

voice

October 2006
Vol. 9 • No. 1

INSERT: Our History

.....
The role of male teachers



2006 **ETFO**
ANNUAL MEETING

GET READY TO CELEBRATE

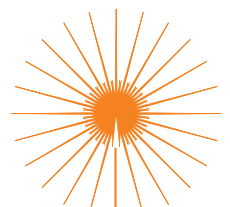


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Features

8 2006 ETFO Annual Meeting



13 ETFO scholarship and bursary winners

21 It's Elementary: A brief history of Ontario's public elementary teachers and their federations



16 Does Gender Matter?



30 Hamster teaches literacy – a true story



35 Local program creates cultural connections

Departments

From the President	4	Il n'est jamais trop tôt... pour apprendre le français!	40
From the General Secretary	5	OTF Report	42
Collective Bargaining	19	CTF Report	43
Disability Issues	29	Reviews	44
Professional Development	33	Teachers' Trivia	47
Equity & Women's Services	38	Calendar	48
		Classifieds	48

On our cover: Some 600 delegates and alternates debated policy at the ETFO Annual Meeting. Photo: Brian Summers.



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Vice-President - Barbara Burkett, Ontario North East

OTF Table Officer - Hilda Watkins, Greater Essex

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Mike Lumb, Limestone

Gayle Manley, Algoma

Lynda McDougall, Upper Grand

Rian McLaughlin, Hamilton-Wentworth OT

Sharron Raymond, Peel

Helen Victoros, Toronto

ETFO Voice

Johanna Brand - Editor

Gene Lewis - Business Manager

Artifact graphic design - Design

Contributors this issue:

Jessica Boyer, Christine Brown, Winston Carter, André Charlebois, Jerry DeQuetteville, Jim Giles, Marjan Glavac, Anne Holloway, Peter Harrison, Jodie Howcroft, David Kendall, Katrina Kenny, Alina Lee, Joan Littleford, Barbara Richter, Linda Rowatt, Kanwer Singh, Krista Swanson, Chris Vert, Hilda Watkins, Catherine West, Carol Zavitz.

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 **Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario**
Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario

480 University Avenue, Suite 1000
Toronto, ON M5G 1V2
Telephone: 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836
E-mail: etfovoice@etfo.org

www.etfo.ca

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This is a year of change at ETFO's provincial office. In his column the General Secretary outlines the new initiatives underway and the new staff in place.

One immediate change in the magazine is that this year there will be five issues rather than four. The extra issue in April 07 will highlight the professional development initiatives ETFO is undertaking as a result of the \$7.8 million we received from the provincial government.

Another unique feature this year will be a series of articles by recently retired staff officer Barbara Richter on the history of ETFO and its predecessor organizations. We are designing these as special inserts that you can pull out and keep.

Not having responsibility for media relations means I will be able to devote more time to working with members who want to contribute to the magazine. Member contributions are a defining feature of the magazine and recently they were recognized for excellence by two national organizations.

The Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) named Kurt Uriarte's photo on the Spring 05 cover of *Voice* as the best photo in a publication produced by staff. CALM members include a broad range of national and local unions.

The Canadian Educational Press Association (CEPA) gave awards of excellence to: Jim Carleton for "A school without borders" (Winter 06); Fran Coté for "Students go to bat for Atawapiskat" (Spring 05); Antonino Giambrone for his curriculum insert, "The extraction of natural resources as a source of conflict" (Winter 06); and Vitusha Oberoi for "Challenging the status quo made easier" (Spring 2005). André Charlebois received an award of merit for his article <<Il était une fois dans la classe de français!>> (Spring 06). CEPA is made up of communications staff from education affiliates across Canada. All of these articles are posted on the website. Click on Publications>Voice.

CALM also named ETFO's Quality Education brochure – inserted in the Spring 05 issue and also distributed to households across the province – as the best flyer or brochure. And CEPA gave an award of excellence to "There's no Substitute for a Substitute Teacher," ETFO's campaign on behalf of occasional teacher bargaining rights.

In the year to come I look forward to receiving your ideas for more award winning stories, photos and curriculum inserts. Contact me at jbrand@etfo.org.




JOHANNA BRAND

.....
Emily Noble congratulates Kurt Uriarte for his award at the 2006 Annual Meeting.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Making a difference for teachers and students

EMILY NOBLE

President, ETFO

ETFO exists to serve you – our members. We work to make a difference in the lives of Ontario's teachers, education workers, and students.

In collective bargaining this past year we saw the successful negotiation of 31 occasional teacher collective agreements. The key goal, as stated by a resolution of the 2004 Annual Meeting, was that every occasional teacher collective agreement would include provisions giving occasional teachers the same timetable as the teacher they are replacing.

We achieved that goal and so much more. The Near North Occasional Teacher Local had to stage a work stoppage to achieve its goals, but the strike showed not only the resolve of members, but also how indispensable they are to the education system. The board closed down schools when occasional teachers went on strike.

We now have collective agreements in place until 2008. Issues that arise before the agreements expire can be resolved through mutual agreement, grievance arbitration, or, in some cases, at the Provincial Stability Commission, which already is having significant success in resolving supervision time disputes. (See the collective bargaining column on page 17.)

We are embarking on an unprecedented year in professional development for our members. This summer, thanks to provincial government support, we were able to offer eight regional Kindergarten Institutes as well as more than 50 summer academy courses. More than 2000 members, including 600 Kindergarten teachers, took advantage of the opportunity to broaden their professional skills.

There has been significant media interest in our courses, which helps the public to understand that teachers value professional growth opportunities.

Providing those opportunities to support the professionalism of our members is one of the services that ETFO is proud of.

Other training – in areas such as classroom management and coping with bullying and harassment – is provided by ETFO Professional Relations Services staff. They are also the people who provide individual assistance to members in difficulty.

