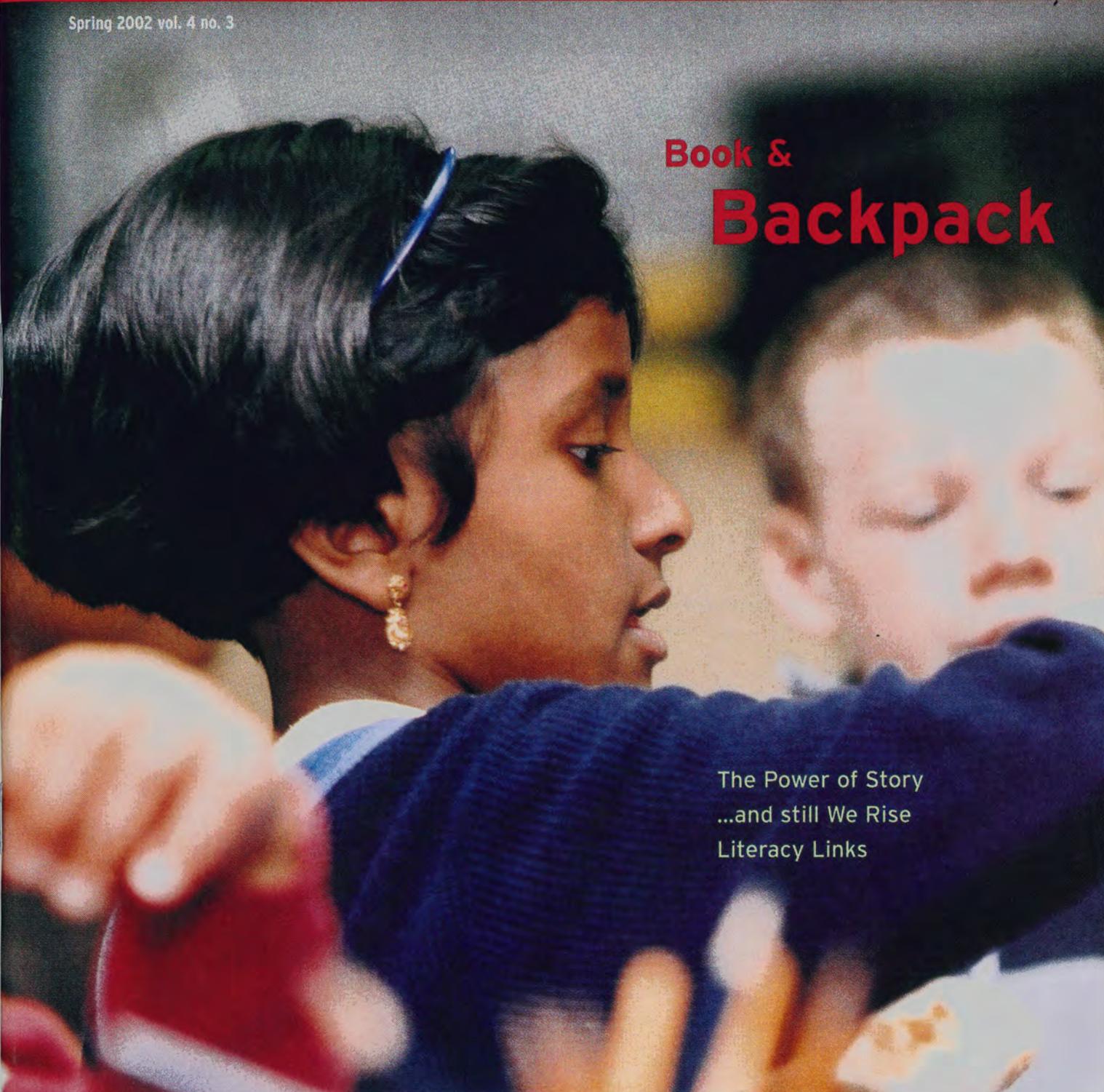


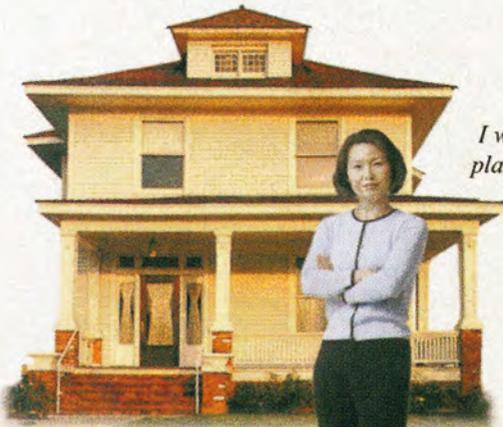
# voice

Spring 2002 vol. 4 no. 3



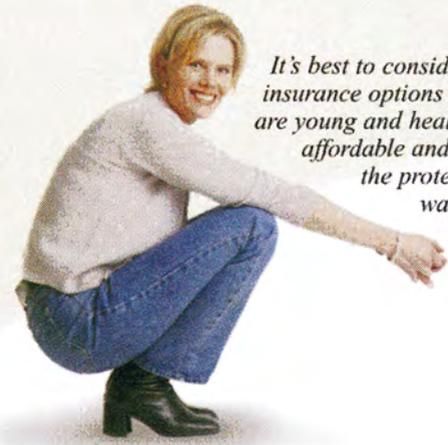
**Book &  
Backpack**

The Power of Story  
...and still We Rise  
Literacy Links

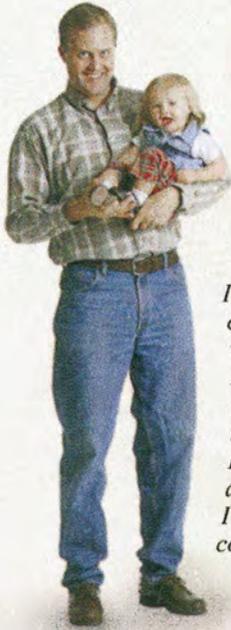


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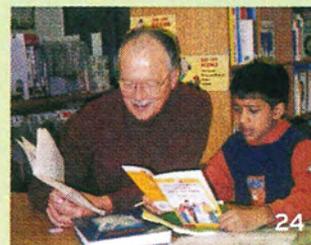
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Toronto grade 1 teacher **Jim Giles** is currently on exchange in Melbourne, Australia, where he is teaching a grade 5/6 class. He has been a frequent contributor to federation publications.



For the past five years, **Ruth Kohut** was a computer consultant with the Lambton Kent DSB. She is currently vice-principal of Lambton Centennial Central School, Petrolia.



**Seema Mehta** is a teacher with the Toronto DSB. After piloting "Literacy links" with twenty grade 4 students, she saw reading scores soar.



**John S. Taylor** is superintendent of the Lancaster County District School District in Lancaster, South Carolina. His parody on teacher testing has amused educators across North America.

LEFT TO RIGHT: **Sherry Ramrattan Smith**, ETFO staff, **Pat Wright**, Niagara; **Margaret Neigh**, Waterloo; **Carol Brown**, Algoma; **Catherine Pawis**, Toronto; **Joan Beecroft**, Bluewater; were all members of the writing team that created *The Power of Story*.



**Charlotte Morgan** is the Editor of the ETFO *Voice*.

### COVER PHOTO

By **Rick Matthews**

# voice

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3

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Canadian Education Press Association  
Indexed in the Canadian Educational  
Index/Répertoire canadien sur l'éducation  
ISSN: 1481-4072

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### "What Can I Do?"



Phyllis Benedict,  
President, ETFO

Recently, a member asked "What is ETFO doing to make sure there is not a third term for the Ontario Progressive Conservative party?" The question is especially timely for, as I write this article, we are ten days away from anointing the next premier and leader of the Ontario Tory party.

The only conclusion one can draw from the jousting of the five contenders is that this has not been a "tournament of champions." We should never forget the events that have happened on their watch:

privatization of cancer treatments; Walkerton; 60-hour work week; reduction of health and safety standards; \$2 billion less in public education; tax credit for private schools – the list goes on.

The Tory agenda has not altered. Replacing the leader will simply put a new face on the same old policies.

The larger question remains. Is the Ontario electorate ready for change?

Provincially, ETFO has continued to work with other groups to help lay the foundation for change. The opposition parties regularly hear from us about solutions to improve public education. We assisted with the development of the Ontario Federation of Labour's "The People's Charter" and the Ontario Coalition for Social

Justice's "Unfit to Govern" campaign.

We continue to be involved in "Women-Our Votes Count" strategies. We will join with other partners to identify and assist ridings where the Tories are vulnerable.

All the provincial strategies and actions will not realize the success we want unless every member answers the question "What can I do?"

At the very least, exercise your right to vote. Get involved. Work in a riding office; distribute pamphlets; put up lawn signs; talk to friends and family; drive voters to the polls.

The changes we want and Ontario deserves can only come from action. Your provincial office is ready – are you?

## FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### Advisories to Members



Gene Lewis,  
General Secretary,  
ETFO

Over the years, teachers and educational workers have achieved significant gains. These have been won through solidarity and unity of purpose. When united in a cause, we have shown both school boards and governments that we will fight for what is right.

Yet, perhaps because we work with young children, or perhaps because we prefer to avoid conflict, elementary

teachers have not always been taken seriously. A quick look at the gap in funding between elementary and secondary students proves the point.

The government currently funds the elementary panel at \$751 per student less than it pays per secondary student. Imagine the difference we could make if the government increased funding for elementary students by this amount.

Elementary teachers' quest for respect continues. ETFO now sends advisories to members on key issues. Currently in force are member advisories related to suspension of students, criminal record checks, extra-curricular activities, mandatory

recertification, EQAO marking, the Ontario teacher qualifying test, and mandatory recertification. All these issues impact on our professional integrity.

To ensure our concerns are not ignored or dismissed by the government and school boards, we must continue to stand together. It is not always easy to take a strong stand. However, it is always necessary if we are to make gains for our profession and the students we teach. Please ask your ETFO steward to share all advisories that come to the school and stand with your colleagues on these and other issues.

Thank you to all those who responded to my request for reviewers. Although there are not quite enough materials to go around at the moment, books and CDs continue to arrive from publishers. I hope to send everyone who has been in touch with me something to review in the near future. My desk is much clearer now!

Each spring, ETFO surveys 1,000 members on a random basis. Last year's survey told us that 87 percent of members read *Voice* regularly. We also learned that most readers turn to curriculum-related articles first. Of course, the strength of these features is that they are written by members for members and are relevant to the work you do every day.

If you find *Voice* useful and have something you would like to share, why not consider writing an article yourself? Many wonderful things are happening in classrooms across the province. Your program could inspire your colleagues elsewhere. If you want to talk it over, don't hesitate to call me at 416.962.3836 or 1.888.838.3836 extension 2339 or email [cmorgan@etfo.org](mailto:cmorgan@etfo.org). With four issues a year, deadlines are flexible.

You may be interested to know that two of *Voice's* most prominent advertisers, OTIP and Teacher's Life, have withdrawn their advertising from the Ontario College of Teachers publication *Professionally Speaking*. They have done so to support ETFO's campaign against mandatory recertification.

**Charlotte Morgan**  
[cmorgan@etfo.org](mailto:cmorgan@etfo.org)

## On Location Report

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Event Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Event or Award Description \_\_\_\_\_

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You can also reach Members' Records by telephone at 416.962.3836 or 1.888.838.3836 or by e-mail to [jpoints@etfo.org](mailto:jpoints@etfo.org)

### Mathieu Da Costa Challenge Award

**Michael Ratushniak**, a grade 6 student at Earl Beatty Public School, Toronto, was one of nine students from across Canada who travelled to Ottawa in February to receive an award in recognition of Black History Month. The award is sponsored by Canadian Heritage and administered by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). Michael's submission was an artistic representation of issues around erasing prejudice.

The Mathieu Da Costa Challenge, held annually, invites students aged nine to 18 to submit an essay, short story, poem or piece of artwork celebrating the contributions of people of Aboriginal and diverse ethnocultural origins who built this country. This year, a record 563 entries were submitted.

Michael's classroom teacher, **Cherie Ling**, reports that the school's teacher-librarian, **Vivian Bradbury**, had asked the staff to recommend students who displayed an interest in equity issues. A small group of students was selected and assembled in the library. This group worked during school time on essays or artistic representations on an equity theme.

Michael built a collage/sculpture depicting the Chinese immigrant experience with the building of the Canadian railways. It shows

Canada being joined by railroad tracks, with captions such as "Whites \$1.50 per day. Chinese \$1.00 per day." Michael's advice to his peers who may want to enter the Mathieu Da Costa Challenge Award next year? "Keep your hopes up and try as hard as you can."

### Internet Resource

**Laurie Bloomfield**, a grade 4 social studies, science and junior and intermediate core French teacher with the Greater Essex DSB, has developed an internet site for educators. Called *Educators' E-Source*, the site offers very practical, hands-on materials that are tied to the Ontario curriculum. This is well worth a visit at <http://members.tripod.com/66inc/IEAEnter.html>.

### Reaching Out to Afghanistan

Dunnville students are engaged in an on-going campaign to fundraise for the Nazooana School. The school is located in a camp for Afghani refugees and is the only high school for girls in Peshawar, Pakistan. The campaign at Dunnville Public School was initiated by kindergarten teacher **Adriana deRuyter** following a visit to the school by author Deb Ellis.

Once a month this year, each class at Dunnville has fundraised to support the Nazooana School. As of early March, the staff and

200 students had raised close to \$900 through bake sales, white elephant sales, draws and other activities. All the money raised goes directly to the Nazooana School through Canadians in Support of Afghan Women.

The Dunnville students have heard directly from their new friends in Peshawar. Letters, written in English, describe a challenging curriculum that includes geometry, science, math and literature. The Afghani girls write that they are getting an education so they can go back and help to build-up their country. The connection between the two schools was featured in *The Hamilton Spectator*.

### Local helps Afghanistan

In 2000, EFTO Halton used its participation in the World March of Women to highlight the plight of women in Afghanistan. Since then, it has distributed Deb Ellis's book *The Breadwinner* to all elementary school libraries in the DSB. The book tells the story of an Afghan girl who disguises herself as a boy and works to support her family. Halton continues to fundraise on behalf of Canadians in Support of Afghan Women, with donations going to women in the refugee camps. The local is selling cards and tiny squares of burqua material as fundraisers. Halton also plans to bring several

resolutions on Afghanistan to EFTO's Annual Meeting in August.

