is made to solve those issues because fostering a sense of belonging is deemed paramount.
- **Units of study** that allow for a longer period of time, as compared to our credit system.
- **Student-led conferences** with the complete involvement of the students in the process; requires ownership by the students for their learning.
- **Common schedules** that allow for movement between schools.
- **Cross-curricular planning**, which is practised faithfully in Finland. It was common to see students building instruments in shop (compulsory at Grade 7), writing a score for the instrument, writing lyrics, building props and performing, all within the school year.
- **Entrepreneurial focus** with a view to making students self-sufficient is a major element within the system. For some schools, that is the main theme of the school, and students are able to experience partnerships not only with businesses that support their communities but with other countries and student populations.

What was evident across the entire system was the inherent trust in teachers, the sense that students need to have a true voice in the running of schools and there is a respectful collaboration between schools, students and parents to make this work. Teaching for inquiry is the general practice, with a national curriculum that allows for significant local autonomy.

Professional Development is split between three compulsory days; teachers make their own decisions for the rest of the days, depending on their assignments. New teacher education is more focussed and there are significant differences in the Finnish entrance process into education. Most Finnish students leave school able to speak Swedish, French and English with varying degrees of fluency.

While testing is random for students

and teacher appraisal takes the form of a collegial conversation, Finland has been able to achieve some consistently high PISA scores over a span of several years.

Whether any or all of these strategies or system practices can be duplicated in Ontario is almost an unanswerable question, given the marked differences in school population numbers and community/municipal supports. In many

cases, the key factor in Finland's success seems to be a strong belief in teachers and their competence, and the understanding that the bond between student, teacher and family is essential to educational success. ☺

Colleen Ireland is the District and Teachers' Bargaining Unit president in District 16, York Region.

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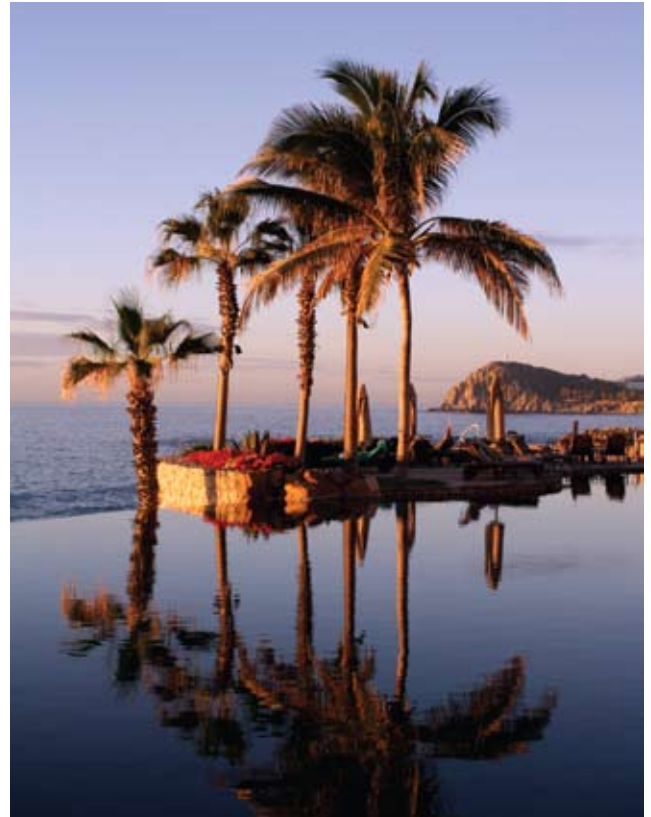
See the world through my lens

I have avidly pursued my passion for photography and travel since retiring as a French teacher in District 11, Thames Valley. Photography has heightened my awareness of the world around me. It is important that a picture allows me to experience again the emotional impact the subject first evoked in me. Capturing a moment in time or a sense of place that similarly speaks to others is both my source of motivation and my measure of success.

Photography is all about light. I try to shoot using only natural light and shadows. My portfolio of black and white images features architectural detail and design, and my colour images attempt to capture the magical quality of light. More of my work can be viewed at www.brucehartleyphotography.weebly.com. 

Clockwise from right: Observing Hindu rituals at sunset along the Ganges River, Varanasi, India; "Early Morning Reflection," Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; "Sail Down at Sunset," Heritage Village of Bayfield, Ontario; "Frozen Landscape," 10-metre-high tunnels of Reed Flute Cave, Guilin, China







Past and future

How ancient cultures can enrich our lives

Every day we read or hear of new and exciting discoveries in numerous areas, from science, technology and the animal kingdom to human behaviour. However, some of the most exciting discoveries have emerged from history and archeology and, over time, have significantly altered our knowledge of the roots of civilization.