We were proud to offer support to Ellen Chambers-Picard, this year's Humanitarian Award winner, when she launched a human rights complaint (see page 10). The resolution of that complaint resulted in significant improvements in the way her board and its schools deal with bullying and harassment.

ETFO does a great deal of work to address social justice issues at the provincial and local levels. This year two more locals have signed on to the payroll deduction plan to support the ETFO Humanity Fund. The Stephen Lewis Foundation has been the signature charity of our Humanity Fund to date. We offer support to organizations and individuals who work on behalf of women and children around the world. We provide curriculum resources that help members teach students about equity issues. And we offer leadership and growth opportunities for members. Through the support of Project Overseas, our members are able to work with their colleagues in developing countries.

This is just some of the work ETFO does for you, and it would not be possible without the work you do for ETFO. None of what we do can happen without you. I urge you to get involved and make the Federation part of your everyday life.

Together we can make a difference.



FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Changing needs of members drive Federation growth

GENE LEWIS

General Secretary, ETFO

ETFO has been evolving since 1998, when its two predecessor organizations joined to form one organization.

In the coming year the ETFO provincial office will undergo exciting changes designed to serve you better as we add staff with expertise in a variety of areas.

We are adding staff to expand our communications services. The ETFO website will be more dynamic, interactive and informative. We will begin an e-newsletter.

A staff officer who can focus on media relations will allow us to do more to inform the public about the needs of students and teachers in our public education system. We will be able to respond more quickly to issues that affect your working life and deal with the media contacts more fully.

Until now media relations have been part of the duties of our magazine editor. The editor will now be able to focus on the magazine: we will be providing you with five issues this year allowing us an additional opportunity to highlight the work that you do in the classroom.

The revamped website, the e-newsletter, and the additional issue of the magazine will keep you better informed about issues that affect your life in the classroom and within your community.

Our expanded communications capability will let us inform not only members, but also the public and provincial policy makers about the issues that affect teachers and students. We will be able to spend more time and energy engaging provincial politicians in all parties so that we can help inform party platforms in the lead up to the 2007 provincial election and communicate

our priorities for the 2008 round of collective bargaining.

Thanks to the funding provided by the Ministry of Education, we are providing professional development opportunities on an unprecedented scale. Additional professional development staff with specific expertise will be seconded to carry out this work. We have also added staff to strengthen our focus on equity and social justice issues so that we can serve a new generation of teachers.

We are strengthening our staff and programming to meet the needs of new members and to sustain our leaders at the local and provincial levels over the next decade.

Like your schools and communities, ETFO will experience major changes as current leaders and staff retire and new leaders come on board. We want to ensure a seamless transition that allows new leaders to feel ready and confident to step forward and work effectively for you.

We are building a stronger union to serve you better. We hope that you will serve your Federation by getting involved at the level that suits you best. Because after all is said and done, you are at the heart of everything we do.

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2006

The 2006 ETFO Annual Meeting was the first without elections. Last year delegates decided to elect leaders for two-year terms; this year they spent four days focusing on Federation business.

In her opening address to the 600 delegates and alternates, ETFO President Emily Noble emphasized the gains ETFO made in collective bargaining for occasional teachers this past year and the overall achievements of the last few years.

“This Federation has grown tremendously in reputation and expertise. Our goal has been to be the leader and to achieve excellence in every endeavour that we have undertaken. In promoting equity and social justice, in providing professional development, and in protecting our members, we have very clearly met that goal.”

Looking forward to the next round of collective bargaining in 2008, Noble said that she could see no advantage in having a provincial framework. Instead agreements will need to be negotiated board by board.

Noble urged delegates to pay close attention to resolutions: “Let’s put our energy into debating the higher-level organizational issues that impact the welfare of all of our members.”

A resolution to reduce the number of report cards from three to two received overwhelming delegate support and generated a great deal of media attention, creating a debate across the province.

Lobbying the Minister of Education to make the change will be one of ETFO’s priorities over the coming year, Noble said. “Our members want to teach; they don’t want to fill out forms that don’t improve education for students.”

In addition, ETFO added its voice to the voices of over 80 other labour, faith, and community organizations and called on Prime Minister Harper and the Canadian government to join in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. Annual Meeting donations added to the \$60,000 the ETFO Humanity Fund gave this past year to the Stephen Lewis Foundation to fight AIDS in Africa.

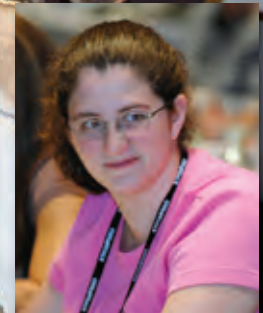
Delegates also called on the federal government to denounce the violent attacks in the Middle East that caused numerous civilian casualties, many of them children. They urged all parties to the current conflict to respect international law, ensure humanitarian action, and work to establish a lasting peace in the region.

Other resolutions directed ETFO leaders to lobby the Ministry of Education to:

- Implement recommendations of the 2002 Rozanski Commission, which called for substantive changes in how education is funded
- Provide additional funding to ensure schools with intermediate students have qualified guidance counsellors.



ETFO ANNUAL MEETING



Photos: Brian Summers

Sandra Pupatello

When they came to power the McGuinty Liberals passed a law banning the practice of spending taxpayer money on “positive ads” – ads that promoted government programs in a blatantly partisan way.



“I’m a bit sorry he did that,” Education Minister Sandra Pupatello told ETFO’s Annual Meeting, “because the public is not aware of what’s happening in Ontario schools.”

The Minister went on to list the government’s accomplishments in education: increased funding, reduction in primary class sizes, additional days for teacher professional development, changes in the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers, and the \$22 million that the government provided to teacher federations’ professional programming.

And, like her predecessor Gerard Kennedy, Pupatello pointed out that the hostility between government and teachers and their federations is a thing of the past. “Your representatives have never spent as much time [in government offices] as they have in the past three years.”