For more information on Canadians in Support of Afghan Women, please email [savis@savisofhalton.org](mailto:savis@savisofhalton.org).

### Renfrew School Counsellor Nominated for Premier's Award

**Frank Rosbottom**, a school support counsellor at Rockwood Public School, Pembroke, was nominated for the Premier's Award for Graduates of Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. Each year, the award celebrates individuals who have distinguished themselves in their careers and made exceptional contributions to their communities.

As a School Support Counsellor, Frank assists children in need, both behaviourally and emotionally. Working closely with teachers, parents and support staff, he counsels individuals and small groups as well as whole classrooms. Frank, who also does crisis intervention, is renowned for making effective use of his musical talents and integrates singing into his programs. As well, he performs with the Friends and Neighbours (FAN) Club, which uses play therapy and games and puppets. In August 2001, Frank was named EFTO's Educational Support Person of the Year.

ETFO Voice is pleased to provide "PD Notes," a column written by the ETFO Professional Development Services Staff. It introduces issues, new programs and publications.



## PD NOTES

### **ETFO's Principal's Qualification Program**

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario will be implementing the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) programs across Ontario in partnership with district school boards.

The ETFO Principal's Qualification Program

- is approved by the Ontario College of Teachers as a certified Principal's Qualification Program as required by Regulation 184/97;
- will be recognized on the Ontario College of Teachers *Certificate of Qualification* as PQP Part I and Part II for successful candidates;
- unlike some other PQP courses, will not be submitted to the Ontario College of Teachers under the Professional Learning Program for the purposes of recertification;
- provides members who oppose recertification with an alternative way of pursuing principal's qualifications;
- is recognized by the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO);
- is designed for delivery within partner district school boards;
- incorporates district school board initiatives;
- offers instructors who are selected from partner district school boards and a provincial pool;
- offers a low candidate-to-instructor ratio;
- focuses on improving student learning;
- models the characteristics of a learning organization; and
- is open to all qualified educators.

At this time, PQP courses are being planned in the following locations:

#### **Partnership with Bluewater District School Board**

Location: Meaford, Ontario. PQP Part I, August 6-16, 2002;

Part II - times and dates - check the ETFO website.

#### **Partnership with Halton District School Board**

Location: Oakville, Ontario. PQP Part I, Fall 2002 - check the ETFO website.

Part II - times and dates - check the ETFO website.

#### **Partnership with Limestone District School Board**

Location: Kingston, Ontario. PQP Part I, June/July, 2002;

Part II - times and dates - check the ETFO website.

#### **Partnership with York Region District School Board**

Location: TBA. Part I, May/June/July 2002;

Part II - times and dates - check the ETFO website.

Monitor the ETFO website, [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca) for additional information. Application forms can be downloaded from our website. Contact Colleen Lee at the provincial office if you have any questions about this exciting new program.

### **ETFO's Media Literacy Workshops**

Media literacy workshops based on ETFO's intermediate curriculum resource, *Take a Closer Look*, have been popular this year.

ETFO offers two media literacy workshops your local can access. Based on *Take a Closer Look*, one takes participants through several activities for intermediate students. The second, which is a women's only program, includes inservice on *Take a Closer Look* as well as a component designed to help female students understand and analyze violence towards women as depicted in the media. Contact Sherry Ramratten Smith at provincial office for further details.

### **ETFO's Curriculum Connections**

ETFO continues to produce high-quality curriculum resources for classroom teachers. Our newest release completes a trio of resources for the kindergarten years:

- *Observation: A focus on evaluation, planning and growth for the kindergarten learner.*
- *The Kindergarten Years: Learning Through Play.*
- *Kindergarten Matters: The importance of Kindergarten in the development of young children* (ETFO's position paper).

About to be released are the following curriculum resources:

- *Firsts – from Aboriginal Peoples to Pioneers*, a grade 3 social studies resource with an integrated focus.
- *Making Mathematics Happen*, a junior division resource, which will be followed by primary and intermediate versions.
- *The Teacher's Planning Book*, an elementary teacher's resource.

If you have suggestions for future resources or have a curriculum document you would like to have considered for Curriculum Connections, please contact Jan Moxey or Diana Tomlinson at provincial office.

### **Professional Portfolio**

Enclosed with the winter issue of *ETFO Voice* was our new resource, *A Teacher's Professional Portfolio: A Working Guide*. We would like to hear how you are using this 'guide by the side.' Also, we are seeking members who have the expertise and are interested in offering workshops across the province on the effective design and use of a professional portfolio. We plan to offer this workshop through our highly successful Presenters On The Road Program.

Contact Jan Moxey (email – [jmoxey@etfo.org](mailto:jmoxey@etfo.org)) or Diana Tomlinson (email – [dmlinson@etfo.org](mailto:dmlinson@etfo.org)) at provincial office if you have questions or something to share.

### **Curriculum Resource Partnership**

In February, the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) sent a new social studies multimedia resource to elementary schools. This resource was prepared last summer by the ILC in partnership with ETFO and OECTA. The ETFO writers were

- Grade 3 – Urban and Rural Communities: Lynn Bristoll and Marlene Foran from Peel;
- Grade 4 – Medieval Times: Danielle Honour and Darlene Landry from Toronto; and
- Grade 5 – Ancient Civilizations: Shawn Nathan and Janet Rubas from Niagara and Grand Erie respectively.

Along with their OECTA counterparts, the ETFO team led by ETFO executive staff member Jan Moxey, has created a CD ROM curriculum resource that will be useful to members.

### **Presenters On The Road**

ETFO is always seeking dynamic workshop presenters for the provincial Presenters On The Road program. If you have a successful workshop that would benefit and be of interest to your colleagues, please contact Jan Moxey for an application form. Don't delay. The 2002-2003 catalogue is created in May and June of each year. Members working with other members is what makes etfo professional development so relevant.

**COLEEN LEE, WENDY MATTHEWS,  
JIM McMAHON, JENNIFER MITCHELL,  
JAN MOXEY, NANCY WANAMAKER, SHERRY  
RAMRATTAN SMITH and DIANA TOMLINSON**  
for ETFO's Professional Development Services.

Additional information on ETFO PD Programs and Services can be obtained from [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca).

ETFO PD - "Making a Difference in the Professional Lives of Our Members."

# Book & Briefcase

## **The Issues Around Homework**

Eight years ago, when I wrote about the Book and Briefcase program, a parent in my class, Mrs. S., was concerned that her son wasn't getting enough homework:

*"I agree with the parents who want homework. Homework should be done at night. Time can always be found in one's busy schedule for homework. It seems that the hierarchy of the school dislikes giving tests and assigning homework. Sorry to say this, but some parents want daily homework for their children – try to satisfy those of us who want it ... please!" Mrs. S.*

When I was beginning my teaching career, a family friend and retired teacher often spoke about the swinging pendulum in education. I was dubious about her comments until the re-occurring issue of homework surfaced. This time, the homework debate is not about "how little" but about "too much."

Home  
and school  
partnerships  
that keep going  
and going...

By JIM GILES

# ackp ack

Phillipa Davies (2001) looked at the homework debate and asked, "When is homework just too much?"

Davies quoted Harris Cooper, professor of psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, with regard to both recent and historical research on this topic.

According to Cooper, there is no relation between time spent on homework and achievement in the upper-level elementary school grades. Later in the article he pointed to the backlash from parents who feel "resentful" about the amount of time that has to be spent helping children with homework.

Mrs. S's comments were made a decade ago, before the Tories introduced their new elementary curriculum. To achieve their objectives, the government ensured that learning expectations from intermediate grades would be downloaded to the junior grades, and junior expectations to the primary division. Of course, little or no resources, professional development or support were given to the classroom teacher.

With so many expectations in each division, many of which are developmentally inappropriate for young children, teachers have in turn passed some of the responsibility for meeting all these grade-specific expectations on to families in the form of homework. Teachers are telling families there are not enough hours in the school day to address all these expectations. Suddenly, families are crying that there is too much homework and have begun to question its validity. The pendulum has swung!

Many mothers and fathers, recalling their own childhood experiences, are witnessing the homework they did when they went to school in their child's nightly assignments. Many concerned parents view drill assignments and research projects as necessary to build discipline and reinforce the skills and concepts taught between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Some demoralized or inexperienced teachers are providing families with hours of this type of busywork. However, many elementary educators, particularly primary teachers, don't favour traditional homework assignments. Instead, these teachers

encourage activities such as reading, visiting museums and libraries, playing board games, solving word puzzles, walking, talking and storytelling.

But can such family-oriented activities be considered real work? Where are the 30 plus math questions? What about spelling lists and word exercises? Why aren't the ditto sheets coming home?

As a result of conflicting views on what homework should be, many teachers find themselves debating with family members about the function of homework. Newly amalgamated boards of education have differing or no homework policies in place.

Mrs. S. was not an exceptional parent with strong opinions. Like many others, she was often sidetracked by ill-informed "back-to-basics" ideas she picked up from the media. Mrs. S. was an advocate for her son's education but didn't understand how teachers approach reading, writing, spelling, math and learning. She wanted to help, but there was a contradiction between the way she wanted her child taught and the way in which she perceived her child was being taught. The question remained: "How can families and teachers see themselves as partners in education, when views about the value of homework and learning differ?"

With each swing of the pendulum, education undergoes dramatic shifts. School looks and sounds very different from when Mrs. S. and I were students. The introduction of computers, the internet, reading recovery, the new curriculum, provincial report cards and testing have kept teachers busy. Many continue to take courses and look for opportunities to grow professionally so as to balance politically based changes with sound pedagogical practices. Time and communication are essential if families are to become attuned to the latest teaching practices and initiatives.

### **Implementing Book and Backpack**

To address the concerns of Mrs. S. and to communicate with parents, I implemented a home-school program. Originally called Book & Briefcase, it soon became known as the Book & Backpack (or B & B for short) program.

In *Real Books for Reading*, Hart-Hewins and Wells (1990) promote the notion of an out-of-school reading program in which children share books with their families. In this program, which the authors called "Borrow a Book," children take books from school home in a special bag that contains a comment booklet. For Hart-Hewins and Wells, the program has particular significance since "...children see their parents and their teacher together on something they both feel is important."

Other teachers have also written about successful home/school programs. Their thoughts gave me the idea for Book & Backpack. In *The Writing Suitcase* by Rich (1985) and *The Writing Box* by Maloy and Edwards (1990), the idea was to fill a suitcase with writing materials to encourage language development at home. I liked the idea of having the children become actively engaged in the process of writing at home and decided to include a book to be read for homework in the backpack. Thus the evolution of Book & Backpack began.

Early in the school year, I purchased three durable backpacks. The idea of carrying materials in a "special" backpack that went home for the night was very appealing to children. Every year, the children gave the backpacks special names. In each backpack were items such as paper, pencils, markers and crayons. Along with writing and drawing materials, each child took home a book or magazine from the classroom library.

The class was organized into nine groups with three children in each group. Everyone was assigned to a specific backpack, and the backpack was rotated through the group. Every child took the backpack home once every two weeks. To ensure that each child knew when it was his or her turn, students asked their families which evening they preferred. A list of the nine groups, children's individual names and a schedule was posted on the wall.

For example, a student in group four would know that if someone in group three had B & B on Friday, he or she would be taking the backpack home the following Monday. If the regular schedule wasn't convenient for a child, he or she could trade their day with someone else in their group.

When B & B was launched, the children and I discussed the implications for fellow classmates when a backpack wasn't returned. We looked at alternative solutions to ensure that the backpack was returned when someone was sick. Forgotten backpacks were seldom a problem.

The expectation of B & B was for each child to share his or her book with a family member (preferably an adult). Also, children were asked to respond to the book in some way – through discourse, writing, drawing or making. Some children wrote letters to their classmates about the story; some wrote stories patterned on the book they read (perhaps with the help of an older sibling); some drew their favourite part of the story; some made constructions; and a few even made tape recordings based on the book talk they had with family members. The expectation was that each of the three children assigned a backpack would have something prepared and ready to share with their classmates the next day.

Alongside the reading and writing materials in the backpack was a duotang folder, which became known as the "Parent's Journal" or the "Adult's Homework." Every two weeks, a professional article and blank paper was included in the backpack, asking family members to respond to the article, raise questions, or make comments about what had transpired at home.

### **The Children Learn**

Every year since the beginning, B & B has exceeded my expectations. First and foremost, B & B promoted a sense of ownership and commitment for the children. It was everyone's responsibility to make sure that the backpack was sufficiently supplied with writing and drawing materials. Children knew they were expected to transport the case safely and return the backpack to school the next day. The children relied on each other to meet these expectations.

THE FIRST PAGE OF THE PARENT'S JOURNAL

Dear Families,

*This is our B & B (Book & Backpack). It will be assigned to one child in our class each day. It contains a book chosen by your child, materials for drawing, writing, etc. Children can use these materials to give their opinion about their book, write a story, or do some art in response to the story. If your child wants to write a draft for you to edit for spelling and grammar, that is okay. GuesSED or invented spelling is acceptable for drafts. Children may write stories, letters, poems, jokes, recipes, advertisements, invitations, records or observations. Children will be expected to share something with their classmates the next day.*

*In the backpack, you will also find a Parent's Journal where you or other family members are welcome to write your comments, observations or questions. Articles about current issues in curriculum, teaching, assessment, childrearing and learning will be included in the Journal. We look forward to reading your comments.*

*Please encourage your child to take good care of the contents and return the backpack the next day without fail, so that another child can take it home. The idea of B & B is to have fun. Enjoy the book your child has selected to read to you or with you. Read the articles in the Journal. Model reading and writing with your child by writing a comment in the Journal.*

*Thank you for your assistance and for demonstrating that learning does not only happen at school.*

SIGNED MR. J. GILES

“STEPHEN HAS ENJOYED HAVING THE B & B. AFTER READING HIS STORY, HE STARTED DRAWING PICTURES AND SPENT QUITE A BIT OF TIME AND EFFORT ON THEM. THIS MORNING, WHEN HE GOT UP, HE DREW SOME MORE!”