A good example is the discovery that intrepid explorers made, in the late 19th century, of ancient Maya cities and temples hidden in the jungles of Mexico and Latin America. More than 100 years later, those buildings and artifacts continue to be a rich source of both learning and wonder. *Maya: Secrets of their Ancient World*, the exhibition currently running at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) until April 9, 2012, is bound to engage visitors. On display are nearly 250 artifacts from the Classic Period (250-900 CE) of Maya civilization. The exhibition displays themes of Maya life in an easy-to-follow, organized fashion, covering The Maya World; The City; Cosmology and Rituals; Writing and Timekeeping; The Palace; Death; and Collapse and Survival. Each section is filled with impressive artifacts and detailed information that variously uses text, video, audio and 13 touchable drawings of artifacts and models of architecture to aid in understanding.

These over-thousand-year-old cities are not only magnificent in themselves but were full of sculptures and temples covered in writing, or glyphs. At first the

glyphs were indecipherable. It took researchers years to go from merely guessing what they meant to actually reconstructing works of the Maya Classic Period. The exhibits provide insight into why certain materials were used to construct city buildings, while the sculptures, some of them made from stucco and ceramics, are realistic portraits of significant people, a trait that was, and still is, shared by many cultures. Another common artistic element is the depiction of animals; the Maya believed animals carry magical and supernatural associations.

A short video features Palenque, the most important city in the western borders of the Maya world. An especially interesting part compares Maya buildings to those of modern-day Westerners' houses. For instance, when a member of a Maya family moved out, their room may have been turned into a storage room or blocked off completely, a practice that is often seen in today's renovations.

Visitors can also see pearls from the Classic Period that were set alone and used as trade goods, not as jewellery. In fact, the jewellery here is mostly made from jade or shells, although, as a special treat, visitors can view fluted ear spools, ornaments that were a key part of Maya dress and that were made from obsidian, naturally occurring volcanic glass that is rarely used because it fractures easily and is difficult to work with. Other cultural artifacts include sculptures of ball players and an explanation of why ball games held such an important place in Maya life.

There are several other exhibits that are well worth visiting. The first is an area where a video and touchable screen aid the visitor in deciphering Maya glyphs. Individually carved stone pieces are spelled out, visually and audibly, to help the visitor understand them. One can only praise the archeologists who spent painstaking years unravelling the mysteries of a language that was once incomprehensible. The other area informs visitors of funeral rituals, including displays of gorgeous jade mosaic masks that were used to preserve the identity of rulers over the centuries.

The various themes are illustrated through the abundant display of Maya artifacts and what they mean. The ROM also has specially trained facilitators who offer guided tours to help students learn about the Maya by introducing them to all aspects of the Maya people's daily lives.

To explore the history of these Maya treasures, you can book your class online at www.rom.on.ca/schools/book/?_qf_Main_BrowseActivities_display=false&sa=34899 or call 416-586-5801 ext. 1. The ROM's educational staff is happy to create custom tours that will present the connections between the Maya world and the specific curriculum of other secondary courses being taught.

The ROM is located in downtown Toronto. For other exhibits and displays that can aid in teaching courses that follow the Ontario secondary curriculum, go to the ROM website at www.rom.ca. ☺

PHOTO: JUSTIN JENNINGS



PHOTO: CONACULTA-INAH, JORGE VERTIZ



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM



PHOTO: CONACULTA-INAH, JORGE VERTIZ



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM



Clockwise from top right:

Ceramic incense-burner stand depicting the Jaguar God of the Underworld. Late Classic Period (600-900 CE) • Obsidian and cinnabar ear spools with incised glyphs. Early Classic Period (250–600 CE) • ROM exhibition curator Dr. Justin Jennings and ROM crew in 2011, ascending the steps from Pakal's tomb, in the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque • Jade, shell and obsidian funerary mask. Early Classic Period (250-600 CE) • Overview of the archaeological site of Palenque. Late Classic Period (600-900 CE)

Keeping you in the loop

Reviews, conferences, PD opportunities and other items of interest

BOOK REVIEWS

15 Ways to ZAP a Bully!

By Jackie Humans

Legwork Team Publishing, 2010

23 pages, \$14.50

Reviewed by Michele McCleave-Kennedy

This book, *15 Ways to ZAP a Bully!*, uses both practical and silly anecdotes to discuss the serious problem of bullying in our schools. The author explains that bullying should never be solved by using violence. Her strategies, illustrated by anecdotes, can be used when the bullying is emotional or verbal. Physical bullying should be reported immediately.

I read this book with a group of Grade 8 students. The students felt the book was best suited for children Grade 5 and up because of the language and illustrations. Some students felt the illustrations were too scary for younger children and that young children might see some of the bullies as adults as depicted in the illustrations.