Examples that she listed include the work of the Provincial Stability Commission (*see the collective bargaining column on page 19*), the Student Success Commission, and the many issue-based partnership tables where teacher federation representatives have a seat.

In response to questions, Pupatello acknowledged that there is a great deal more to be done. Delegates asked about funding for special education and English as a second language. As well, they pointed to the gap in per-pupil funding – the amount spent per pupil at the elementary level is far less than that spent at the secondary level. And despite funding increases, the gap has not diminished.

“We’re just getting started here,” Pupatello replied, asking for patience.

Howard Hampton

NDP leader Howard Hampton took issue with Pupatello’s description of the education portfolio as a government success story.



He pointed out that in opposition the Liberals supported the findings of the Rozanski Report. Mordecai Rozanski led the Education Equality Task Force which, in the winter of 2002, recommended that the government update base education funding levels to deal with real costs. The existing funding formula, introduced by the Conservatives, bases funding on the number of pupils in a school.

“We are now on the verge of another election and the funding formula still exists,” Hampton said.

He noted that Boards that have run into difficulty – like the Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Board – have been advised by the government to use ESL funding to pay for on-going operating costs, to lay off custodians, to cut continuing education and to reduce reading recovery programs.

“It is boilerplate Conservative party language,” Hampton claimed.

Hampton reiterated the NDP commitment to public education and public services generally.



2006 ETFO ANNUAL MEETING

Farley Flex's hero is his mother

Farley Flex, a *Canadian Idol* judge, was one of the Annual Meeting's keynote speakers. He spoke to delegates about the importance of nurturing confidence and talent in young people.

He said his mother did that by working hard to expose her children to as many areas of interest as possible. This early exposure to sports, music, and travel helped set his own successful career path. "She implanted self-esteem and gave us the confidence to overcome adversity."

He urged teachers to do likewise and to avoid blanket characterizations when working with children and youth. "They will live up or down to your expectations."

Flex has spent his career discovering, promoting, and developing new Canadian talent. As a teenager he was an event promoter. He went to university on a soccer scholarship. He was one of the founders, and the first music director, of Flow 95.1, an urban music radio station in Toronto. He is involved with a number of organizations that work with youth.

But despite his media prominence, "My role is not as special as the role you guys play," he said. "Everything you do, everything we do, the way we speak to kids encourages things that are amazing. We have to understand the potential that is there for everyone."



ETFO 2006-07 BUDGET General Fund

REVENUE	\$57,232,920
Fees from Teachers, Occasional Teachers, ESP/PSP & associate members + interest	
Defense Fund	(10,885,247)
Political Action/Public Relations Fund	(1,404,548)
OTF/CTF/EI Fees	(3,393,130)
QEEO Fees	(1,008,000)
OFL/CLC Fees	(821,255)
NET REVENUE	\$39,720,740

Projected Expenditure

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	\$ 179,900
GOVERNANCE	2,466,283
annual, executive, & representative council meetings & released executive costs	
ETFO LOCALS	16,212,160
fee rebates to locals, local release time, training & materials for locals & stewards	
COMMITTEE, TASK FORCE & WORK GROUP MEETINGS	189,196
two meetings for each	
ASSISTANCE	609,550
awards, donations, scholarships & project overseas	
EQUITY & WOMEN'S PROGRAMS	1,182,300
race relations, employment equity, anti-violence & women's programs*	
PROTECTIVE SERVICES FOR MEMBERS	1,891,750
collective bargaining, professional relations services, health & safety, pensions & legal costs	
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	1,264,200
PD programs, teacher education & conferences, publication & distribution of VOICE, LINK, EXPRESS & other communications, pamphlets	
PROVINCIAL OFFICE	2,332,200
rent, maintenance, taxes, phones, equipment, printing & postage & members' records	
STAFF SALARIES & BENEFITS	12,239,457
provincial staff salaries & benefits	
ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES & SUNDRIES	490,000
legal costs, consultants, insurance & auditors	
TRANSFERS TO RESTRICTED FUNDS	820,134
transferred assets to be accumulated in separate funds to meet long term goals	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$ 39,877,130

surplus (deficit) of expenditure over revenue \$(156,390)

* Each year, ETFO allocates 6% of the annual budget (\$2,284,184) to programs for women. Some of these programs are in the Equity & Women's Programs section but most are spread throughout the budget.

2006 **ETFO** ANNUAL MEETING



ETFO priorities for 2006-2007

Annual Meeting delegates passed the following priorities for 2006-07:

- To protect the collective bargaining rights of all members.
- To defend publicly funded public education.
- To serve the needs of the membership.
- To provide for the professional development of members.
- To promote social justice in the areas of anti-poverty, non-violence, and equity.
- To support international assistance and co-operation.
- To promote the care and protection of the environment

2005-2007 Provincial Executive

President	Emily Noble , Algoma
First Vice-President	David Clegg , York Region
Vice-President	Barbara Burkett , Ontario North East
Vice-President	Sam Hammond , Hamilton-Wentworth
OTF Officer	Hilda Watkins , Greater Essex
Executive members	Rachel Gencey , Durham
	Shelly Jan , Peel OT
	Martin Long , Toronto
	Mike Lumb , Limestone
	Gayle Manley , Algoma
	Lynda McDougall , Upper Grand
	Rian McLaughlin , Hamilton-Wentworth OT
	Sharron Raymond , Peel
	Helen Victoros , Toronto

ETFO scholarship and bursary winners

Bursaries – Sons and Daughters of ETFO Members

Allison Dickie (daughter of Donna Dickie, Bluewater Teacher Local)

Julie Hillaby (daughter of Mary Hillaby, York Region Teacher Local)

Jennifer McMaster (daughter of Jeannie McMaster, Keewatin-Patricia Teacher Local)

Wayne Russell (son of Brenda Russell, York Region Teacher Local)