Mrs. F.

“IT IS MAGIC. I AM SURPRISED. EVERY TIME ARA BRINGS HOME B & B SHE HAS SUCH GREAT IDEAS! THE ARTICLES ARE GREAT FOR US TOO. EVEN THOUGH ARA DOESN'T UNDERSTAND EXACTLY EVERYTHING IN ENGLISH YET, IT IS CHALLENGING AND REWARDING FOR HER. THANKS.”

Mrs. A.



Rick Matthews

Because the children knew they would be sharing their ideas and creative work with one another, they became motivated by the expectations created by B & B. Time was set aside each day for the children to talk about their involvement with the program. This sharing time was very crucial to the program's success. Children would talk enthusiastically about their book, their responses and creative work. This show-and-tell concept promoted language opportunities as children described, explained, questioned, demonstrated and reported their involvement with B & B. As the audience, the children praised each other's efforts and exchanged positive comments, questions and suggestions. Motivated by what their peers had shared, children would often hitchhike on each other's ideas, perhaps writing a longer story or working on an art activity just like their friends.

Another consequence of B & B was that, during class time, many children chose to continue with the reading or response activities they had started at home. Several stories that began as homework were developed and eventually published. When a child enjoyed a particular book, he or she might spend time re-reading the book, reading it aloud to a friend or perhaps investigating other titles by the same author.

B & B offered the children a sense of empowerment, prompting them to make choices: the choice of which books to read, the extensions to share and discuss in class. The work that emerged from B & B provided data for assessment purposes. Writings and drawings were stored in each child's personal file or portfolio; books were recorded in reading logs; and samples of the student's work were referred to when it came time to write report cards or communicate with families. B & B provided a strong focus for assessment and discussion. Many families were thrilled to see their child so motivated.

They also saw the activities their children were involved with as meaningful.

#### Parents Learn Too

Not only did B & B stimulate the children's learning, it was also a vehicle for educating families. For one thing, the enclosed articles provided information on current educational theory and practice. Secondly, adults were encouraged to write questions and concerns in the journal, and a network was developed between parent and teacher and between adults of different families. Frequently, parents would raise questions about curriculum or language learning and would invite a response from the teacher or another parent in the Journal. Sometimes, the adults would react to articles they had read in the newspaper or to programs they had seen on television, and they used the Journal to offer an opinion on what they thought should be happening:

*“Thank you very much for giving me a chance to make a comment. In my opinion, spelling and pronunciation is also very important. In class students should be asked for correct spelling and pronunciation. Every day students could be assigned a specific topic and given spelling and pronunciation as homework. I am looking forward to meeting with you.”* Mr. M.

After reading a comment such as Mr. M's in the Journal, I often discuss the comment with the class so they can understand my intentions and why we do what we do. I would also follow up on Mr. M's comment with a written response in the Journal; an article for him to read; or an excerpt from a curriculum document to give him information about what goes on in our classroom.

“SCIENCE & BACKPACK WAS GREAT FUN TONIGHT. ANDREA CAME HOME ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT HER WORK. IT WAS A FAMILY AFFAIR AND HER BROTHER, DAD AND I JOINED IN WITH HER EXPERIMENTS. WE’LL LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT B & B.”

### Mr. R. and Family

“THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE COMMENTS IN THE PARENT’S JOURNAL. I STRONGLY SUPPORT THE B & B PROJECT, WHICH HELPS OUR CHILDREN TO PROMOTE READING, UNDERSTANDING AND HAND SKILLS. AT THE SAME TIME, IT PROVIDES A BRIDGE BETWEEN TEACHER AND ALL PARENTS. WE COME FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES WITH DIFFERENT CULTURES AND LANGUAGES. MY CHILD, MIKE, DIDN’T LEARN ANY ENGLISH BEFORE HE LEFT CHINA. AFTER ONLY TWO MONTHS, HE HAS MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN ENGLISH. HE CAN SPEAK SOME WORDS AND EVEN SIMPLE SENTENCES. THANKS AGAIN MR. GILES.”

### Mr. Z.



Because Mr. M. went to school outside of Canada, his experiences with education are very different. Other adults might read my comments to Mr. M. in the journal and share their own views or experiences, thus further building a dialogue about spelling and language learning.

Finally, because I had to respond to the individual parent’s concerns, my own understanding of program was enriched. I was challenged to research, justify and articulate why I teach the way I do and my beliefs about how children learn.

The idea of B & B became so successful that we began to extend the program to include math, with a collection of materials that included tangrams, pattern block, calculators and backpack, poetry and backpack, jokes and backpack etc. For science and backpack, the children had the choice of several hands-on experiments that they conducted at home with their family. Observations on such experiments were recorded and presented to the class during sharing time. Reference books and science magazines were displayed in our classroom and became part of the backpack program.

Jane Baskwill (1989) provides insight into the relationship between families and teachers. “What we need is a shift in thinking about the nature of home/school communication, a new model of reciprocal responsibility based on a mutual understanding of what learning is. I dream of teachers communicating with

parents on a regular basis, sharing everything they noticed about the child’s growth in learning. Indeed, even more important, I imagine parents doing the same with teachers, feeling it was their place and their right to do so.”

#### Is B & B Homework?

Many families were very satisfied that this program was a meaningful liaison between “school” work and “home” work. From the involvement of the children, the feedback of the parents and the enthusiasm in the classroom, B & B seemed to be homework that worked.

I thank Mrs. S. for her concerns eight years ago, and feel that B & B was one way to meet her demands for more homework. Moreover, through meaningful activities, B & B strengthened several partnerships: between child and teacher, child and child and teacher, child and parent, and parent and teacher. As educators, we must continue to foster these partnerships and hold them in high regard in order to enrich the learning of our students, regardless of what happens outside the classroom walls.

JIM GILES teaches grade 1 at Queen Victoria Public School, Toronto. Currently on a one-year teacher exchange to Australia, arranged by the Canadian Education Exchange Foundation ([www.ceef.ca](http://www.ceef.ca)), he can be reached at [jgiles100@hotmail.com](mailto:jgiles100@hotmail.com).

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Hart-Hewins, Linda and Jan Wells. *Real Books for Reading: Learning to Read with Children’s Literature*. Toronto. Pembroke Publishers, 1990.  
Maloy, R.W. and S.A. Edwards. “The Writing Box: Kindergarten and First Grade Children’s Writing at Home.” *Contemporary Education*, Vol. 62, No. 4 - Summer 1990. Rich, Susan J., “The Writing Suitcase.” *Young Children*, July 1985.

Four young faces, side by side, stare at the computer monitor. Occasionally, they point at the screen, jot notes, discuss new information and debate. This is the image of involved, interested and integrated learning for which we all strive.

## WebQuests: The Solution to Internet-Curriculum Integration



By RUTH KOHUT

Since its arrival on the educational scene, interest in the Internet has grown exponentially. Teachers are continually encouraged to integrate this wonderful tool into the classroom. *Harness the power of the internet. Integrate. Use computers in the classroom. Integrate. Retrieve your students' attention. Use your students' natural enthusiasm for the internet to further learning. Breathe new life into research projects. Integrate. Integrate. Integrate.* The only problem with this litany is that teachers are rarely offered the proper training to accomplish integration effectively. Nevertheless, the chant continues.

### WebQuests: An answer

Bernie Dodge's WebQuests may be the answer to our integration blues. Dodge describes a WebQuest as "an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the internet."

With this tool, groups of students follow a guided lesson, search for information using teacher-selected internet sites and resources, answer questions that encourage critical thinking,

and present their ideas through a multimedia presentation or web page. WebQuests can be short-term (one to three days) or long term (one to five weeks), based on a single topic or cross-curricular. The most exciting aspect of WebQuests is that they support the education research connections to constructivism, multiple intelligences, critical questioning and brain research and, best of all, they provide a useful integration tool that teachers can reuse, with minor adjustments, every year.

### WebQuests and Constructivism

The key to the constructivist theory is that learners build on their existing knowledge base. When learners are asked to analyze, compare and synthesize new information, they use their previous experiences to make sense of the new. WebQuests support many of the beliefs of constructivism.

### Constructivism emphasizes learning, not teaching.

WebQuests are student-based activities with the teacher as a guide and facilitator.

### Constructivism sees learning as a process.

Tom March, a colleague of Bernie Dodge, writes: "Research has shown that the most important factor related to student learning and technology use is how teachers relate the technology-based activity to other learning activities." In order to heighten student learning, it is important for the teacher to relate the WebQuest to other off-line learning activities, both before, and after, the WebQuest. The WebQuest should not be "an isolated experience disconnected from the rest of [the] curriculum." (March 1998)

### Constructivism encourages learner inquiry.

WebQuests include a series of thoughtful, open-ended questions that invite student inquiry. Questions are designed to encourage students to ask questions of each other, analyze information and synthesize multiple sources of information. "A WebQuest forces students to transform information into something else: a cluster that maps out the main issue, a comparison, a hypothesis, a solution, etc." (March 1998)

### Constructivism acknowledges the critical role of experience in learning.

The critical questioning involved in WebQuests encourages the learner to articulate personal perspectives about issues and then compare and analyze these perspectives against those of others. This aids the learner in constructing an understanding that builds on an individual prior knowledge.

### Constructivism makes extensive use of cognitive theory terminology such as predict, create and analyse.

The questioning techniques used in WebQuests generally require learners to apply higher-level thinking skills after they have gathered the necessary information.

### Constructivism encourages learners to engage in dialogue with other students and the teacher.

In most cases, WebQuests are designed as group activities.

### Constructivism supports co-operative learning.

Within each WebQuest group, students may be assigned different roles. The process through which the students merge their information promotes the use of co-operative learning strategies.

Teachers are eager to integrate the internet into their classroom curriculum, but up until recently they haven't been offered a suitable vehicle for effective integration. Our search is over. By combining "the most effective instructional practices into one integrated student activity" (March 1998), WebQuests give teachers the tool to make internet integration a reality in their classrooms.

### WebQuests and multiple intelligences

Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, developed a theory of seven or more "multiple intelligences." Each individual has all of these intelligences, but some are better developed than others. A key to the effectiveness of internet integration is the recognition by the teacher that students learn in different ways. WebQuests can meet the needs of most of these "intelligences."

#### Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence

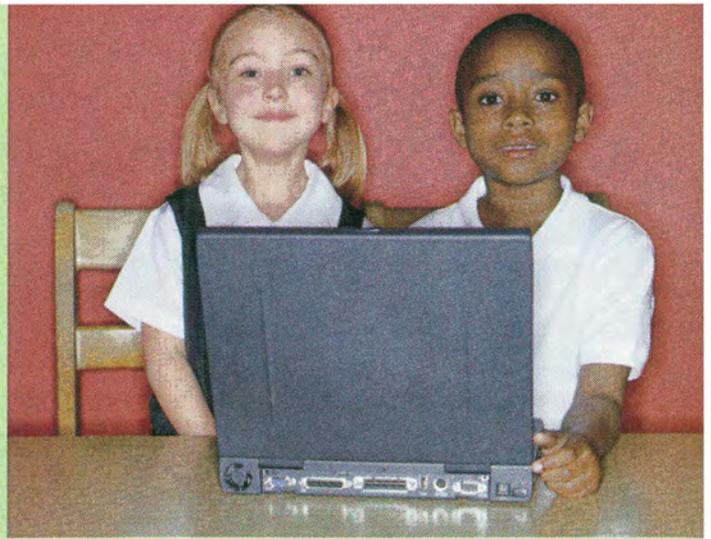
These individuals learn best by listening, reading and verbalizing. Most aspects of a WebQuest would suit this learner, including reading, writing and oral presentations.

#### Visual/Spatial Intelligence

These learners need to be taught through images, pictures and colours. Maps, charts, drawings, puzzles and 3-D imaging are very effective teaching tools. This learner would particularly shine at creating a multimedia presentation or web page as an end result of a WebQuest.

#### Musical Intelligence

These individuals learn through rhythm and melody. They would benefit from working with the visual/spacial person, adding a musical component to the multimedia presentation or web page.



### Logical/Mathematical Intelligence

These individuals learn best by forming concepts and looking for abstract patterns and relationship. An integral part of WebQuests is a problem-solving component, in which these learners would excel.

### Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Separate roles are assigned to the individuals in a WebQuest group. The B-K individual should have the role of manipulating the keyboard or mouse, as this person learns by touching, manipulating and moving.

### Interpersonal Intelligence

Children with interpersonal intelligence need dynamic interaction with other people. This would be provided within the WebQuest group, in which students are encouraged to discuss and exchange ideas.

### Intrapersonal Intelligence

These individuals have a deep awareness of their inner feelings, dreams and ideas. A WebQuest element that would be suited to these individuals would be to identify and articulate personal perspectives about issues, or errors in one's own or others' thinking.

The format of the WebQuest project encourages and enables students to use their strengths, or their natural intelligences, to learn.

### WebQuests and critical questioning

One of the main components of a WebQuest is the outline of the assigned task, which includes the questions to be addressed. Questioning can mean the difference between a good WebQuest and a great one. The best WebQuest projects use questions to evoke deep thinking in students. Teachers need to pose a variety of questions to promote different thinking styles and to engage more students in the critical thinking process. Questions can ask learners to recall or retrieve information, to relate personally to the content, or to reorganize and synthesize information. It is up to the teacher, as the WebQuest questioner, to determine the level of thinking required by the student.

### WebQuests and brain research

Marian Diamond, a brain research pioneer, believes that enriched environments have an impact on the brain's growth and learning. Many of Diamond's ideas of an enriched environment are found in WebQuests. WebQuests may include

- stimulation of all the senses;
- having an atmosphere free of undue pressure and stress, but suffused with a degree of pleasurable intensity;
- presenting a series of novel challenges that are neither too easy nor too difficult for the child at his or her stage of development;
- allowing social interaction for a significant percentage of activities;
- giving the child an opportunity to choose many of his or her efforts and to modify them;
- providing an enjoyable atmosphere that promotes exploration and the fun of learning; and
- allowing the child to be an active participant rather than a passive observer.