My students felt that “#1 Spy on the Bully,” “#5 Look Bored” and “#7 Call the Bully the Wrong Name” could be useful strategies. The Grade 8s who had been bullied said they wouldn’t feel confident enough to “#12 Flirt with the Bully” or “#13 Trick Them with Words.” From an adult point of view this may seem to be a viable alternative; however, my students felt they would be too intimidated to engage in a conversation. The students felt that “#15 Put it in Writing” was the most important point made in the book. The author suggests documenting What, Where, When and Who witnessed it.

This information could then accurately keep track of the number of incidents.

The author’s hope is that students can choose a few strategies that are useful to them. Certainly, the elementary students I spoke with felt that several would indeed be helpful.

Michele McCleave-Kennedy is an Educational Assistant in District 2, Algoma, and a member of the Educational Services Committee.

15 Ways to ZAP a Bully!

De Jackie Humans

Legwork Team Publishing, 2010

23 pages, 14,50 \$

Critique de Michele McCleave-Kennedy



Le livre intitulé *15 Ways to ZAP a Bully* a recours à des anecdotes à la fois pratiques et amusantes pour aborder le problème sérieux de l’intimidation à l’école. L’auteure explique que l’intimidation ne doit jamais se résoudre par la violence. Ses stratégies, illustrées par des anecdotes, peuvent être utilisées lorsque l’intimidation est émotionnelle ou verbale. Les actes d’intimidation physique, quant à eux, doivent être signalés immédiatement.

J’ai lu ce livre en compagnie d’un groupe d’élèves de 8^e année. Ils l’ont trouvé mieux adapté aux enfants de 5^e année à cause du niveau de langue et des illustrations. Certains élèves ont trouvé les illustrations trop effrayantes pour les plus jeunes et estiment qu’elles pourraient leur donner à penser que certains des auteurs d’actes d’intimidation sont des adultes.

De l’avis de mes élèves, les stratégies

n° 1 « Épier l’auteur d’actes d’intimidation », n° 5 « Avoir l’air de s’ennuyer » et n° 7 « Donner un sobriquet à l’auteur d’actes d’intimidation » peuvent être utiles. Les élèves de 8^e année victimes d’intimidation ont déclaré ne pas se sentir assez à l’aise pour tenter la stratégie n° 12 « Flirter avec l’auteur d’actes d’intimidation » ou n° 13 « Le piéger par des mots ». Du point de vue d’un adulte, cela peut paraître viable, mais mes élèves pensent qu’ils seraient trop intimidés pour engager la conversation. Selon eux, la stratégie n° 15 « Décrire l’acte par écrit » est la plus importante de toutes. L’auteure suggère en effet de mettre par écrit le nom des auteurs d’actes d’intimidation, de décrire ces actes, de préciser où et quand ils se sont produits et d’indiquer qui en a été témoin. Ces indications pourraient permettre de déterminer précisément le nombre d’incidents.

L’auteure espère que les élèves pourront puiser dans son ouvrage quelques stratégies utiles à leur cas. Il est certain que les élèves du niveau élémentaire à qui j’ai parlé ont trouvé plusieurs d’entre elles très utiles.

Michele McCleave-Kennedy est aide-enseignante au District 2, Algoma, et membre du Comité des services éducatifs.

Dear Bully:

Seventy Authors Tell Their Stories

Edited by Megan Kelley Hall

& Carrie Jones

Harper Collins, 2011

384 pages, \$19.99

Reviewed by David Roberts

Have you ever been in the situation where someone has said something to you, or done something to you, and you’ve walked away but then later thought, “I should have said this” or “I wish I’d done that”? Seldom does it happen that we get a second chance. *Dear Bully* is a compilation of 70 stories from 70 different authors, edited by Megan Kelley Hall and Carrie Jones. These stories are really messages to their former bullies; the authors get to say what they always wanted to say or what they

now choose to say after much reflection.

The authors take us back to their childhoods and they share their real-life experiences. They tell us how they were bullied, how it felt to be bullied and how their lives have been shaped from the experience. Some of the stories are raw and gripping. Some make you shudder as you read them, and you shake your head at the insensitivity, while at the same time you may be reminded of a similar experience of yours or a friend's. They provide helpful insights into the complicated relationship that exists between the bully and the bullied.

Not all of the authors, though, dwell only on the negatives of their experiences. Some refer to a growing sense of self as they processed what had happened to them as a child. Some indicate they have a better understanding of what truly matters in life. In fact, in some of the letters, they almost seem to be thanking their bullies (though certainly not condoning their actions) for making them who they have become.