Gregory Jozef Violot (son of Raymond Violot, Waterloo Region Teacher Local)

Bursaries – Persons with Disability/Visible Minorities/Aboriginal

Amanda Williams-Yeagers

Satnam Parmar

Ariel P. Vente

Anjili Pant, Hamilton-Wentworth Teacher Local

Israelita Olaz

Nina Danielle Anaman

Yollanda Zhang

Doctoral Scholarship

Douglas Thur, Hastings-Prince Edward Occasional Teacher Local

Doctoral Scholarship – WP

Arlene Campbell, York Region Teacher Local

Master's Scholarship

Lindsay Adams, Rainbow Teacher Local

David Banerjee, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Robin Dashnay, Simcoe County Teacher Local

Luisa Giartzis, Halton Teacher Local

Douglas Jones, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Jill Mountford, Upper Grand Teacher Local

Tania Sterling, Peel Teacher Local

Master's Scholarship – WP

Jennifer Hart, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Flora Joskolka, York Region Teacher Local

Jodi Lynne Regier, Avon Maitland Teacher Local

Alyson Shearer, Durham Teacher Local

Mejalla Skrinda, Thames Valley Teacher Local

Laura Smith Christian, Hamilton-Wentworth Teacher Local

Alice Te, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Deadline for applications for ETFO awards

December 1

- Anti-Bias Curriculum Development Award
- Arts and Culture Award
- Curriculum Development Award
- Curriculum Development Award – Women's Program
- Multi-Media Award
- Multi-Media Award – Women's Program
- Rainbow Visions Award
- Women Who Develop Special Projects in Science and Technology – Women's Program
- Writer's Award (*Published*)
- Writer's Award – Women's Program (*Published*)
- Writer's Award (*Unpublished*)
- Writer's Award – Women's Program (*Unpublished*)

February 1

- ETFO Local Website of the Year Award
- Health and Safety Activist Award
- Honorary Life Membership
- Humanitarian Award for an ETFO Member
- Humanitarian Award for a Non-ETFO Member
- Innovative Projects on Behalf of Children Living in Poverty Award
- Local Leadership Award
- New Teacher Award

- Newsletter Editor's Award (*single and multi-sheet categories*)
- Occasional Teacher of the Year Award
- Outstanding Role Model for Women – Women's Program
- Women Working in Social Activism on Behalf of Women and Children – Women's Program

April 30

- Aboriginal Women in Education – Women's Program
- Bev Saskoley Anti-Racist Scholarship
- Children's Literature Award
- Doctoral Scholarship
- Doctoral Scholarship – Women's Program
- Educational Support/Professional Support Person Bursary
- ETFO Bursaries (*for sons and daughters of ETFO members*)
- ETFO Bursaries (*for persons with a disability, visible minorities, Aboriginal, and LGBT members*)
- ETFO Bursaries – Women's Program (*for persons with a disability, visible minorities, Aboriginal, and LGBT members*)
 - Master's Scholarship
 - Master's Scholarship – Women's Program
 - Women's Studies Scholarship

Other Awards and Honours

Aboriginal Women in Education

Nikki Soliman, Durham Teacher Local

Betty Gunner, James Bay Teacher Local

Robyn Turgeon, Thames Valley Teacher Local

Adelle Lewis, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Ontario Teachers' Federation Fellowships

James Bartleman,

Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Ron Gugula, ETFO Staff

Barbara Richter, ETFO Staff

Harold Vigoda, ETFO Staff

For information about ETFO's awards program:

Please contact Jerry DeQuetteville at provincial office; or visit our website, etfo.ca, and click on Getting Involved.

2006 ETFO AWARDS

Honoured for their Federation work



Ellen Chambers-Picard (left) received the **2006 Humanitarian Award for an ETFO Member** for outstanding service to education and the community. Chambers-Picard is a member of the Lakehead Teacher Local.

Chambers-Picard advocated for her gay son who came out and was harassed and bullied by his peers. She had to choose whether to speak out for her child or quietly comply with her employer.

With ETFO's assistance, Chambers-Picard filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Its resolution resulted in significant changes in the school board's practices and policies.

Chambers-Picard also founded a community group to counteract homophobia and will be lobbying Thunder Bay city council to support Gay Pride Day.

Jan Heinonen received the **2006 President's Award**. Heinonen is the president of the Near North Occasional Teacher Local whose 290 members staged a three-week work stoppage in May in support of their demands for fair pay.



In presenting the award, President Emily Noble described Heinonen as a focused and strong-minded leader determined to achieve a fair wage settlement for her members. "She has worked tenaciously, quietly and tirelessly serving and assisting members," Noble said. "She is very much a team player who always talks about the team and others."

Deborah Wells (left) and **Allan Hasketh** (not shown) from the Limestone Teacher Local received the award for **Best Local Website**. **Kim Pearson** (centre) and **JoAnne Chapman-Beauvais**, from the Waterloo OT Local produced the **Best Local Newsletter**.



Honorary Life Members Patricia St. Laurent, a teacher for 35 years, worked for 20 years as the collective bargaining chair of the Kawartha Pine Ridge Teacher Local. ETFO

staff officer, **Barbara Richter**, is retiring after having worked for ETFO and its predecessor organization the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario for more than 30 years. **Ruth Behnke**, is a former ETFO first vice-president and executive officer, and former president of the Lambton Kent Teacher Local. Recently retired as president of the Hastings-Prince Edward Teacher Local, **Dave Patterson** was a teacher for more than 35 years.

Teacher of the Year: **Dave Patterson**, recently retired Hastings-Prince Edward Local president, received the **Teacher of the Year Award**. **Beverly Ferlatte**, second vice-president of the Upper Canada



Occasional Teacher Local, was named **Occasional Teacher of the Year**. The **Health and Safety Activist Award** went to **Sharlene Smith** from the Lakehead Teacher Local.