With internet connections in the classrooms, students enjoy increased interaction with other students, mentors on-line, and people from around the world. Teachers are encouraged to act as guides and facilitators, rather than the providers of information. They are encouraged to use educational research ideas, such as constructivism, multiple intelligences, critical questioning and brain research. Now teachers have a tool in which these ideas have been united.

WebQuests were created specifically in response to the need to combine "the most effective instructional practices into one integrated student activity." (March, 1998) Individually, these research ideas have been used in the classroom for years. For a truly integrated approach, however, WebQuests fill the gap all by themselves.

# Suggested WebQuest sites

For the past five years, **RUTH KOHUT** was a computer consultant with the Lambton Kent District School Board. In this role, one of her main tasks was to train and help teachers to integrate technology into their classrooms. She is currently Vice-Principal of Lambton Centennial Central School, Petrolia.

## THE WEBQUEST PAGE

BY BERNIE DODGE

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html>

*Teachers will find the resource section entitled "Training Materials" very helpful.*

## SOME THOUGHTS

### ABOUT WEBQUESTS

BY BERNIE DODGE

[http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about\\_WebQuests.html](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about_WebQuests.html)

*This site is a short article, written by Dodge, that explains what WebQuests are and the critical thinking skills that good WebQuests would engender.*

## WEBQUESTS FOR LEARNING

BY TOM MARCH

<http://ozline.com/webquests/intro.html>

*March explains why WebQuests are useful in today's classrooms and relates them to the constructivist theory.*

## KATHY SCHROCK'S GUIDE

FOR EDUCATORS - WEBQUEST

<http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/webquest/webquest.html>

*Schrock offers a slide show that explains the components of a WebQuest and guidelines for its development.*

## INTEGRATING THE INTERNET

INTO THE CURRICULUM:

USING WEBQUESTS IN  
YOUR CLASSROOM

<http://pd.L2L.org/linktuts/intoweb.htm>

*Suggests reasons to use WebQuests in the classroom. Also has links to other WebQuest sites and a template to use when creating a WebQuest.*

## Sample WebQuests and WebQuest Collections

THE WEBQUEST WEBQUESTS

<http://www.geocities.com/techlabloms/Quest.htm>

*Participate in a WebQuest. Good starting point for teachers to become acquainted with the idea and format of WebQuests.*

## WEBQUEST COLLECTIONS

[http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest\\_collections.htm](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest_collections.htm)

ANNE FRANK AND CHILDREN  
OF THE HOLOCAUST

<http://www.spa3.k12.sc.us/WebQuests/Anne%20Frank/index.html>

USING WEBQUESTS IN  
YOUR CLASSROOM

<http://coekate.murrystate.edu/kate/full/webquest/using.htm>

## Creating WebQuests

FILAMENTALITY 2.0

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/>

*This is a wonderful site that helps users walk through the process of creating a WebQuest. The completed project is posted on the Filamentality website.*

## WEBQUEST TEMPLATE

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/LessonTemplate.html>

*At this site you'll find a template that teachers can use when they create WebQuests. Written by Bernie Dodge.*

## WEBQUEST RUBRIC

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/act102/webquestrubric.html>

*Excellent source for assessing a WebQuest. Written by Bernie Dodge.*

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More than 500 ETFO members from across Ontario were in Toronto February 6-8 to attend...and still We Rise - ETFO's Annual Leadership and Personal Growth Conference for Women.

## ...and still We Rise

By CHARLOTTE MORGAN

» Participants ranged from those in the first years of their careers to those in their last.

» All agreed the conference offered something for everyone. Here's what participants had to say:

"Even better than last year!"

"Loved it!"

"Great to get together with other teachers from around the province!"

"Thank you for including so many areas of personal growth!"

"Thoroughly enjoyed whole conference!"

"Fantastic!"

"A wonderful opportunity to be in touch with the world outside the classroom!"

"Great to see such a cross-section of members!"

"Very much enjoyed the leadership and personal growth workshops!"

"Incredibly informative. I learned so much!"

"Very well planned!"

"Good variety of workshops!"

Participants experienced an eclectic blend of plenary sessions, leadership and personal growth workshops along with entertainment and opportunities to meet, discuss and network informally.

The conference included a full day of leadership training workshops, focused on collective bargaining, legal issues, equity, presentation skills, health and safety, and status of women. The following day focused on personal growth workshops, including self-defense, balancing career and personal life, and family law issues affecting women.

In her address to the opening session, Sally Armstrong, human rights activist and editor-at-large of *Chatelaine* magazine, spoke of her experiences in Afghanistan under the Taliban government, as well as her forthcoming visit to that country as UNICEF's special representative. The next day, the Women of Afghanistan Forum featured Deborah Ellis, women's rights activist and author of *Women of the Afghan War*, *The Breadwinner* and *Looking for X*, which won the Governor General's Award; Dr. Sharifa Sharif, who was born and educated in Afghanistan and now lives in Canada; and Linda Middaugh, vice-president, ETFO Halton. The panelists spoke of their work on behalf of women and children in Afghanistan. Participants were inspired to pass the hat and raised over \$1,200. This amount was matched by ETFO provincially. The money will go to UNICEF's back-to-school campaign, which supports the efforts of the Ministry of Education of the Interim Authority of Afghanistan to provide primary education from the beginning of the new school year.

Among the many other conference highlights was a presentation by Jane Doe. Doe spoke of what it was like to pursue a conviction for rape and of her successful suit of the Toronto police force for failing to inform and warn her about rapes being committed in her neighbourhood.

...and still We Rise also welcomed Miriam Abou-Dib, Ontario Representative of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women who spoke on the importance of maintaining women's issues at the top of the national agenda.

Plans are already underway for next year's ...and still We Rise. Information will be sent to ETFO stewards early in the fall.

MAYA ANGELOU is a leading literary voice in the African American community. Her poem *Still I Rise* inspired the theme of this conference.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Barbara Sloan, UNICEF Canada; Sally Armstrong, human rights activist and editor-at-large, *Chatelaine* magazine; Women On Line Workshop; Deb Ellis signs her books; presenter Gayle Lesperance with participants at her workshop on redefining retirement.

# Professional Relations Services

## Notice of Resignation

The current teacher shortage in Ontario has recently enhanced opportunities for members to accept new job opportunities with other employers. In the past, particularly during times of teacher surplus and redundancy, changing one's employer in the teaching world was risky. Invariably, when a teacher moves to a new school board, he or she will be placed at or near the bottom of the seniority list, making the spectre of being declared redundant a distinct possibility. In recent years, however, the shortage of teachers has significantly reduced this risk.

### Timing of Opportunities

As more members look to change their employer, difficulties can arise if the timing of this opportunity does not coincide with the language set out in their current collective agreement regarding providing notice to the school board. Most collective agreements will contain a requirement for notice of retirement or resignation some time in November for resignation on December 31 or some time in May for resignation at the end of June or during the summer. An important caveat to these timelines which is discussed later is the addition of the words "or by mutual

agreement." A few agreements around the province have different or no language around this issue. Some members have found themselves in a dilemma when an opportunity to move has arisen at a time that does not allow them to meet these notice provisions.

### The Dilemma of "What to Do."

It should be emphasized that a teacher should follow the language set forth in their collective agreement. Sometimes members find themselves in a situation where circumstances make it impossible to comply with existing notice provisions. An example of such a situation is where an individual is offered

a teaching position with a different school board in late summer when his/her current employer is expecting them to return in September. Teachers should never simply walk away from their responsibilities to the current employer. What then might be done to resolve the issue?

### Resignation by Mutual Consent

It may be possible to obtain the "mutual agreement" referred to above. Teachers should speak with the supervisory officer, explain the circumstances and request that they be granted a "resignation by mutual consent." It is important to >

## Regulation 521/01 Collection of Personal Information

Regulation 521/01 - Collection of Personal Information - requires the district school board to collect, by July 31, 2003, a criminal background check from all existing employees who became members of the Ontario College of Teachers before December 31, 1998.

If a member has a criminal conviction under the *Criminal Code* for a non-sexual offence, that member may want to consider applying for a pardon,

particularly if the conviction occurred some time ago.

A pardon is recognition of good conduct. The granting of a pardon by the National Parole Board, under the *Criminal Records Act*, means that any federal agency or department that has records of conviction must keep those records separate and apart from other criminal records. The information will be taken out of the Canadian Police Information

Centre (CPIC) computer system.

Once a person has been pardoned, information about the conviction may not be given out without the approval of the Solicitor General of Canada.

*The Canadian Human Rights Act* forbids federal agencies and departments to discriminate against a person on the basis of a pardoned record.

The pardon application process is lengthy and must be completed prior to July 31, 2003.

Please note, however, that if a transfer to another site in the school board occurs prior to obtaining a pardon and before July 31, 2003, it will be necessary to disclose the conviction on the offence declaration that will be required by the board.

For more information on the pardon process, contact **Susan Thede** at provincial office.

## Notice of Resignation CONTINUED

understand that school boards are under no obligation to agree to such a request. The granting of this request is often dependent upon the ease with which a board can fill the resulting vacancy.

### What if the employer says No?

For both legal and professional reasons, members may need to decline or postpone an opportunity with the new employer. In these circumstances, it will be important to contact the potential employer to explain the situation. It is possible the employer may be willing to defer hiring to allow the individual to adhere to the notice provisions in resigning from the current position. The federation strongly advises members not to abandon their current employment contract. The risks are both legal and professional.

### Labour Relations Act

From a legal point of view, it should be noted that a collective agreement made under the *Labour Relations Act* is binding not only upon the employer and the union but the employees who are members of the bargaining unit as well. As a result, it could be argued that there is an obligation on the employee to give the notice outlined in the collective agreement and that a school board may grieve against the federation or the individual teacher concerned in the event that he or she fails to give such notice.

### College of Teachers

There are also significant professional risks associated with abandoning one's employment if all other avenues fail. School boards or other individuals are allowed to complain to the College of Teachers if they believe a teacher has shown "professional misconduct." While there is no specific provision making the termination of a contract without notice as grounds for professional misconduct, there are certain general provisions contained in the professional misconduct regulation which may be relied upon to allow for such complaints to be filed. These include "failing to maintain the standards of the profession" and "conduct unbecoming a member."

In summary, given the legal and professional risks inherent in leaving a job without employer consent, ETFO advises against such an action.

The following provides a checklist of actions to consider when looking to change your employer:

- Strive to have the timing of the change coincide with the provisions of your collective agreement so that adequate notice can be given.
- If this is not possible, consult with your local representative and work with your employer to obtain "mutual agreement" in the termination of your obligation to your current school board.
- Call the Professional Relations staff at ETFO for advice and assistance.

### Other Important Considerations

Before accepting a new employment offer, it is advisable to research and understand the differences in the salary and working conditions contained in the collective agreement applicable to any prospective new employer. Issues such as extended health coverage, calculation of experience for grid placement, personal leave time and pregnancy benefits, to name a few, can vary significantly from agreement to agreement. Your local federation representative can assist you in seeking information about these issues.

JIM WHITE  
for ETFO's Professional  
Relations Services



# the power of story

A Kindergarten to grade 8 resource that links the experiences of Canadian girls and women to the curriculum.

By JOAN BEECROFT, CAROL BROWN, MARGARET NEIGH, CATHERINE PAWIS, PAT WRIGHT and SHERRY RAMRATTAN SMITH

Lesson  
Plans

“Each time you tell your story,  
remember that you make  
a difference for someone.”

(MODELL, 1992)

Life stories provide a valid means of transmitting history. They allow us to draw connections between the past and present, yesterday and today. In our society there exist oppressive structures that constrain some voices. Storytelling, or narrative, creates rich conditions that enable those who are silenced to transform their contributions and concerns from hidden or intimate spoken stories into shared text. Yvonna S. Lincoln says “It takes an extended amount of time for the silenced to seek and find their voices and to frame their stories.” The women featured in this collection have finally reached such a stage. They lead rich, full lives and view the world as optimists. Each story unfolds to demonstrate how these women rose to the occasion, whether it meant facing an illness, helping a friend, speaking out on behalf of another, or achieving career and personal goals.

“In a world where the meaning of  
events and incidents must be quite  
puzzling, the story offers a haven  
of clarity.” (EGAN, 1986)

Stories provide a means for provoking thought and examining our attitudes and assumptions. Even though we may not be experiencing a situation directly, by allowing our minds to be open to diverse perspectives, we are able to learn through the life experiences of others around us. When we share anecdotes, the concentration and energy levels of our audience changes. This is because ideas and facts take on a human face and become real.

“Stories are gifts.” (HARDING, 1992)

The writers hope that the stories crafted in this book will help students to realize the worth and contributions that ordinary people bring to one another on a daily basis. As long as one person benefits from an action that we as individuals have taken, the world becomes a better place.

## Why create this resource?

This collection of stories provides a way to teach students that

- storytelling validates our life experiences.
- storytelling is an art.
- storytelling is a valid means of transmitting history.

In the complete *Power of Story* document, teachers are encouraged to read all the stories and not to feel limited by the grade levels suggested.

Some stories have lesson plans for more than one grade. Teachers may wish to use particular stories at school-wide events or to highlight special themes, such as White Cane Week, United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Cancer Awareness Month, International Women's Day, Arthritis Month, African Heritage Month, Gay and Lesbian Pride Week, National Aboriginal Day and cultural celebrations. Many of the stories complement the 10 monthly themes from ETFO's anti-bias resource *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good*.

We attempted to tell the stories of women whose voices have not been heard. Some stories offer simple messages, while others deal with more complex issues. Both kinds are equally important since they reflect the way we live and learn.

As you read the sample story that follows, remember that children have their own experiences that need to be validated. This model can be used to encourage students to relate their own life stories.

## Hidden Talent

*Brenda Kaufman lives in Listowel, Ontario, with her husband, Bob, and daughter Nicole. When she discovered she had a gift, her life took off in a new direction.*

Have you ever wondered if you have a talent for something you haven't discovered yet? That's what happened to Brenda Kaufman. When she was in school, she loved sports – mostly baseball, badminton and volleyball. She loved to sing, too. When she was in grade 12, her school choir travelled all the way to Cork, Ireland, to sing in a music festival. She loved doing all those things and was pretty good at them, but she still hadn't discovered her big talent.