The book is an amazing retrospective. Everyone who has lived through childhood knows of situations similar to the ones presented in *Dear Bully*. We readily identify with that awful feeling: were they just teasing me or were they bullying me? Why am I being excluded? Why is it that I was their best friend yesterday but today, they are laughing with others about me?

This book is a wonderful resource for educators. It gives us a way to open up conversations that we feel are important to have with a class. Most of the stories are only two to five pages long and so are easily read in a few minutes, and provide a nice framework for a class discussion. Given the recent introduction of anti-bullying legislation, there are many such conversations that are necessary to let the victims know they have rights and to make it clear to the bullies that what they are doing is not acceptable.

David Roberts is a teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge, and a member of the Educational Services Committee.

Dear Bully:

Seventy Authors Tell Their Stories

Publié sous la direction de

Megan Kelley Hall et de Carrie Jones

[Harper Collins, 2011](#)

[384 pages, 19,99 \\$](#)

[Critique de David Roberts](#)

Vous est-il déjà arrivé ceci : Vous êtes la cible des propos ou des actes d'une personne... Cependant, sur le moment, vous décidez tout simplement de vous éloigner. Plus tard, vous pensez : « J'aurais dû lui répondre ou réagir autrement... »? Il nous arrive rarement d'avoir une deuxième chance. L'ouvrage intitulé *Dear Bully* est une compilation de 70 lettres rédigées par



70 auteurs et publiées sous la direction de Megan Kelley Hall et de Carrie Jones. Ces anecdotes sont en fait des messages adressés aux personnes qui ont autrefois intimidés les auteurs, ceux-ci trouvant enfin l'occasion de leur dire ce qu'ils ont toujours voulu ou choisissent alors de dire après mûre réflexion.

Les auteurs nous replongent dans leur enfance pour nous faire part de leurs expériences personnelles. Ils décrivent comment ils ont été victimes d'actes d'intimidation et comment leur vie a été façonnée par ces expériences. Certaines de ces anecdotes sont crues et prenantes, d'autres vous font frémir. Une telle insensibilité vous fait réagir tout en étant à même de vous rappeler votre propre expérience ou celle de l'un de vos amis. Ces anecdotes sont utiles pour décortiquer la relation compliquée qui se noue entre l'auteur d'actes d'intimidation et la victime.

Les auteurs ne s'attardent cependant pas tous sur les conséquences négatives de leurs expériences. Certains parlent de l'accroissement de leur autonomie après avoir réfléchi à ce qui leur était arrivé lorsqu'ils étaient enfant. D'autres affirment avoir mieux compris ce qui compte vraiment dans la vie. En fait, dans certaines des lettres, les auteurs semblent presque remercier leurs agresseurs (sans toutefois, bien entendu, admettre leurs actes) pour les avoir poussés à devenir ce qu'ils sont aujourd'hui.

Cet ouvrage est une rétrospective sidérante. Nous avons tous été des enfants un jour et nous rappelons de situations similaires à celles que présente *Dear Bully*. Nous comprenons facilement ce sentiment terrible : « Est-ce qu'ils ont seulement voulu me taquiner ou était-ce de l'intimidation? Pourquoi suis-je exclu? Hier encore, j'étais leur meilleur ami et aujourd'hui, ils se moquent de moi. Pourquoi? »

En tant qu'éducateurs, cet ouvrage est précieux, car il nous permet d'engager une conversation sur un thème qu'il nous semble important d'aborder en classe. La plupart de ces anecdotes font entre deux et cinq pages et peuvent être lues en quelques minutes – une entrée en matière tout à fait appropriée pour une discussion en classe. Ce genre de conversations est rendu nécessaire par la nouvelle législation anti-intimidation, pour montrer aux victimes qu'elles ont des droits et faire clairement apparaître aux auteurs de tels actes que leurs agissements sont inacceptables.

David Roberts est enseignant au District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge, et membre du Comité des services éducatifs.

Behind Our Doors: A Memoir of Esther Warmerdam as told to William Butt

[The Althouse Press, 2011](#)

[191 pages, \\$32.95](#)

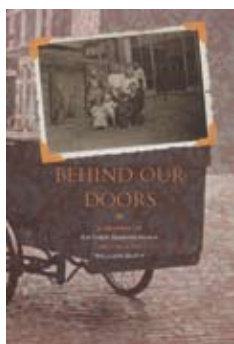
[Reviewed by Clint Lovell](#)

“In most of the stories of wartime, children rarely count. But children have to live with the memories longer than the



older generation.” *Behind Our Doors: A Memoir of Esther Warmerdam as told to William Butt* gives voice to teenaged Esther Warmerdam—one of 12 children in a Dutch Christian family that risked their lives to save over 200 Jews from the Nazis. Author William Butt tells Esther’s story of danger, decency, joy and tragedy through the eyes of a 13-year-old child who experiences her world shrinking under Nazi occupation.