Two more ETFO locals reached agreements with their boards during the past year to allow payroll deductions of 10 cents per member per day for the **ETFO Humanity Fund**. With Emily Noble (centre) are **Margaret Crawford**, president, Grand Erie OT Local (left); and **Ruth McLean** president, Upper Grand Teachers Local.



Honoured for their work in the community

Kaysandra Curtis thought parents should be more involved in helping their young children learn how to read. So she set about educating them about how to do that.

“Read to your bunny until your bunny reads to you” is the catchphrase of the Pediatric READ Committee, a group Curtis helped found. The group distributes book bags – complete with a book, a library card and a bookmark – to new moms in hospital.

It’s just one of numerous activities Curtis has undertaken to promote literacy in her community. Curtis received the **2006 ETFO Award for Women Working in Social Activism on Behalf of Women and Children**, which recognizes individuals or groups who have been outstanding social activists on behalf of women and children in Ontario.

Curtis began her efforts as a member of the Parent Advisory Council at Princess Anne Public School in Windsor. She has raised funds for a wide variety of literacy resources. The Christopher Paul and Kaysandra Curtis Children’s Learning Centre at the Windsor Central Library is named to honour her and her husband, a prize-winning children’s book author.



Debora Ellis received the first **ETFO Children’s Literature Award** for her book *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*.

The award recognizes quality children’s literature that is in keeping with ETFO’s positions on social justice and equity.

Ellis’s book portrays the current reality of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the perspective of 20 Israeli and Palestinian youths who describe how the war has affected them.

The book also won the Vicky Metcalf Award for juvenile fiction as part of the 2005 Writers’ Trust of Canada’s literary awards.

Children who struggle to survive and rise above challenging circumstances are a recurring theme in Ellis’s work. Her first book, *Looking for X*, won the Governor General’s Award for Children’s Text in 2000. The heroine, an 11-year-old girl, Kyber, lives in a low-income part of Toronto with her mother and autistic twin brothers.

The Breadwinner (2001), *Parvana’s Journey* (2002), and *Mud City* (2003) make up The Breadwinner Trilogy and tell the story of young Afghan girl, Parvana and her friend Shauzia, and their efforts to survive under the Taliban regime.

Ellis’ latest books, *The Heaven Shop* (2004) and *Our Stories, Our Songs*, deal with the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in Africa and the prejudices and hardships faced by children orphaned because of AIDS.



A pamphlet describing hands-on environmental projects helped kick off **Ian Naisbitt’s** long involvement in environmental activism.

Naisbitt was teaching science and social studies at Concord Public School in Windsor when he read the pamphlet and decided he and his class could make a contribution. They adopted a four-kilometre stretch of the Little River and began cleaning it up.

“Anytime you can make the connection for kids between the classroom and the community, it’s always an easy motivator,” Naisbitt says. He and his students pulled discarded cars, appliances, tires – sometimes as many as 300 – and other waste from the river and its banks. And after a couple of years they began planting trees as well.

That school project spawned the Little River Enhancement Group, which today involves scores of people who look after a watershed of more than 60 square kilometres in three municipalities. The group has raised thousands of dollars to build nature trails.

Naisbitt received the **2006 ETFO Humanitarian Award for a Non-member**, which recognizes an individual who is not an ETFO member and who has given outstanding service to education and the community. Naisbitt retired from teaching in 2004.

The award is the latest in a string of awards Naisbitt has received, both for his teaching and for his environmental activism.



Does Gender Matter?

Would boys do better in school if more of their teachers were men?



Men who are contemplating a career in education are often torn: our society has traditional ideals of masculinity; unchallenged homophobia makes people look askance at men who work with young children; working with young children is thought to be women's work.

■ by Jerry DeQuetteville

When I was growing up there was no women's work or men's work in our household, there was just work. We all pitched in and did what needed to be done. My grandmother was a teacher, my mother was a teacher, and many of her friends were teachers, both male and female. I came into contact with many teachers, both male and female, who had a profound impact upon me. Perhaps it was these influences that, when I was mulling over career options, made me finally settle on teaching. I never once thought that it was women's work. Clearly not all men have this same experience.

For many years there has been concern about the fact that the number of male teachers has been declining. At the elementary level, the number of men seems to have stabilized over the past few years, while at the secondary level it continues to drop.

The media portray the issue with a sense of hysteria. This summer a *Globe and Mail* columnist suggested that the lack of male teachers was the reason boys are falling behind girls in high-stakes standardized testing.

To examine the issue and to try and correct some of the misconceptions that exist, ETFO sponsored a symposium that asked the question: Is the Male Teacher Becoming Extinct? The symposium, held in May, provided an opportunity for a wide range of participants to gather information and discuss the issue.

In her introduction, ETFO President Emily Noble reminded participants that "the media seems to tie the fewer number of male teachers to some perceived failure of boys in our schools. The assumptions that women are somehow unable to teach boys and that all boys learn the same way are simplistic and insulting to both genders."

Justin Trudeau, who was briefly a teacher, delivered the keynote address. He pointed out that the reduced numbers of male teachers in our schools is a symptom that society no longer values service-related professions in general. Those who make a product are valued, those who work with people not so much. He believes teachers have a responsibility to help students to become leaders who care about others and about the environment in which we live. He emphasized the importance of teachers as role models and implored the audience to work with students in an effort to reintroduce to our society the respect for service to others and to one's country.

Dr. Rebecca Coulter, professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario, and Christopher Greig, a UWO graduate student, provided an historical perspective. They pointed out that the debate, while not new, is highly charged and historically has led to some inappropriate comments and proposed "solutions."

Coulter and Greig provided numerous examples of policymakers throughout Canadian history downplaying the work of teachers, particularly woman teachers, as they waded into the debate about male teachers. There has always been a perception that teaching is less than 'manly' in the macho definition of the word. Apart from a slight fluctuation during the Depression, women dominated teaching because they could be paid less, and men often stayed in the profession only to become administrators.