After she left school, she went to the University of Toronto and became a dental hygienist. She married Bob Kaufman and had no trouble finding a job in her field. She settled down to married life in the town of Listowel, Ontario, where she had lived most of her life. Her mother had a talent with a needle and thread and had made many clothes for Brenda and her sisters as they were growing up. Brenda did some sewing as a young woman and sang with a local singing group, but she still hadn't discovered her big talent.

Then Brenda was dealt a blow. She developed rheumatoid arthritis. This is a degenerative disease that causes damage to various joints in the body. It also causes a lot of pain and debilitating fatigue. Her hands were so painful that sewing became very difficult for her and, even more devastatingly, so did working as a dental hygienist.

Brenda worked part-time over several years, during which she gave birth to a daughter, Nicole.

In 1995, she faced another blow. Her much loved sister, Jodeyne, died suddenly. Brenda felt this loss deeply and was looking for a new direction in her life. Her daughter was in grade 4 by this time and was taking art classes to learn how to paint with watercolour. Brenda thought she would like to try that too. Have you guessed? She was about to discover her big talent!

Of course, she didn't realize this at first. Brenda was painting for her own enjoyment. She enjoyed learning the techniques involved in painting with watercolour. The gentle touch required suited her hands well.

She took a painting to a frame shop where a friend saw it. This woman became her first customer and commissioned a painting from her. As more people saw her work, orders for paintings increased. One day her husband said to her "I didn't know you could paint." Brenda replied, "Well, I didn't know either!"

Brenda always saved photocopies of her paintings. Someone suggested to her that her paintings would make very good cards. Now she and her husband run a small business, producing paintings and cards that are sold in stores in a number of towns in southwestern Ontario.

Watercolour is the best medium for her because the sable brushes she uses are very soft and offer little resistance to her hands. She has tried working with acrylics, but finds that too much pressure is required and can cause pain in her hands. She takes courses whenever she can, to learn new things about the various techniques and to stimulate her creativity.

Brenda says that she derives great pleasure from "being able to put colours down and have a painting come out beautiful." Having given up a lot because of her physical health, she finds it very satisfying to be able to do something and to make a contribution to the world.

Her advice to anyone is "Be what you want to be at that time. Allow yourself to change and be open to new directions." Her advice to people with disabilities is "If you have a love of something, there are different ways of achieving it. Don't put stress on yourself to keep up with others. We often put on our own limits and don't allow ourselves to think bigger."

After having surgery, Brenda has discovered you can be in a wheelchair and still sing in a choir. People can become famous, pursuing their talent, in spite of a physical challenge.

Remember, also, that Brenda discovered her talent as a result of her daughter taking art classes. Maybe you will have an effect on someone's life too. Maybe you will inspire someone in your life to move in a new direction and discover a hidden talent!



Brenda Kaufman

Brenda describes herself as assertive, creative and blessed. The following inscription composed by her sister appears on the back of each card she sells:

*The Creator distributes talents in unique ways and for different reasons. The expressions of life and the beauty of nature shown in Brenda Kaufman's watercolours are such gifts. Even though rheumatoid arthritis has challenged Brenda's physical being, she has found a way to share how she sees, loves and cherishes life. There is no need to ask how this creativity happens. Enjoy!*



**Grade 5**

**Hidden Talent**

**Expectations - Language**

**5e2:** Use writing for various purposes and in a range of contexts, including school work. For example, to summarize information from materials they have read, to reflect on their thoughts, feelings and imaginings.

**5e3:** Organize information to convey a central idea using well-developed paragraphs that focus on a main idea and give some relevant supporting details.

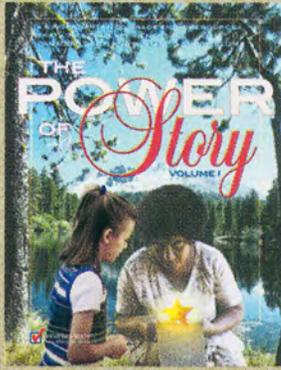
**5e7:** Revise and edit their work, seeking feedback from others and focusing on content, organization and appropriateness of vocabulary for audience.

**Expectations - The Arts**

**5a36:** Describe the strengths and limitations of various art tools, materials and techniques. For example, identify drawing tools, such as charcoal, pencil crayons and pastels, and describe their effectiveness on specific surfaces.

**5a37:** Select the most appropriate tools, materials and techniques for a particular purpose, and use them correctly.

**5a38:** Organize their art works to create a specific effect, using the elements of design. For example, create a still life depicting their favourite foods, and explain how they used colour, texture and shape to appeal to the viewer's senses.



### Suggested activities

- Write about someone you know who discovered a hidden talent later in life.
- Describe how you might have “inspired” someone in your life to do something new, as Brenda’s daughter did. For example, have you inspired your learning buddy, sister, brother, grandmother, grandfather?
- Experiment with watercolour techniques to discover how to acquire a soft touch and how different effects are achieved.
- Produce a painting with watercolour, then choose a different medium to capture the same subject. Compare the two. Give examples of appropriate uses for each.
- Use a Venn diagram to compare one medium you used in the above activity with the other.

### Extensions

Find examples of famous and not well-known people with a disability who have contributed to society, both famous and not well known – for example Jean Little, Ludwig van Beethoven, Stevie Wonder, Jeff Healey, Auguste Renoir. Make an oral presentation. List new interests that you would like to explore. Select one and plan the steps to do so.

### About the Authors

**JOAN BEECROFT** teaches for the Bluewater District School Board. She has experience at all grade levels (1-8) in English as a second language, French, special education and in the regular classroom. Joan is involved with her local as school steward and works to promote equity issues.

**CAROL BROWN** is an elementary teacher with the Algoma District School Board. She has taught students in all divisions as well as special education. She is known for the practical approach she takes in her workshops. She has most recently been involved with equity issues in her local federation.

**MARGARET NEIGH** is an elementary teacher with the Waterloo Region District School Board. She has worked with students from kindergarten to grade 13 and adults in the areas of English as a second language, French and drama. Margaret has been actively involved in equity issues for a number of years.

Prior to her promotion to vice-principal, **CATHERINE PAWIS** was an instructional leader for Native Studies, kindergarten to oac, with the Toronto District School Board. She also worked for three years as a special education consultant. Catherine has taught grades 3-8, as well as special education and French.

Presently with the Niagara District School Board, **PAT WRIGHT**'s teaching experience includes grades 1-8. Through her federation involvement, specifically in the area of collective bargaining, and her role as classroom teacher, Pat continues to promote equity in the workplace.

**SHERRY RAMRATTAN SMITH** is an elementary teacher from Waterloo. She has taught students from pre-school to grade 8, including special education, music and English as a second language. She is currently an executive assistant with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, where she works in the areas of professional development and equity.

**The Power of Story**, published in the spring 2002, is available through The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. ShopETFO on line at [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca) or by calling 416.962.3836/1.888.838.3836.

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- Harding, Susan. *The Afterlife of Stories: Genesis of a Man of God*. In Rosenwald, George C. & Ochberg, Richard L. Eds. 'Storyed Lives: The Cultural Politics of Self-Understanding.' New Haven: Yale University Press. 1992.
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### RESOURCES

- Nichol, Barbara. *Beethoven Lives Upstairs*. Lester Publishing. 1993.
- Ennis' Gift. Meet actors, scientists, business leaders, a polar explorer, a teacher and dozens of others who have one thing in common - they all have learning differences. Contact the Ennis Cosby Foundation: [www.hellofriend.org](http://www.hellofriend.org)
- We're Erasing Prejudice for Good Anti-Bias Resource*. A school-wide, annotated, K-8 kit of anti-bias resources and lessons for the classroom. ETFO 1999. Available from ShopETFO - [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)

# Educating for Peace



Mary Gordon

Last year, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario held the first of our annual lectures. In 2001, the lecturer was Canadian author John Ralston Saul, whose books have won wide acclaim and been translated into more than a dozen languages.

This year, ETFO's guest lecturer will be Mary Gordon, founder and president of Roots of Empathy. Roots of Empathy is a parenting program for elementary school students designed to teach human development and emotional literacy, and nurture the growth of empathy. Mary Gordon is a teacher of children, parents and teachers. She founded Canada's first and largest school-based parenting and family literacy program. Her model of parental engagement in education has been shared throughout the world. A member of the Ontario Early Years Study, co-chaired by Dr. Fraser Mustard and the Hon. Margaret McCain, Mary Gordon speaks nationally and internationally on children's issues.

Mary Gordon has presented to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in France and to the U.S. Department of Education, in Washington, D.C., to help shape the research agenda for early childhood development programs. She delivered the keynote presentation in Luxembourg, at a conference co-sponsored by the World Health Organization, and in London, England, to the Royal College of Physicians.

In 1998, Ms Gordon received the Community Services Award from the Psychology Foundation of Canada. In February 2001, she was awarded the Distinguished Educator Award by the University of Toronto. Mary Gordon's hope is to build civic and peaceful societies, classroom by classroom, through the Roots of Empathy program. When children are able to understand another person's point of view and respect his or her feelings, aggressive behaviour is less likely to occur.

For more information and tickets, which are free and available to ETFO members on a first-come, first-served basis, contact Bonnie Gul at ETFO's provincial office.

Telephone: 416.962.3836/1.888.838.3836

E-mail [bgul@etfo.org](mailto:bgul@etfo.org)

Last spring at the Project-Based Learning Conference, **Kids Who Know and Do**, keynote speaker Linda Darling-Hammond retold the following story by John S. Taylor, Superintendent of Schools in the Lancaster County School District in South Carolina. In a room full of 5,000 educators, you could have heard a pin drop. Of course, during the witty dialogue and the ironic parts, outbursts of laughter filled the room.

# High-Stakes Testing for Dentists?

What Dentists and Teachers Have in Common

By JOHN S. TAYLOR

MY DENTIST IS GREAT! He sends me reminders so I don't forget checkups. He uses the latest techniques based on research.

He never hurts me, and I've got all my teeth, so when I ran into him the other day, I was eager to see if he'd heard about the new state program. I knew he'd think it was great.

"Did you hear about the new state program to measure the effectiveness of dentists with their young patients?" I said. "No," he said. He didn't seem too thrilled. "How will they do that?"

"It's quite simple," I said. "They will just count the number of cavities each patient has at age 10, 14, and 18 and average that to determine a dentist's rating. Dentists will be rated as excellent, good, average, below average and unsatisfactory. That way, parents will know which are the best dentists. It will also encourage the less effective dentists to get better," I said. "Poor dentists who don't improve could lose their licences to practise in South Carolina." "That's terrible," he said.

"What? That's not a good attitude," I said. "Don't you think we should try to improve children's dental health in this state?"

"Sure I do," he said, "but that's not a fair way to determine who is practising good dentistry."

"Why not?" I said. "It makes perfect sense to me."

"Well, it's so obvious," he said. "Don't you see that dentists don't all work with the same clientele; so much depends on things we can't control.

"For example, I work in a rural area with a high percentage of patients from deprived homes, while some of my colleagues work in upper-middle-class neighbourhoods. Many of the parents I work with don't bring their children to see me until there is some kind of problem and I don't get to do much preventative work.

"Also, many of the parents I serve let their kids eat way too much candy from a young age, unlike more educated parents who understand the relationship between sugar and decay."

"To top it all off," he added, "so many of my clients have well water which is untreated and has no fluoride in it. Do you have any idea how much difference early use of fluoride can make?"

"It sounds like you're making excuses," I said. I couldn't believe my dentist would be so defensive. He does a great job.

"I am not!" he said. "My best patients are as good as anyone's, my work is as good as anyone's, but my average cavity count is going to be higher than a lot of other dentists because I chose to work where I am needed most."

"Don't get touchy," I said.

"Touchy?" he said. His face had turned red, and from the way he was clenching and unclenching his jaws, I was afraid he was going to damage his teeth. "Try furious. In a system like this, I will end up being rated average, below average or worse.

"My more educated patients who see these ratings may believe this so-called rating actually is a measure of my ability and proficiency as a dentist. They may leave me, and I'll be left with only the neediest patients. And my cavity average score will get even worse.

"On top of that, how will I attract good dental hygienists and other excellent dentists to my practice if it is labelled below average?"

"I think you're overreacting," I said. "Complaining, excuse making, and stonewalling won't improve dental health. I am quoting that from a leading member of the DOC," I noted.

"What's the DOC?" he said.

"It's the Dental Oversight Committee," I said, "a group made up of mostly lay persons to make sure dentistry in this state gets improved."

"Spare me," he said. "I can't believe this. Reasonable people won't buy it," he said hopefully.

The program sounded reasonable to me, so I asked, "How else would you measure good dentistry?"

"Come watch me work," he said. "Observe my processes."

"That's too complicated and time-consuming," I said.

"Cavities are the bottom line, and you can't argue with the bottom line. It's an absolute measure."

"That's what I'm afraid my patients and prospective patients will think. This can't be happening," he said despairingly.

"Now, now," I said, "don't despair. The state will help you some."

"How?" he said.

"If you're rated poorly, they'll send a dentist who is rated excellent to help straighten you out," I said brightly.

"You mean," he said, "they will send a dentist with a wealthy clientele to show me how to work on severe juvenile dental problems with which I have probably had much more experience? Big help."

"There you go again," I said. "You aren't acting professionally at all."

"You don't get it?" he said. "Doing this would be like grading schools and teachers on an average score on a test of children's progress without regard to influences outside the school, the home, the community served and stuff like that. Why would they do something so unfair to dentists? No one would ever think of doing that to schools."

I just shook my head sadly, but he had brightened. "I'm going to write my representatives and senator," he said. "I'll use the school analogy, surely they'll see my point."

He walked off with that look of hope mixed with fear and suppressed anger that I see in the mirror so often lately.