Mourning the death of their infant daughter, Esther’s parents resolve to save the lives of others. This requires the family to live a tense double life. Newly installed doors close the front yard to prying eyes and a layer of gravel brings warning of boots approaching. Father arrives pedal-



ling a bicycle with a box trailer. He lifts the cover of pedlar’s goods and out steps a frightened child from the box. “This is Paul,” he would say, or “This is Max” or “This is Elly and she is going to stay for a while.” Classmates wonder why they can never come to play at the Warmerdam house. Others ask Esther why she wears the same dress all week, not knowing that the clothing and food rations are being stretched to cover hidden Jews.

Esther’s memories are vivid. Local girls are killed in an air raid. A young boy, Esther’s first crush, falls to machine gun bullets. A toddler must surrender his beloved pet goat to the table of the occupiers. Her father stands helplessly before her, a German soldier’s rifle held at his head. Heavy soldiers’ boots stomp through the house while a Jewish child hides above, trembling against the chimney. And al-

ways, the constant hunger.

Yet the portrayal of the German soldiers is not all negative, and that adds to the poignancy of the memoir. The Germans camped on the other side of their backyard fence share their scant rations with the children. Ordinary German soldiers often visited the house. Tears fill a soldier’s eyes as he plays with a Warmerdam toddler, noting that he has missed his own daughter’s second birthday.

Finally, in May 1945, “the door of Heaven opened and Canadian soldiers marched through.” For the Warmerdam family, it is a time of joy and reunion but for the Jewish people, peace reveals the horrible fate of their families.

Behind Our Doors is an exciting and inspirational story ideal for Grade 10. Despite the ever-present danger, young readers will identify with the anger, frustrations and free-spirited fun expressed by Esther, an ordinary teenager in extraordinary times. The Althouse Press also publishes a teacher’s guide for this book

Clint Lovell teaches history at Eastview Secondary School in District 17, Simcoe. He also currently serves on the Governing Council of the Ontario College of Teachers.

WEBSITE REVIEW

LD Online

www.ldonline.org

LD Online is a great website that provides a better understanding of students with learning disabilities. The site is organized into several sections—Getting Started, LD Topics, Multimedia, Especially for..., Finding Help, Learning Store and Features—to help teachers, educational workers, parents and students find information and resources about learning disabilities.

In the section for educators, there are articles and resources on memory tips, instructional strategies for teaching students with LD or ADHD, addressing students with problem behaviour and much, much more.

Another section I really found important is the LD News section. It features three or four newspaper and magazine articles each week about current issues in special education. There are articles about new education laws being changed in many states and countries, for example, plus stories about students who have made it through the education system with a learning disability or about celebrities who have dyslexia or ADD or other learning disabilities.

Another great feature on LD Online is the Personal Stories section. Here some famous people and mostly not so famous people describe their experiences with learning disabilities, either their own or those of a relative. For example, Henry Winkler writes about having dyslexia, and Kathleen Turner writes about finding out that her son has ADHD. There is even a submission from a guy in Ontario whose story compares being small and trying out for the Trent Varsity Rugby team with getting through his classes with a learning disability. (Okay, I wrote the story.)

What is really great about LD Online is that it will help any teacher or educational worker be more successful in helping students with learning disabilities in their classes.

Wayne McFarlane is a teacher at Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.

CONFERENCES

April 17, 2012 (revised date)

[Region 4 \(Toronto\)](#)

May 4, 2012

[Region 1 \(Thunder Bay\)](#)

OSSTF/FEESO Regional Symposia

Tools For Wellness: Managing the Stress in Our Lives

Outils pour le mieux-être : Gérer le stress dans nos vies

This year we are offering two great workshops to help you learn the tools you need to handle stress.



- **Keys to Financial Wellness—Educators Financial Group:** In our 90-minute Financial Wellness Workshop we'll provide you with the information you need to help you feel more in control of your financial situation—helping you reduce stress and build a happier and more financially secure future.
- **Stress Management Through Humour:** Sometimes we feel overwhelmed with stress. We become tired and lose all our enthusiasm. Everything begins to look grey! Andrée Jetté, a charismatic speaker with a passion for neuroscience and quantum physics, will present effective and simple ways to let go of your stress, build back your power and find joy again! She will help us to identify the four types of stress—physical, intellectual, emotional and situational—and offer simple, practical tools for dealing with stress while providing a humorous look at life.

Registration details will be posted at www.osstf.on.ca prior to each event.