During the Depression, when men lost their higher-status jobs many became teachers and female teachers were let go: the rationale was that women had fathers and brothers to support them, whereas men needed to support their wives and children. As far back as 1943, an article in the *Educational Courier* indicated that women appreciated all young and single professional men except teachers.

Jerry DeQuetteville is an ETFO staff member in Professional Services.



Photo: Anne de Haas

University of Alberta researcher Dr. Janice Wallace questioned the assumptions that society has about male educators. Her research revealed that men who are contemplating a career in education are often torn: our society has traditional ideals of masculinity; unchallenged homophobia makes people look askance at men who work with young children; working with young children is thought to be women's work. It is no wonder then that fewer than 25 per cent of elementary teachers are male and many men teach the higher grades. Interestingly, Wallace also pointed out that a disproportionate number of male candidates at the faculties of education are "second-career" men who are changing professions later in life.

Male elementary teachers often compensate for society's conflicting expectations by assuming a super-masculine personality, or by simply leaving the profession to find jobs in more traditional fields, Wallace said. This is a message that other speakers reinforced.

Wallace surveyed beginning teachers and asked why they chose the profession. Their responses showed that parents and high school teachers were largely positive influences, while friends and the media had a negative impact. The male respondents indicated that increased pay, a re-evaluation of the teacher stereotype, and a work environment that was more reflective of male characteristics – more action oriented, less emphasis on discussion and consensus building – might encourage more men to see teaching as a viable career choice.

Dr. Gary Jones of the Calgary Board of Education reiterated this idea when he spoke of a need to create a safe space for all teachers. His work with male teachers in Calgary revealed that many didn't feel they fit in: their female colleagues had unique bonds and the men didn't feel as if they

belonged. In order to counteract this phenomenon, Jones has formed a number of book clubs and professional learning communities for men, these have a professional dimension but also an important social aspect.

This caused me to reflect on my own career. I recalled meeting with colleagues to organize class lists for the upcoming school year. Over and over I heard: "We have to put 'X' in Jerry's class because he is a handful." Or "X needs a male influence." Such comments made me nervous because I didn't identify my role as a teacher with my gender and I felt my teaching itself was trivialized. It was as if my teaching skills and my program had little to do with the class-building decisions; my gender was the deciding factor. Also, I didn't know what my "male influence" was! Was I supposed to be tougher on students than others? More and more research indicates that men find teaching unwelcoming because of this perception of masculinity. Men, like women, don't always want to be forced into a gender role that is constructed by others.

Many of the speakers challenged the audience to look at why the issue is raised. Why does it continue to be debated when it has existed for more than 100 years? Dr. Coulter showed that often the debate is linked to high-stakes standardized tests in which, commonly and historically, boys perform less well than girls. This discrepancy pressures politicians to come up with quick fixes.

According to Dr. Wallace, studies show that having more male teachers will not greatly affect boys' test scores. However, there is ample research to indicate that low socio-economic status, family history, family supports, and peer group influences have an impact on test results. Governments that want better student performance should focus not on teacher gender but on quality pedagogy, ensuring that teachers are well trained and have the tools they need to do their jobs.

The debate is not unique to Canada. Dr. Wayne Martino and Dr. Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli cited numerous research studies from the UK and Australia that reviewed the impact male teachers have on boys. Australia's ultra-conservative federal government reacted in a knee-jerk way: it went so far as to change the country's constitution so that it could offer scholarships just for men. This extreme measure has had a negligible impact. Other policies designed to give preference to men applying for teaching jobs have also been failures. There are no simple answers.

During the afternoon, participants were led through facilitated discussions of four key issues: Is this a problem? Why is it a problem? What can be done to address the issue? Who should undertake the solutions?

The discussions were rich and passionate. Recently the ETFO Executive called for an executive/staff task force to review the data collected by the facilitators and to report back to the November executive meeting.

Teachers understand that we are important influences in children's lives and that we try to expose our students to positive role models. Unfortunately our impact can't always be measured. Often it isn't planned. Yet all teachers have had the experience of a former student sharing with them the effect that they had. It is powerful, it is real, and it is one of the reasons why ETFO believes in a diverse teaching population.

The Provincial Stability Commission: Building on our bargaining success

Before beginning to negotiate the 2004-2008 teacher collective agreements, ETFO entered into discussions about establishing a provincial framework that would apply to negotiations in all locals.



■ by **Dave Kendall**

The April 2005 agreement we reached with the Ministry of Education and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) clearly set out the parameters for salary increases, improvements in preparation time, and a reduction in weekly supervision duties. It was to apply to the negotiations in every local for the next four years

Very early on, ETFO voiced its concerns about our ability to resolve system-wide issues with a lengthy collective agreement in place. In the past, one and two year agreements had provided us the opportunity to address new issues at the bargaining table relatively quickly. Minister Kennedy responded to our concerns by proposing the creation of a Provincial Stability Commission (PSC) as part of the framework agreement. We agreed to this clause:

“The Government will appoint a Provincial Stability Commission to review potential system-wide issues arising out of a four-year collective agreement. The Commission will consist of equal numbers of representatives acceptable to the school boards and ETFO respectively, with a mutually acceptable chair. Right to grieve and arbitration rights under the provisions of collective agreement are maintained.”

The Provincial Stability Commission (PSC) was established on March 29, 2006.

The Commission's ability to function effectively is recognized in the language that has been negotiated into ETFO's local collective agreements. During the last round of bargaining, boards and locals agreed to give the Commission authority to resolve issues dealing with supervision schedules. In July 2006, the Commission paper, *Commission Practices*, elaborated on its mandate and the principles that guide its activities:

- The PSC exists to foster and further labour relations peace and stability
- The PSC will operate as a primarily consensual problem-solving body through consultation and facilitation with local board/ETFO joint supervision committees
- The PSC will undertake to conduct research and to collect information and data that can assist boards in fostering a cultural change to incorporate proven practices experienced in other parts of the province

Dave Kendall is the coordinator of Protective Services at ETFO.