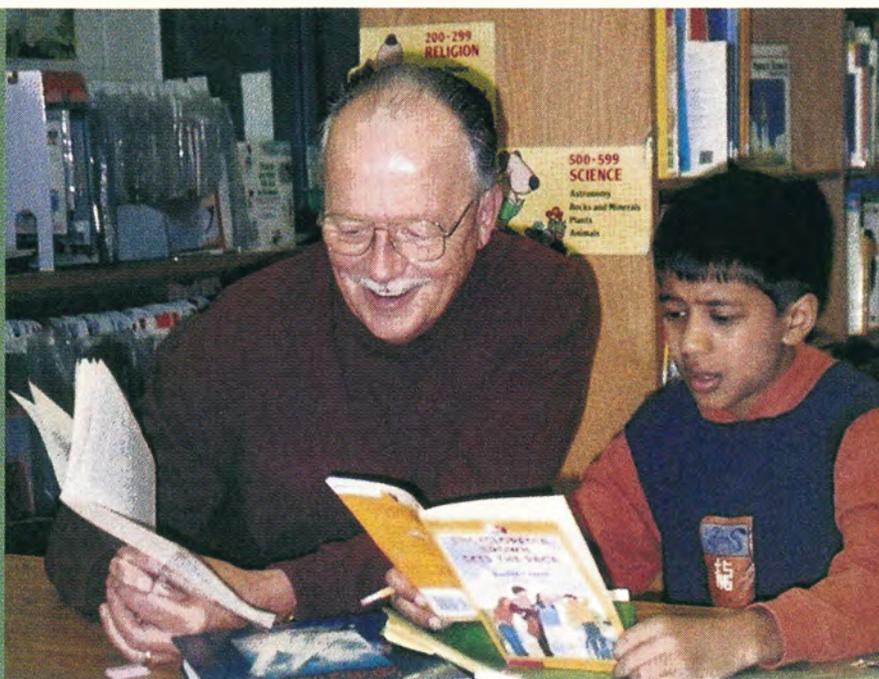
**JOHN TAYLOR** is Superintendent of Schools for the Lancaster County School District in Lancaster, South Carolina. He is a graduate of Davidson College with MEd and EdS degrees from the University of South Carolina. He has served as a teacher or administrator in several of South Carolina's most economically challenged school districts and has served as an education consultant at the Department of Education.

# Literacy Links... Generations of Readers Together

By SEEMA MEHTA

"A single conversation  
across the table with  
a wise man is better  
than ten years' mere  
study of books."

*Hyperion Longfellow, 1839*



**T**here is an old African proverb that has become universal in the world of education. This slogan has been adopted into the pedagogy of our profession and provides a moral basis for our workings. "It takes a whole village to raise a child," is easily tossed about in dialogues and trains of thought, but to build it directly into the curriculum has proven to be the greatest challenge and perhaps the greatest triumph of my career thus far.

It began in my third year of teaching. The school – centred in a hardworking community, where English was often not the first language of choice in many households. The class – a grade 4 comprised of 20 students of varying abilities. The target – to instill a passion for literature. Passion is an extreme word, and like most extreme words, it carries a heavy weight that is difficult to uplift by the force of just one person, perhaps because it is so strongly rooted in the elements of knowledge, success and

appreciation. As a single educator in a generalized grade 4 class of readers with mixed abilities, my target felt more like a loophole that led straight into a pipe dream.

Still, I grappled with my goal. Throughout my education, I had come to understand the value of communication. Communication is a basic necessity of life. Like food, words nourish the mind. Take away words and all students are left with are negative social behaviours to express their ideas. "Behaviour disturbance, in particular anti-social or conduct disorders, are associated with difficulties in reading" (Rutter, Tizard and Whitmore, 1970) Snowballed over time, this could spark heightened aggression and perhaps even violence. Put into the context of the future, my target became charged with a whole new perspective.

I knew what my students needed. They needed their own guide who could steer them through the individualized bumps and obstacles found in the terrain of literacy; someone who could help them read between the lines and appreciate the author's intent; someone who had the time to sit down and have one-to-one discussions that approached and solved the reader's individual queries. Time, patience and a love for books – that's what the job called for. Finding a group of people who could fit this demanding description is how the individualized reading program "Literacy Links" came to be.

In a way, I was looking for surrogate grandparents who could impart a love of literacy in their own unique and nurturing way. What I got was so much more. In the summer of 2000 I approached various senior community centres with my idea and was welcomed with open arms.

As the school year approached, I was energized by the prospect of a group of children who would bring with them a whole new set of personalities and learning styles, that would expand my teaching repertoire. I went through the usual motions of getting my classroom ready for learning. But this year would be different from the others. To prepare for my upcoming journey through the Literacy Links program I had purchased a journal in which I would record the weekly events as they unfolded. Here are just a few of the many highlights.

#### **Wednesday, September 27**

Seventeen seniors meet my class of 20 students in the lunchroom of our school. My students are nervous about getting to know a new group of people that they are going to spend the year working with. Clinging tightly to book bags for security, they come prepared with readers specifically matched to their reading level and a duotang filled with generic worksheets. Their first task is to fill out a "Getting to know you" questionnaire. During this exercise, some of my students discovered that their reading buddies had served in World War II and lived through the Great Depression.

#### **Wednesday, October 4**

The reading begins. My students aren't nervous this week. As they crack open the spines of their new novels, I circulate down the rows of lunchroom benches. Each worksheet comes with instructions. I clarify when needed and make sure that the sheets are being filled out correctly. The children write and discuss setting, characterization and vocabulary. Each chapter is chunked by end of chapter questions that the seniors formulate for the children and that I read after each session.

#### **Wednesday, October 18**

I overhear a conversation between a little girl in my class and her reading buddy. It isn't dealing with the black and white details contained in the novel, but rather real-life experiences that relate to setting and paint a background full of colour and richness. The story is set in the back-drop of mid-west America during one of the bleakest periods of history, The Great Depression. This particular reading buddy lived in Oklahoma in the 1930s and described a natural disaster known as the Dust Bowl. "We had to wear hats with wide brims, kerchiefs over our faces ... we had to put Vaseline in our nostrils to prevent breathing in the dust ... the black blizzards destroyed everything." Her words echoed the feelings of the story's main character. This woman's empathy gave the character a third dimension which brought her to life for the little girl.

#### **Wednesday, October 25**

The lunchroom is occupied, so we change our weekly venue to the library. One of our senior reading buddies – a retired journalist, freelances as a magician and offers to put together a magic show aimed at literacy. During the last ten minutes, he works his magic on a receptive audience, yearning to be entertained. He teaches them how to look words up in the dictionary, and how to use a thesaurus, with the tap of a wand and the inner workings of a black top hat. After the show, I ask my students what they had learned. Naively they reply, "Nothing. We just had fun!" Initially I was disappointed, but in retrospect I realized that the best classroom should be a stage where learning recedes into background and fun takes over the spotlight.

Literacy Links was piloted with 20 grade 4 students. Academic results were as follows:

Students whose grades improved with Literacy Links $13/20 = 65\%$	Students whose grades remained the same with Literacy Links $6/20 = 30\%$	Students whose grades fell with Literacy Links $1/20 = 5\%$
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**Wednesday, December 13**

The day of the Literacy Links party. The roads are layered in thick, persistent ice. The wind is fierce. As I watch the flag outside our school flailing frantically, I am afraid that many seniors will not be able to come. My students look forward to the party. They have made napkin ring holders in the shape of poinsettias and rehearsed a French Canadian carol. I can tell by the straightness in their postures, and the expressions in their voices, that they feel important. I don't have the heart to tell them their guests may not come. Luckily I didn't have to. Every senior came, and not once did they complain about the weather. Instead, they just went on doing what they loved best – reading. Even though I never go into detail about the obstacles some seniors cross just to make it to our sessions, I know my students understand – an unspoken truth that draws our group closer together.

**Wednesday, March 21**

One of the reading buddies and a student engage in a discussion around the word “crackerjack.” It’s a word contained in the novel they are reading. They talk about the word and how it is used in the context of the book. The reading buddy, who is somewhat nautical, provides insight into the origin of the word. He explained that “crackerjack” was a term derived from the Vikings. It was used to describe tidbits of leftovers meats, biscuits that were mixed together in a stew-like fashion, for sailors aboard ships. As I watched the student, I could tell by the grin on his face that he was intrigued yet distanced from the conversation. Perhaps the origin of this word lay too far out of the realm of his own experiences. In order for it to make sense for him, the reading buddy shifted gears and talked about a subject with which every child is familiar – candy. He related crackerjack to the confectionery concoction of peanuts, popcorn and caramel, as tidbits of food put together. He told the boy that the next time he goes to the store to take a closer look at the packaging of this candy, for a clue to the origin of the word. Before the reading buddy could finish his sentence, the boy’s face was transformed by excitement. “I know!” he declared. “There’s a sailor on the front of the bag!” As one fisher would say to another, the reading buddy had reeled the student in.

**Wednesday, June 13**

The first year of Literacy Links draws to a close. I can say without any hesitation that it has been a success. Most children have improved their reading scores by a whole letter grade. But more than just a development in academics, there is a development that cannot be quantified on paper. Perhaps it is because it lies in the children’s smiles when they learn important life lessons through the author’s unspoken words. Or perhaps it lies in the excitement of the students’ voices as they and their reading buddies embark on journeys where the only ticket for travel is imagination. Whatever the case may be, success, knowledge and appreciation are budding below the surfaces of written text. I can see it and I can hear it as I feel students’ shift from *having* to read to *wanting* to read.

The students prepare gifts for their reading buddies as tokens of their gratitude. The gifts are a perfect metaphor for learning – hand-painted ceramic garden pots each



containing a packet of seeds. But more than the seeds of any flower, our seniors, through their wisdom and devotion, have planted seeds of passion. Over time, this will bloom into a love of literacy which will outlast and outshine even the fairest of roses. The future looks bright. Teachers and parents from other schools are interested in starting similar reading buddy programs in their communities. Over time, Literacy Links may add a novel twist to a textbook tale. And perhaps it will go something like this ... “Once upon a time there was a village who raised a child, and then along came a group of people who proved that it takes a generation to teach one.”

**SEEMA MEHTA** teaches grade 4 at Lucy Maud Montgomery School, Scarborough.

**REFERENCE**  
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“Never underestimate the power of story,” author Wayson Choy told ETFO’s provincial and local leaders at the February 2002 Representative Council meeting.

# ETFO Meets Wayson Choy

BY CHARLOTTE MORGAN



**Wayson Choy** was born in Vancouver in 1939. In 1962 he moved to Toronto and published *The Sound of Waves*, which received the Best American Short Stories Award. In 1967 he became a professor at Humber College and a faculty member of the Humber School for Writers. In 1977, *The Jade Peony* was published as a short story. Since then it has been included in more than 20 anthologies. Published as a novel in 1995, *The Jade Peony* was co-winner of Ontario’s Trillium Book Award. Choy is currently working on a new book, *Paper Shadows*, about growing up in Vancouver’s Chinatown.

Choy based one of the characters in his award-winning book, *The Jade Peony*, on a real-life teacher, Miss Doyle, whose class he attended at Strathcona Public School, in Vancouver. Many years later, when Miss Doyle was approaching her 100th birthday, she heard about the book and asked to meet her erstwhile pupil. The two met again – and finally recognized each other as human beings.

“Miss Doyle was racist. She used to tell stories about races of people – it was never as good as being like her. Yet I say to you, you don’t have to have everything perfect. What you need is a sense of justice that you bring to the classroom, a sense of wanting to know more and do more than any one group can think of doing,” Choy said.

“From kindergarten I was taught the works of the superior beings above me – the literary canon. These included Shakespeare and all the writers I worshipped. But it was a racist education because I was being colonized by a narrow aspect of the world – an appropriate world of those times. I don’t judge it negatively. I had a fine education. I judge it in the way that we can undo the injustices and social wrongs of the past by knowing better – by expanding our sense of education of every person in that classroom.

“My teachers taught me the British colonial aspect of the world – where white was right and comfortable and powerful. They also taught me that there was a sense of justice, a sense of belonging I never encountered any overt racism. That might have been partly because the world was changing, and how it changes influences the classroom. Today, with so many changes going on in the classroom, I can’t imagine where you, as teachers, might be now in your heads and in your hearts. Both need to be open. I love that saying, “The mind is like a parachute. It does not work unless it opens!”

“As teachers, you know that years from now your students will look back on your curriculum and see things that should have been and things that weren’t right. Yet they will remember that you taught with a certain ability, with love and affection, and that’s what makes the difference.”

Choy told many stories of his personal life – of his family’s move from Vancouver to Belleville, of how his respect for omens led to a \$100,000 lottery win that helped his father die in dignity, of how he was unexpectedly influenced by the work of Françoise Sagan and learned to love Jaguar cars. A creative writing course he took from author Carol Shields while he was on sabbatical in Vancouver changed his life. An exercise in which he had to use the colour pink was fully realized in the short story and later novel *The Jade Peony*.

“I grew up with storytelling and always wanted to tell stories myself. I noticed the teacher held the book in a way that suggested weight and dignity. From that moment, I knew I wanted to be a teacher; I wanted to be a writer.

“My own feelings were that I had nothing to say, so when I graduated from my writing course I did nothing for almost three decades. I didn’t write until I was 55. During that time, the consciousness of the world changed and I changed with it. I realized that our stories are important and they need to be told. And they need to be told truthfully.

“I have never forgotten all those English teachers who made sure my heart would be broken with the death of King Lear. My best advice to teachers is to be aware of who is sitting in your classroom. Understand they are just as aware of you, your curriculum and your teaching as I was of Miss Doyle.”

# Keep Your Eye on the Prize

By VIVIAN McCAFFREY

In April 1999, former Premier Mike Harris announced that the government would introduce teacher testing in Ontario. In June 2001, he made good on that promise when the government introduced Bill 80, the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act* that prescribes a program for teacher recertification. From the beginning, the issue has been intensely political. The fight against teacher recertification will only be won at the political level and with the support of strong, collective action on the part of teachers across the province.

The Harris government, more than any provincial government in recent history, has operated according to simplistic, ideological notions. The details of the recertification requirements are highly offensive to teachers. They are not based on sound research about professional learning or the art of teaching. Teacher recertification is a political gesture based on the assumption that the electorate is ill-informed about teacher training, the nature of teaching, the role of the Ontario College of Teachers, and the professional accountability measures already in place through teacher evaluation. The government manipulates public communications about these issues to its political advantage to win support for a simplistic response to the complex issues related to effective teaching and student achievement. At a time when Tory ratings among voters are in steady decline, the government continues to score high in public opinion polls on the issue of teacher testing.