March 29–31, 2012

[Listen to the music, share the stories, live the culture](#)

[Écoutez la musique, partagez les histoires, vivez la culture](#)

[Ontario Modern Languages Teachers Association \(OMLTA\)](#)

[DoubleTree by Hilton — Toronto Airport Hotel](#)

As soil, however rich it may be, cannot be productive without cultivation, so a mind without culture can never produce good fruit. The OMLTA spring conference invites you to take the time to choose the sessions that will enhance your teaching of culture in the classroom: Listen to the music, share your stories and live the culture! Keynote speaker Jowi Taylor will speak to the culture he has been sharing across Canada with Voyageur, the Six String Nation guitar. For more information and to register go to www.omlta.org.

April 15–17, 2012

[We Can Cope!](#)

[Ontario Association for Students At Risk](#)
[Holiday Inn Toronto Airport](#)

This 24th annual conference will feature workshops that address issues of mental health and are designed to meet the needs of professionals—teachers, child and youth workers, educational assistants, aboriginal educators and mental-health workers—who work with at-risk students, as well as vendor and publisher displays. For full details and conference registration information, visit www.oasar.org.

April 22–24, 2012

[The Spirit of COOPeration](#)
[Ontario Cooperative Education Association \(OCEA\)](#)
[Sheraton Parkway Toronto](#)

OCEA's 2012 Spring Conference will offer workshops to improve standards of professional service and promote the development of Cooperative Education, Work Experience, School-Work Transition and OYAP Programs, and to assist in members' professional growth. For more information, visit www.ocea.on.ca.

April 27, 2012

[Shaw Festival Spring Teachers Day](#)
[Niagara on the Lake](#)

Interactive drama and theatre workshops led by theatre and education professionals. Registration fee includes lunch, refreshments and parking. An evening performance of *Ragtime* is optional. Registration: \$92.50. Details in the spring issue of the *Teachers Companion* newsletter. To subscribe: education@shawfest.com.

May 3–5, 2012

[EcoLinks 2012](#)
[Ontario Society for Environmental Education](#)
[Gzowski College, Trent University, Peterborough](#)

The 63rd annual conference will help teachers to integrate environmental education in every subject in every grade. Keynote speakers are Bruce Lourie, president of The Ivey Foundation and best-selling author, and Leora Berman, who been leading and developing large-scale ecological projects for non-profit groups and governments for almost 15 years. For more information, visit www.osee.ca.

May 10–12, 2012

[Targeting Your Program](#)
[Ontario Council for Technology Education](#)
[Delta Meadowvale Resort & Conference Centre, Mississauga ON](#)

This conference, for science and technology teachers K–8 and Technology teachers 9–12, consists of workshops and seminars organized around the conference theme, and a vendors' market that focuses on literature and software, supplies, materials, tools and machinery specific to technology education. Keynote speaker Vivien Wharton-Szatan, Ontario Ministry of Labour, will present information on the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as it relates to schools and what to expect when an inspector visits your workplace, as well as an update on the changes to the legislation under Bill 160. For more information and online registration, visit www.octe.on.ca.

May 10–12, 2012

[OAME 2012 CON.NET WORKS](#)
[Ontario Association for Mathematics Education](#)
[St. Lawrence College, Kingston ON](#)

Join us at what will be an amazing OAME conference in Kingston. Great speakers include Dan Meyer, Ben Hazzard, Marian Small, Richard Epp, Rena Upitis, Joan McDuff and Institute of Child Studies teachers. All featured speeches, sessions and exhibitors are under the same roof. Registration opens February 15, 2012. For more information, please visit www.OAME2012.ca.



OTHER PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Overcoming Obstacles in Education 2012 Educational Services Conference Call for Presenters

The Provincial Educational Services Committee is hosting its next biennial conference—"Overcoming Obstacles in Education/Surmonter les obstacles en éducation"—at the Hilton Suites Toronto/Markham Conference Centre on November 15–16, 2012. This conference will offer best strategies to identify and address the many obstacles faced by those working in education.

We are currently inviting proposals for workshops that highlight new and innovative responses to the challenges faced in elementary, secondary and university settings. All educational workers and related professionals are invited to submit

a workshop application form relating to the theme of the conference. Suggested topics include Aboriginal/First Nations/Indigenous Issues, Adult Education, Attendance, Bullying & Harassment, Community Involvement, Funding, Mental Illness & Addiction, Parent Involvement, Progressive Discipline, Special Education and Student Success.

If you have a workshop topic that you believe should be considered, please submit your fully completed application form to Karen Metherall, Conference Coordinator, Educational Services Department, no later than April 6, 2012.

You can download the application form from the OSSTF/FEESO website at www.osstf.on.ca/ESconference2012. For more information, please contact Suzette Clark, Department Head, or Karen Metherall at 416-751-8300/1-800-267-7867.