The Commission recognized early on that each board and each local has a unique culture with practices that have been in place for many years. This often prevented them from discovering simple solutions to what appeared to be extremely complex issues.

- The PSC will act quickly to produce results and solutions ... to accomplish success within weeks not months.

During the past several months, the Commission has been working with those boards and locals that experienced disputes around supervision issues during the 2005-06 school year. Discussions continued throughout the summer to ensure that as many schools as possible could begin the new school year with approved supervision schedules in place.

To date, the commissioners have worked by consensus very successfully. We operate with a respect for each other's positions and opinions and with the clear understanding that the best solutions are those fashioned at the local level by those directly involved. These principles have helped the Commission reach positive results to some very challenging issues in schools across this province.

However, the Commission has also adopted a process to be used in the event consensus fails: a cadre of arbitrators will assist the PSC in reaching final binding decisions. The arbitrators will follow guidelines established by the Commission and will make recommendations for solutions to issues within one or two weeks.

Reflection on past challenges and future gains

The Commission recognized early on that each board and each local has a unique culture with practices that have been in place for many years. This often prevented them from discovering simple solutions to what appeared to be extremely complex issues.

We have been able to help schools learn from each other. For example, we found that there were cases of schools of similar sizes, with similar physical layouts, where one school was able to find a solution to its supervision issues but the other was not. The Commission has been effective

in spreading information about best practices among schools and among boards.

As a commissioner, I've learned that the one issue that has consistently affected the process at the local level has been communication. We have witnessed not just a breakdown in communications between the members of the local joint supervision committee but also a lack of clear guidelines for school supervision committees. The Commission has been very successful in helping many committees to recognize these breaches in process.

Although the supervision-time provisions in collective agreements have created many challenges for many local committees, there are also many success stories and new opportunities to celebrate.

- Teacher workload has been reduced, often significantly.
- School boards and local unions have learned new and better ways of solving problems, and have resolved major system issues, specifically in the area of supervision. With effort, this can only lead to positive experiences in dealing with system-wide challenges in the future.
- Although principals were at first often apprehensive, many have recognized the positive results from shared decision making with school staff.
- Because of the commitment demonstrated time and time again by the school supervision committees, school board officials now clearly recognize our members' devotion and care for the children they serve. They also recognize that members aren't acting in self-interest.

We've met the challenges presented to us and have a strong resolve to face what comes our way during this next school year. The unique culture of each school board will once again have been modified by circumstance and by the participation of the partners in the resolution process. As much as school boards view themselves as unique, they all share the same common elements and need only to expand their horizons beyond, in some cases, a very narrow focus.

I suspect that a decade from now we will wonder what all the fuss was about.

It's Elementary

■ by **Barbara Richter**

1998 – what a year to be born as a federation! It was the year of “the big ice storm” in Eastern Ontario and Quebec. Google was founded and Sesame Street turned 30. It was the year Swissair flight 111 crashed off Peggy’s Cove in Nova Scotia. Air Canada pilots went on strike for the first time in the company’s history. The Calgary Stampeders won the Grey Cup and the New York Yankees won the World Series. Bill Clinton was president of the USA. Jean Chrétien was the prime minister of Canada and Joe Clarke had been elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada again. Mike Harris was premier of Ontario. And the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) began.

.....
Barbara Richter recently retired after spending 30 years as a staff officer at ETFO and its predecessor organization, the Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario.

A brief history of Ontario’s public elementary teachers and their federations



This is the first of a four-part history of Ontario public elementary teachers and their federations.

We will learn about ETFO and its predecessor organizations, the challenges they faced and the victories they achieved. We will learn that:

- Federations work steadfastly to promote and protect the interests of their members
- Federations were and continue to be leaders in advocating for the rights of teachers and the broader society
- Funding for elementary education has been an issue since the 1800s
- Legal or collective agreement rights are never completely secure; the Federation and its members have had to be vigilant in keeping elementary education issues in the public eye and on the government agenda.



The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario was created by the amalgamation of two predecessor organizations, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) and the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation (OPSTF). When ETFO began operating as a federation on July 1, 1998, it continued the work of two federations that had worked to promote and protect the interests of public school educators for 80 years.

The year 1998 was a time of massive change in Ontario education. The provincial government forced Ontario's 129 school boards to merge into 72 organizations, 31 of them public boards. Some of these new boards were huge, covering, in one instance, an area the size of France.

New funding arrangements meant boards could no longer raise money from their local tax base. Teachers were brought under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*. Occasional teachers became members of teacher federations but principals and vice-principals were removed. Thousands of veteran teachers and administrators took advantage of a new opportunity – the 85 factor – for early retirement. Added to this was a new curriculum (with no resources for implementation), new report cards (with none of the technical support needed to produce them), and the threat of ongoing teacher testing.

These were not ideal conditions in which to launch a new federation but elementary teachers proved once again they were up to the challenge.

The critical first year...

A hectic year of activity followed ETFO's inaugural Annual Meeting in 1998.

In collective bargaining the Federation and the newly configured school boards had to reconcile old agreements – sometimes six or more agreements had to become one. Many of the benefits teachers enjoyed were removed from the

This overview captures some of ETFO's more public achievements during the last eight years. ETFO also performs a great deal of work on behalf of members through professional relations services, equity and women's services, professional development, public relations, communications, collective bargaining, research, leadership development, and much more. There is outreach to equality-seeking groups, to community, labour, and social justice groups, in addition to the work ETFO does on the international scene. I will highlight some of that work in future installments. I will go back in history but will not leave ETFO behind: past issues remain relevant and ETFO continues to address them today.