Teachers tend to be extremely idealistic about how democratic governments should work. ETFO has responded to the government's teacher testing proposals with sound, rational alternative policies. Those proposals would ensure high professional standards for Ontario teachers and would provide real accountability for teaching and student learning in our classrooms. While ETFO's alternative policies and our lobbying at Queen's Park to promote them have won the federation important credibility on the issues, they, by themselves, are not enough to win the fight.

Since the passage of Bill 80 in June 2001, ETFO locals and members have responded with great determination to the call for action to protest this teacher recertification legislation. Local leaders were busy this fall and early winter lobbying MPPs in their ridings and making presentations to school boards and faculties of education. Thousands of teachers have returned recertification

letters to the College and have written letters of protest to the College, the Minister of Education, and opposition MPPs.

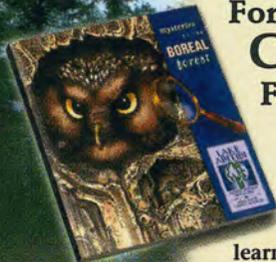
These actions have had an impact. The vast majority of public school boards and faculties have agreed to respect teachers' requests not to forward any results of professional development courses to the College for the purposes of recertification. While all public boards have applied for provider status, few are rushing to submit courses for approval by the College's Professional Learning Committee. In response to presentations from their ETFO locals, the Renfrew County District School Board has agreed not to forward any courses for approval to the College and the Upper Grand District School Board has endorsed the ETFO *Alternative Accountability Model* as an alternative to teacher recertification. In response to concerns expressed by teacher federations and individual teachers, a number of providers have withdrawn as providers from the College. These include various subject associations, the Stratford Festival and Shaw Festival theatres, and the Bureau of Education and Research. More withdrawals are anticipated.

ETFO members have written letters and signed petitions. The notification letters returned by teachers in the first recertification cohort, the protest letters from thousands of other teachers, and the petition calling on the Governing Council of the College to denounce recertification have all sent a clear message that teachers lack confidence in the way the College is implementing its mandate to govern the profession.

Most importantly, the actions addressed to the College and the letters directed specifically to Queen's Park have caught the attention of the opposition leaders. Both Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty and NDP Leader Howard Hampton have clearly indicated that, if their party forms the next government, they will withdraw the recertification program and work with teachers and the College to implement meaningful professional development for teachers. But they have gone further. Both leaders have acknowledged that the current governing structure of the College is not working. They have indicated the College requires reform to reduce the politicization and the political interference and to transform the College into a more truly self-governing body.

CONTINUED PAGE 31

## Forest Stewardship Comes To Life For Your Students



"Mysteries" is an innovative and bilingual learning tool that encourages students to learn about forest stewardship.

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**Recertification NO**

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## FOCUS ON EQUITY

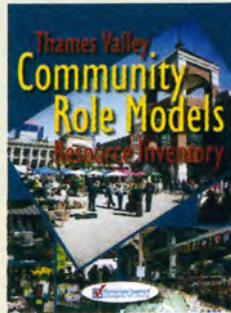
ETFO objects include: To foster a climate of social justice in Ontario and continue a leadership role in such areas as anti-poverty, non-violence and equity.

ETFO recognizes that we live in a society characterized by individual and systemic discrimination against particular groups. Within this context ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures which result in equality for all.

### Resource Inventory

ETFO, in partnership with ETFO Thames Valley, has developed a *Community Role Models Resource Inventory*. The resource has information about 15 racial minority and Aboriginal community role models in the Thames Valley area and includes lesson plans for kindergarten to grade 8.

The *Community Role Models Resource Inventory* was written by the Thames Valley Local Anti-Racist Education Committee, with support from provincial office staff John Guiney and Sherry Ramrattan Smith, who are attached to the Equity and Women's Services Service Area. The members of the Thames Valley Local Anti-Racist Education Committee are Jaki Armstrong, Shirley Jones, Lorraine Mention, Christine Rodriguez, Henricus Terpstra and Cathy Wirick. For information on purchasing this resource, contact John Guiney at provincial office.



### LGBT Listserve

The listserv for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of ETFO has been operating since October. The listserv is a forum for lgbt members of ETFO to discuss sexual orientation and sexual identity issues in education. Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender members of ETFO can apply to join the listserv by going to the ETFO website ([www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)) and following the links from "Equity."

Lesbian and Gay Pride Week is set for June 24-30. ETFO will participate in the Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade in Toronto on June 30.

All members are encouraged to participate in the week's activities in their local and to come to the parade in Toronto. To share information about Pride Week events in your local, please contact John Guiney at provincial office.

### Resource Revised

*We're Erasing Prejudice for Good* was revised recently and the updated kit will be available from ETFO shortly. An in-service for teachers on using this award-winning resource is available through provincial office. For further information on the resource or the in-service, contact staff in Equity and Women's Services at provincial office.

### Equity in the Classroom

The "Equity in the Classroom, Equity in the Curriculum" Conference will be held at York University on May 9 and 10. The keynote address, "The Ecology of Teaching and Learning", will be delivered by Dr. Ursula Franklin. On May 10, all of the executive staff in Equity and Women's Services will be involved in presenting or facilitating workshops. Sherry Ramrattan Smith and Carol Zavitz will give a workshop on ETFO's resources for addressing equity issues. Kathleen Loftus and John Guiney will present the recently released NFB films on celebrating diversity and challenging homophobia and will facilitate a discussion about using these resources in the classroom. John was also involved in bringing together a panel of gay and lesbian elementary teachers to discuss LGBT issues in education. As in previous years, this year's conference will be an opportunity for all educators, whatever their experience with equity issues, to gain further knowledge and to hone their skills.

## Local Initiatives

### Hastings-Prince Edward

The Anti-Racist Education Committee works with Board and community members on some projects to ensure broad-based education and support for their initiatives. In conjunction with staff from provincial office, the committee is developing a *Community Role Models Resource Inventory*. The document will be published this year and will provide classroom teachers with a practical, local resource of community members who represent multi-racial and cultural backgrounds.

The workshop, "Focus on Ability", was given at the steward training in January. The committee has organized a speaker series and a Symposium/Modified UN project, and it liaises with the Board's Multiculturalism/ Multiracial Advisory Committee. A major initiative of the committee this year has been the introduction of ETFO's anti-bias curriculum resource, *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good*, to schools and teachers. The project was written up in the local newspaper, where the local and the committee were commended for their efforts in eliminating racism and prejudice through the education of young children.

**JOHN GUINEY, KATHLEEN LOFTUS, SHERRY RAMRATTAN SMITH and CAROL ZAVITZ** for ETFO's Equity and Women's Services.

## Keep Your Eye on the Prize

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

These are significant gains won during the early days of recertification implementation. To fully realize the goal of having recertification withdrawn, we must keep up the pressure and continue the collective action. If teachers consistently avoid taking courses that are registered as Professional Learning Program (PLP) courses, more school boards will be forced to abandon their PLP courses and focus on providing professional development that responds directly to their teachers' needs. If school boards fail to forward courses for approval to the College, the recertification program will begin to crumble. If all this happens, the next provincial government will truly have a crisis to resolve and we will be calling on them to live up to their commitments on the issue.

There are other developments that will, in the longer term, have an impact on Ontario government policy on teacher recertification. The government adopted its simplistic proposals for teacher testing and high-stakes standardized student testing from the "accountability reform" agenda of the Republicans in the United States. There is a growing body of research in the United States that challenges the validity of both forms of testing. An increasing number of teachers are protesting how the testing is being implemented. Eventually, the waves of repudiation and protest will wash over the border and in time influence those of our politicians who continually look southward for inspiration and direction.

So keep your eye on the prize. We can win the battle if we remain focused on sending a strong message to the college and to the politicians at Queen's Park that, without teacher support and compliance, recertification will not work. We support accountability, not recertification.

**VIVIAN McCAFFREY** for ETFO's Strategic Services Service Area

## Bargaining Basics

In any workplace, a fundamental imbalance of power is a fact of life. We may have the numbers, but they retain the power to issue the pay cheques.

Collective  
Bargaining

### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

By Christine Brown for ETFO's Collective Bargaining Services

Given that the relationship between employers and employees is lopsided from the start, when it comes to negotiations, mechanisms are needed which will help in some measure to redress the imbalance. After all, what is to stop an employer from firing the members of the bargaining team, ripping up the collective agreement, and refusing to return the calls of the union president who is attempting to open negotiations (or better yet, firing her too)?

The answer from a legal perspective is the *Labour Relations Act* (with an assist from the *Education Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*). What follows is, in broad strokes, a summary of the bargaining process under the *Labour Relations Act* (LRA) for ETFO members. Since 1998, the basic framework has been the same whether you are an educational support personnel member, a teacher, an occasional teacher, a child care worker, etc.

The right to represent ETFO members in the bargaining process is held by the ETFO provincial body which, in turn, delegates the negotiating to the locals. School boards must recognize ETFO as the exclusive bargaining agent for elementary teachers and other employees for whom it holds bargaining rights and they are obligated to bargain with ETFO. Bargaining officially begins with the "notice to bargain" letter, which must be sent any time within 90 days prior to the expiry date of the collective agreement, or in such other time period as the parties agree upon in their collective agreement. Most ETFO collective agreements do in fact provide for more than 90 days' notice. The management side also has the right to send a "notice to bargain" to the union, though school boards rarely do so. One thing management can't do with respect to the union's initial letter, however, is ignore it.

Once the notice is out, negotiations must begin within a short time frame. Thereafter, the law enjoins both parties to "bargain in good faith and make every reasonable effort to make a collective agreement."

What does it mean to "bargain in good faith?" A few examples of the kinds of situations ETFO bargainers sometimes encounter follow.

For one thing, bargaining in good faith means that the employer must actually meet with the union to bargain. While there are occasionally legitimate reasons for cancelling a scheduled bargaining session, it is a contravention of the LRA to simply find endless excuses not to meet: "We'd love to but there are three other employee groups ahead of you in line." "Our Superintendents are tied up working on our application for the Bertelsmann award." "We're short-handed in payroll just now and can't get the documents together." "My dog ate the data."

Second, it means the employer must engage on a serious level with the union over the issues that have been tabled. "Surface bargaining" i.e., just going through the motions with no serious intent to arrive at an agreement, is a contravention of the LRA duty to bargain in good faith.

Third, the employer must bargain only with the union, and cannot bargain with individual employees. This does not mean that there must be absolutely no communication from management to the employees during bargaining. It does mean, however, that the rules for what management can say to bargaining unit members, and how they can say it, are strict, and you will find your local executive and bargaining team to be highly vigilant on this point.

Fourth, the employer cannot refuse to disclose relevant information requested by the union and required for meaningful bargaining.

For example, data on payroll, staffing levels and benefits are essential in understanding overall cost.

Allegations that one or the other party has failed to bargain in good faith are taken before the Ontario Labour Relations Board, which has remedial powers ranging from a slap on the wrist to an order which requires the guilty party to correct its behaviour.

Formal charges are fairly rare in negotiations between ETFO and school boards, however. Tabloid newspaper reports notwithstanding, the most common pattern in the education sector is that the parties meet, continue to meet and eventually conclude a collective agreement.

The LRA provides for third-party assistance in arriving at a collective agreement. Increasingly, settlements tend to happen at the stage known as "conciliation." Either side may apply for conciliation at any time after notice to bargain has been given or anytime after the parties have met, though in school board bargaining such applications are rarely made before the parties have met at least a few times to discuss the issues.

A conciliator is appointed by the Ministry of Labour when one or the other side applies. Unlike the factfinders of yore, he or she is there strictly to assist the parties in getting a deal, and not to pronounce on the worthiness (or lack thereof) of the positions taken. The conciliator will typically meet with the parties at least a few times, and will shuttle back and forth trying to get both to compromise sufficiently in order to craft a settlement but will not issue recommendations or a detailed report.

Should this shuttle diplomacy be heading nowhere, one side or the other will typically ask for a "no board report." This odd little phrase derives from a power which the Minister of Labour holds under the LRA to appoint a panel – a conciliation board – to deal with bargaining disputes. It has been 30 years since any Minister actually appointed such a panel; nevertheless, the Minister of the day still issues a written notice that she or he does not deem it advisable to appoint such a board in the present case, hence, a "no board report."

Why issue the report then? Think of the "no board report" as a kind of stopwatch. It is the writing of this report that, under the LRA, starts the clock ticking to the point in time at which a strike, or lockout, is legal. After this time the freeze on existing terms and conditions of employment also expires and the employer may alter terms and conditions of employment. That day happens on the 14th day after the

release of the report. Where the report is sent by mail the report is deemed to have been released two days after it is sent. So ordinarily employees are in a strike/lockout position on the 17th day after the report has been sent.

In addition to this deadline, two other conditions must be met in order to mount a legal strike. The first is that the collective agreement must have expired. The second is that the union must have taken a successful strike vote.

Unions have wide latitude over how a strike vote is conducted, but there are basic rules of fairness which must be followed under the LRA. Such votes must be by secret ballot, all bargaining unit members are entitled to vote, and members must be given ample opportunity to cast their ballots (which in practice means that there must be adequate notice that a vote is to be held and that the place and time must be reasonably convenient). An affirmative vote by 50-percent-plus-one of those voting authorizes a strike.

Throughout this time, bargaining typically continues. The parties may jointly agree to ask the Ministry for a mediator (who is sometimes the same individual as the conciliator). They may also jointly agree to send the dispute to binding arbitration, in which case they would forfeit their strike/lockout option.

Eventually, however, a settlement does occur. With very rare exceptions, the LRA requires that any settlement must be ratified by the members (using the same basic procedural rules as those outlined for strike votes, above).

So much for the law. In addition, a number of practices are in place within ETFO itself to ensure that members have a say in how their collective agreements are bargained.

For example, ETFO negotiations procedures require that a local's preliminary submission, i.e., the initial set of proposals that will be given to management at the bargaining table, be endorsed by the membership. As well, you will receive written information on the progress of negotiations, and, depending on the circumstances, there may be school visits from local executive members and central or regional mass meetings.