ABCs of Mental Health

www.hincksdellcrest.org/ABC/

This website offers early-warning signs, prevention and intervention strategies for educators working with youth. Using details about a variety of mental-health concerns and behaviours, the site provides summaries of green-light, yellow-light and red-light behaviour patterns along with useful strategies for the education worker when addressing a variety of presented behaviours. Resources cover concerns and behaviours for youth from Early Childhood (age 3) through Early Adolescence (age 14). The inclusion of a Behaviours Map provides education workers with a quick reference guide to help identify the behavioural area(s) a student may be exhibiting. The site is currently under peer-review and provides opportunities for education workers to review the content. ☺



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www.uwindsor.ca



Last word

by Ken Coran, President

Mot de la fin

par Ken Coran, Président

Preparing for bargaining 2012

A team effort

The 2012 round of bargaining. The global and provincial economy. The global and provincial attacks on public sector workers. These are the topics that are starting to dominate worksite conversations, acting as catalysts for member discussions about their concerns and their speculation about what lies ahead for their students, the education system and themselves.

Local chief negotiators and negotiating teams have capitalized on these discussions and have been surveying members to collect input about bargaining goals. In addition, many local Presidents have begun worksite visits to highlight the current realities and challenges we may face as we get closer to the August 31 expiry date of our collective agreements in the elementary and secondary sector and also those soon to expire in the university sector.

We need to be clear that this round of bargaining will present challenges in this current fiscal climate. Consequently, we know finances will influence a significant portion of negotiating priorities, and there are three factors that will have a direct impact on bargaining:

1. Recommendations from the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services (the Drummond report);
2. The Ontario Budget due to be released in March;
3. The Grants for Students' Needs (GSNs), which determine employers' operating budgets.

OSSTF/FEESO provincially has been carefully preparing for the 2012 round of bargaining since the last round of negotiations ended. We have been gathering information from all sources as well as monitoring and analyzing revenue forecasts, economic outlooks and budgets. We have also analyzed the input received from negotiating surveys, from local leaders and from meetings with members. The information was presented to a joint meeting of Provincial Executive and Provincial Negotiators on February 1 to ensure we are fully prepared to effectively and strategically deal with the issues raised. We understand that members want us to focus on the day-to-day challenges they face in doing their jobs, as well as the related concerns they carry home with them at the end of the work day.

Provincial Executive members and staff have continued to meet with many other stakeholder groups in order to remain

La préparation aux négociations de 2012

Un travail d'équipe

LA ronde de négociation de 2012. La conjoncture économique mondiale et provinciale. Les attaques menées à l'échelon provincial et mondial à l'encontre des travailleurs du secteur public. Ce sont des sujets qui commencent à prédominer dans les conversations entre collègues et agissent comme des catalyseurs sur les discussions des membres lorsqu'ils expriment leurs préoccupations et leurs suppositions sur ce que l'avenir leur réserve, ainsi qu'à leurs élèves et au système éducatif.

À l'échelon local, les négociatrices et les négociateurs en chef, tout comme les équipes de négociation, ont tiré parti de ces discussions et interrogé leurs membres pour recueillir leur avis sur les objectifs de ces négociations. En outre, plusieurs présidents locaux ont commencé à visiter les lieux de travail pour faire ressortir les faits et les défis actuels auxquels nous pouvons être confrontés alors que le 31 août, date d'expiration des conventions collectives des secteurs élémentaire et secondaire, approche, tout comme approche la date d'expiration des conventions collectives du secteur universitaire.

Soyons clairs : cette ronde de négociation présentera des défis compte tenu de la situation financière actuelle. Par conséquent, nous savons que les finances influenceront la majeure partie des priorités de négociation et que trois facteurs auront un effet direct sur les négociations :

1. Les recommandations de la Commission sur la réforme des services publics de l'Ontario (rapport Drummond)
2. Le budget ontarien qui sera rendu public au mois de mars
3. Les Subventions pour les besoins des élèves (SBE) qui déterminent le budget de fonctionnement des employeurs


À l'échelon provincial, OSSTF/FEESO prépare soigneusement la ronde de négociation de 2012, et ce depuis la fin de la ronde précédente. Nous avons recueilli de l'information provenant de toutes les sources, tout en surveillant et en analysant les prévisions des recettes, les perspectives économiques et les budgets. Nous avons également analysé les données provenant des sondages sur les négociations, des dirigeants locaux et de réunions avec des membres. Cette information a été présentée lors de la réunion conjointe de l'Exécutif provincial et des négociatrices et négociateurs provinciaux du 1^{er} février afin d'être fin



current about the fast-changing political and economic climate. They include the Minister of Education and staff, the Minister of Finance and staff, the NDP and Tory leaders and opposition critics, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, as well as a myriad of OSSTF/FEESO partners in labour. With the uncertainty surrounding the bargaining process, one set of negotiations can produce a ripple effect upon OSSTF/FEESO bargaining and so we must remain well aware of any developments within the education sector and in the broader labour sector.

Local leaders and chief negotiators are also being updated and receiving additional training in preparation for bargaining.

Our strength, derived from the
commitment and dedication of
members, is our hallmark.



Our extended Collective Bargaining Conference, held February 10-11, featured workshops and sector discussions reviewing specific issues and effective strategies. The Teacher/Occasional Teacher and Support Staff Ad Hoc Advisory work groups met on January 12 to identify priority bargaining issues as well as categorize those issues more suited for central table/provincial discussions and those more appropriately dealt with at local bargaining tables. When information about the bargaining process is received, the Provincial Executive has made a commitment to bring in Bargaining Unit Presidents and Chief Negotiators.

We do not know what form the bargaining process will take as of yet, but we have been preparing for anything from totally central bargaining to totally local negotiations. Our strategy and tactics are adaptable. Together we will be able to meet the challenges that arise from when and how bargaining unfolds, no matter the format.

OSSTF/FEESO's success in bargaining will be determined by you, the member. In order to achieve the best results, you must be informed and understand the facts and realities surrounding bargaining and you must be involved. That is how OSSTF/FEESO achieves its goals. We plan, prepare, inform and involve members and then time the execution of our plan for when it will be most effective. Our strength, derived from the commitment and dedication of members, is our hallmark. That's why we can, and why we will, fight for all our members and ensure they are treated fairly in this next round of bargaining. ☺

prêts à traiter les problèmes soulevés de manière efficace et stratégique. Nous comprenons que les membres souhaitent que nous nous concentrons sur les défis quotidiens de leur travail ainsi que sur les préoccupations connexes qu'ils ramènent chez eux après leur journée de travail.

Les membres de l'Exécutif provincial et le personnel ont poursuivi leurs rencontres avec de nombreux autres intervenants pour rester au fait de la conjoncture économique et politique en évolution constante. Ils ont notamment rencontré la ministre de l'Éducation et son personnel, le ministre des Finances et son personnel, des dirigeants du NPD et du PCC, ainsi que des porte-parole de l'opposition et de l'Ontario Public School Boards' Association, tout comme un grand nombre de partenaires syndicaux d'OSSTF/FEESO. Étant donné les incertitudes quant au processus de négociation, un seul ensemble de négociation peut retentir sur le cours des négociations d'OSSTF/FEESO et c'est pourquoi nous devons demeurer au fait de toute évolution dans le secteur de l'éducation comme dans le secteur du travail en général.

En outre, dans la perspective des négociations, à l'échelon local, nous informons les dirigeants et les négociatrices et négociateurs en chef et assurons leur formation complémentaire. La Conférence de négociation collective prolongée, qui a eu lieu les 10 et 11 février, comprenait des ateliers et des discussions sectorielles visant à analyser les problèmes particuliers et à mettre au point des stratégies efficaces. Les groupes de travail consultatifs des enseignants/enseignants suppléants et du personnel de soutien se sont réunis le 12 janvier pour identifier les questions de négociation prioritaires et pour classer par catégorie les questions qui relevaient plutôt de tables centrales ou de discussions provinciales et celles qui devaient plutôt être traitées lors des réunions des tables de négociation locales. Lorsqu'il aura reçu les renseignements sur le processus de négociation, l'Exécutif provincial a pris l'engagement de réunir les présidences des unités de négociation et les négociatrices et négociateurs en chef.

Si nous ne connaissons pas encore la forme que prendra processus de négociation, nous nous sommes toutefois préparés à tout, des négociations totalement centralisées aux négociations entièrement locales. Notre stratégie et nos tactiques peuvent être adaptées. Ensemble, nous serons en mesure de relever les défis dès que le processus de négociation sera connu, quel qu'en soit le format.

En matière de négociation, le succès d'OSSTF/FEESO tient avant tout à vous, en tant que membres. Pour obtenir les meilleurs résultats possibles, vous devez être informés des faits et de la réalité des négociations, tout comme vous devez y participer. C'est ainsi qu'OSSTF/FEESO atteint ses objectifs. Nous planifions, préparons, informons et faisons participer les membres pour ensuite déterminer le calendrier d'exécution de notre plan afin qu'il donne les meilleurs résultats. Notre force, qui provient de l'engagement et du dévouement de nos membres, est ce qui nous caractérise. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous pouvons – et allons – nous battre au nom de tous nos membres pour qu'ils soient traités équitablement lors de la prochaine ronde de négociation. ☺



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