All of these create an opportunity for you to ask questions, put forward suggestions and provide the kind of input and guidance that the bargaining team will need throughout the time-consuming and stressful business of negotiating a collective agreement. The legal framework may force management to deal with the union, but only the solidarity of members ensures that the union is treated with respect.

**>> Tabloid newspaper reports notwithstanding, the most common pattern in the education sector is that the parties meet, continue to meet, and eventually conclude a collective agreement.**

Teachers and their federations represent the only credible group able and willing to speak in support of the core values of our public education system.



#### CTF REPORT

Doug Willard, President, CTF

On March 16, 1880, then Leader of the Opposition, Sir Wilfrid Laurier spoke in Parliament during the debate on how the government should deal with those involved in the rebellions in western Canada.

“What is hateful is not rebellion but the despotism which induces that rebellion: what is hateful are not rebels but the men who, having the enjoyment of power, do not discharge the duties of power: they are the men who, having the power to redress wrongs, refuse to listen to the petitions that are sent to them: they are the men who, when asked for a loaf, give a stone,” he said.

He could have been referring to today’s governments and their responses to petitions from teachers calling for greater support for the education of our country’s children.

In British Columbia, the provincial government was asked to keep class sizes small, to provide a fair wage increase for teachers and to fund the public education system adequately. The government’s response was to produce a legislative settlement that removed class size limits, that gave the teachers a paltry wage increase and that froze education funding. Just to make sure everyone understood the government’s inability to listen, the government also used legislation to strip benefits from collective agreements previously negotiated with other public sector unions.

In Alberta, the provincial government sank to new depths of shallowness as politicians falsely argued that Canada’s richest province was too poor to offer teachers the same kind of salary settlements it had offered other public sector employees.

These kinds of government actions make it very easy to identify them as stone givers.

But before we become too smug in our condemnation, we must judge our own actions in the same way. We cannot fall into the trap of echoing our employer’s arguments about the difficulty in securing funding for public education when it comes to funding our own federations.

It is becoming very clear that teachers and their federations represent the only credible group able and willing to speak in support of the core values of our public education system. Because of our dedicated classroom work with children, we occupy the moral high ground in this debate. We all believe that teacher federations make a significant impact on that front.

ETFO members can be very proud of the support they have given to their colleagues in CTF and across Canada. In your classrooms, in your federation involvement and in your political struggles you exemplify how much better it is to be givers of loaves than givers of stones.

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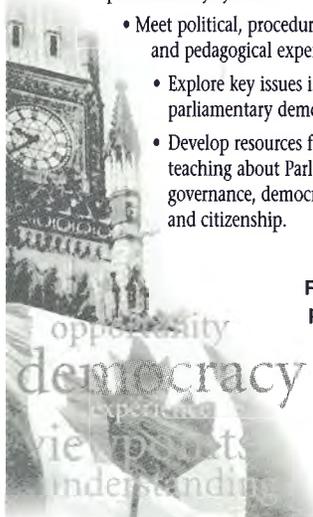
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I remain hopeful that we can weather the financial storm, that we will have a successful ruling in our court case, and that OTF can look forward to a bright future on behalf of teachers.



#### OTF REPORT

Pearse Shannon, President, OTF

Presidents go to interesting places and events. Early in February, I found myself in Court Room One of the Superior Court of Ontario at Osgoode Hall in Toronto to hear the appeal of the lower court judgement in the OTF vs. OSSTF case.

The lower courts ruled that every teacher in the publicly funded schools of Ontario is a member of OTF. That means OTF is 145,000 teachers strong. That issue was not in dispute on in the appeal.

Also not in dispute is OTF's right to set a fee for membership.

At the heart of the case is whether or not OTF can compel the affiliates to pass along the OTF fee collected from teachers. OSSTF is not passing along the \$48.70 a year that is the OTF fee. AEFO, ETFO and OECTA are collecting and forwarding the fee.

Since October 2000, OSSTF has withheld approximately \$2 million in OTF fees.

In that time, the focus of OTF has been on work related to the objects of the federation – the legal obligations of the organization. But finances have been strained. Such an operation cannot be sustained indefinitely.

When the OTF Board of Governors met in January, I pointed out that should this financial situation continue – that is, no fees from OSSTF teachers – OTF would not be able to meet its staff payroll in July.

In the weeks since the Board meeting, a process has been underway at the OTF office to deal with this reality. It is a process that, above all, is aware of and sensitive to the concerns of staff. The entire OTF staff is closely involved in

every step of the downsizing plan. One senior staff person has retired and will not be replaced. Layoff notices have been given to senior staff, resulting in a 50 percent reduction in senior staff. Five support staff have taken the early-exit option and another has been served with notice.

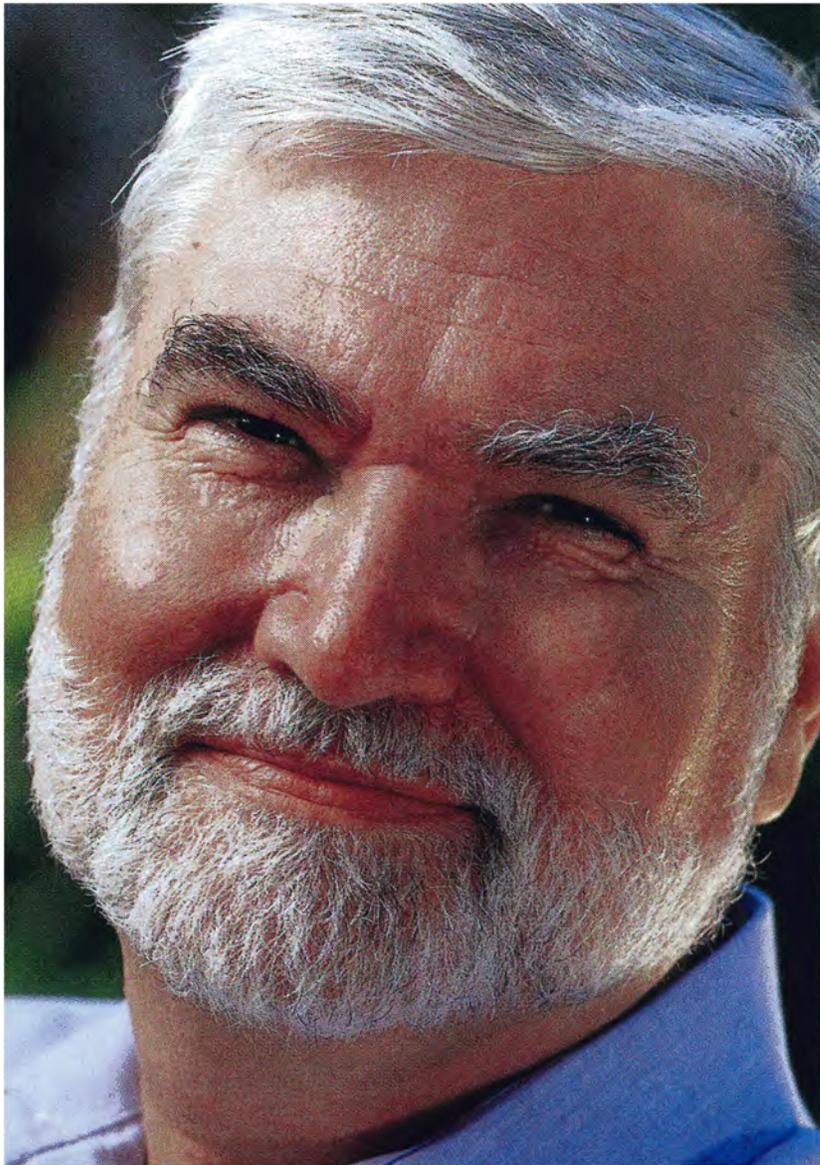
The Executive has committed to reconsider decisions made to date should we have a successful ruling in our appeal court case.

OTF is continuing to work towards a legislative remedy to the fee collection problem. We know from government lawyers that not giving OTF any mechanism to collect its own fee was simply an unintended consequence of Bill 160.

At the same time that the downsizing is underway, the OTF Executive has been looking at restructuring the work of OTF. Unhappily, the two activities have become entwined.

Notwithstanding the financial situation, and regardless of how it resolves itself, the Executive and the Board of Governors believe the work of OTF should be reorganized. In ordinary times this could be an opportunity to strengthen the work OTF does in the interests of teachers and the profession.

As the President of OTF, I remain hopeful that we can weather the financial storm, that we will have a successful ruling in our court case, and that OTF can look forward to a bright future on behalf of teachers.



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# Events

APRIL 19-20 NEW LISKARD

**OTF Retirement Planning Workshop**

Contact: Jim Paterson  
Ontario North East Teacher Local  
Tel: 705-335-4420  
Email: etfokap@ntl.sympatico.ca

MAY 2-4 COLLINGWOOD

**Curriculum 2002: The Joy of Learning 25th Anniversary Year**

Contact: Michael A. Giffen  
Tel: 705-424-3317  
Email: mgiffen@georgian.net

MAY 3-4 THUNDER BAY

**OTF Retirement Planning Workshop**

Contact: Hilda Postenka  
Lakehead Teacher Local  
Tel: 807-345-1468  
Fax: 807-767-8575

MAY 21-25 BRITISH COLUMBIA

**The International Children's Conference on the Environment (icc)**

Contact: ICC Canada 2002  
Victoria, B.C.  
Tel: 1-250-995-0255  
Fax: 1-250-995-0226  
Email: info@iccCanada2002.org

MAY 23-25 OTTAWA

**Fear & Loathing - A Symposium on Bullying**

Ottawa Marriott Hotel  
For information: Tel: 613-244-3803  
web: www.cayfo.ca  
Email: cayfo@aol.com

MAY 26-29 ALBERTA

**International Council on Open and Distance Education and the Canadian Association Of Distance Education**

Contact: Dr. Ken Collier  
Conference Co-ordinator  
Athabasca University, Edmonton  
Tel: 1-780-397-3416  
Email: kenc@athabascau.ca

JUNE 2 TORONTO

**Mariposa In The Schools Performers Ferry Tales** - A Magical, Musical Cruise of Toronto Harbour, 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.  
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SEPTEMBER 2002 ALBERTA

**University of Alberta, Department of Educational Psychology - M. Ed. in Deafness Studies**

Contact: Dr. M.A. Bibby, PhD  
Coordinator, Deafness Studies Education  
Tel: 780-492-3697  
Email: maryann.bibby@ualberta.ca

SEPTEMBER 20-25 ITALY

**21st Century Project**

"The Humanistic Renaissance in Mathematics Education"  
Città del mare Hotel  
Contact: Alan Rogerson  
Email: arogerson@vsg.edu.au

NOVEMBER 7-9 TORONTO

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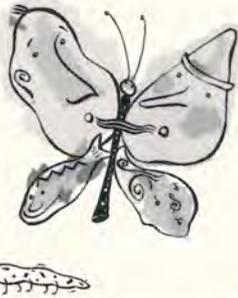
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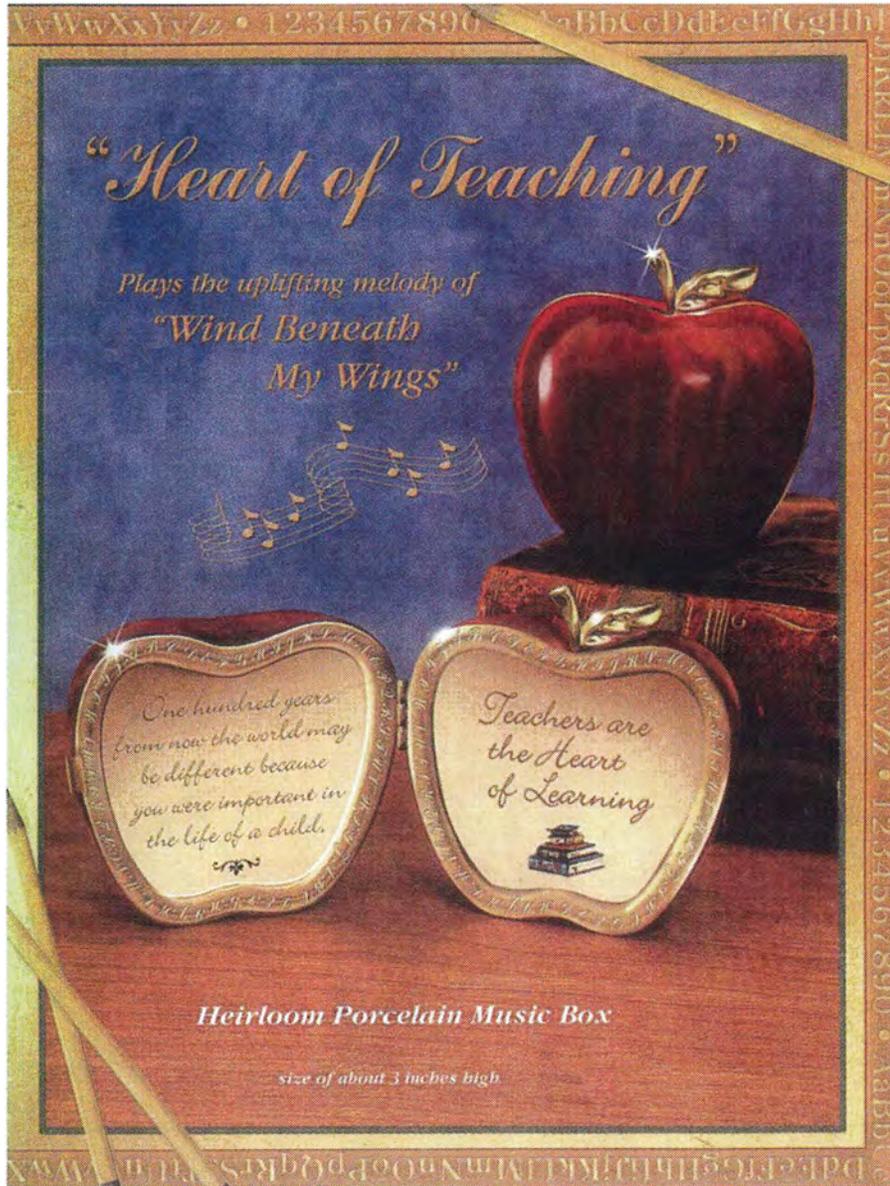
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