It's Elementary

Education Act and had to be renegotiated. School boards, crying poverty in the face of the new funding formula, were eager to strip hard-won clauses on working conditions, staffing, and benefits. Their idea of reconciling salary grids was moving to the lowest wage.

It took tough bargaining, determined members, more than 20 takeovers, and three strikes (including one lockout), but ETFO locals prevailed. Salaries were reconciled up and working conditions preserved; in both cases some modest improvements were made. One local even managed to reinstate a retirement benefit lost in 1979.

But bargaining wasn't all ETFO did that first year. The programs and services that the two federations had offered also had to be merged. Education and training programs offered in that first year included a training program for local leaders, summer curriculum courses, professional growth workshops, and credit courses.

Curriculum Connections and Presenters on the Road were launched.

There were workshops for Aboriginal and racial minority women members, and leadership, employment equity, and collective bargaining training for women. New curriculum resources were created, including the nationally acclaimed anti-bias curriculum, *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good*.

ETFO consulted members from equality-seeking groups to see how the organization could meet their needs. It created a program to welcome new members and made presentations to future members at the faculties of education.

To keep in touch with its members ETFO launched a new website and created *Voice* magazine, which was mailed to each member's home. Information packages sent to stewards at every school included the newsletters *Link* and *Women's Issues*.

ETFO responded to government initiatives, presented position papers, lobbied the govern-

ment, and developed relationships with the broader labour and social justice communities.

And ETFO also provided advice and assistance to hundreds of individual members. Not bad for a first year!

The 1999 spring election

Delegates to the 1998 ETFO Annual Meeting voted unanimously to work to defeat the Mike Harris government and to elect MPPs who would promote high-quality public education. During the provincial election held in June, ETFO worked with other teacher federations, unions, and community groups to raise the profile of public education. ETFO produced billboards, leaflets, radio ads, and co-sponsored TV advertising. The provincial organization and many locals released members to work in Liberal and NDP campaigns. Mike Harris's government was re-elected, but 17 Conservative incumbents lost their seats. These included three cabinet ministers, one of them former Education Minister David Johnson.

Teacher testing

When the government threatened to force teachers into a cyclical testing program to maintain their certification, ETFO took control of the issue, and, before any details were announced, released *Ensuring Professional Standards in Ontario Education: A Response to the Teacher Testing Proposal*. The document showed that teacher testing failed to assess teacher competency, wasted taxpayer's money, and had no precedent in Canada or the US. ETFO proposed alternatives that would benefit the education system, students and teachers.

The paper called for:

- Enhanced, government-supported teacher professional development
- Development of a provincial model for teacher evaluation and professional growth,

It took tough bargaining, determined members, more than 20 takeovers, and three strikes (including one lockout), but ETFO locals prevailed. Salaries were reconciled up and working conditions preserved; in both cases some modest improvements were made. One local even managed to reinstate a retirement benefit lost in 1979.



- in partnership with education stakeholders
- Creation of a mentoring program for new teachers.

Funding for elementary education

When the 2000-2001 grants provided additional funding for secondary programs but no new money for the elementary panel, ETFO responded. *Out of Focus: How Student-Focused Funding Undervalues Elementary Education* detailed how each grant shortchanged elementary students. As a direct result of ETFO's actions, the next provincial budget included additional money for the reduction of primary class sizes, \$70 million in special education funding for junior kindergarten and primary students, and an additional \$70 million for early-years reading initiatives.

Keeping extra-curricular activities voluntary

Other problems were also brewing. The *Education Act* increased the course load of secondary teachers and, as a result, many refused to volunteer for extra-curricular activities. Bill 74, the *Education Accountability Act*, made extra-curricular activities mandatory anytime, any place, and any day in the school year for both elementary and secondary teachers. It also denied teachers the right to bargain conditions around extra-curricular activities.

ETFO fought back. With our partners in the Ontario Teachers' Federation, ETFO explored a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* challenge to the bill and a complaint to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

ETFO consulted its membership. Over 99 per cent of them agreed Bill 74 represented an unwarranted intrusion into their professional role and was a direct attack on collective bargaining rights. With this strong mandate ETFO advised teachers not to take on extra-curricular

It's Elementary

activities during the 2000-2001 school year.

Keeping extra-curricular activities voluntary became one of ETFO's bargaining goals. ETFO's public relations campaign, *No More Bullying*, included radio spots, newspaper ads, and a special website that allowed members to fax their MPPs and put on the record their opposition to both Bill 74 and the recertification scheme. At the height of the campaign, the website attracted over 1,000 visitors a day, more than five times the normal traffic.

Teachers won. On June 12, the Minister announced she would not proclaim the part of Bill 74 that dealt with extra-curricular activities and, in the future, would deal separately with the elementary and secondary panels.

Building partnerships and presence

That summer delegates to the 2000 Annual Meeting voted overwhelmingly to join the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), making ETFO the largest teachers' organization in the country affiliated with the labour movement. ETFO recognized that participation in the labour movement would give the federation added power to advance the cause of public education, high-quality public services, and the rights of workers.

Capitalizing on the success of the ETFO media campaigns, delegates also voted to establish a provincial political action/public relations fund to support activities to reclaim the education agenda, forge alliances with parents and the public, and protect and improve the working conditions of teachers and the learning conditions of students.

Protecting teachers as professionals

On June 12, under the guise of improving education and ensuring teacher competency, the government finally unveiled its teacher recerti-

fication plan. Bill 80, the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001*, required members of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to participate in a five-year recertification cycle during which they would have to successfully complete 14 professional development courses. The prescribed set of courses gave teachers little flexibility. It did not take into account students' learning needs, teachers' own professional development goals, or what stage they were at in their careers.

The OCT would administer this Professional Learning Plan (PLP) and would randomly select the first cohort of 40,000 practising teachers who would start their five-year cycle in September 2001. Those remaining would start the following year.

Fighting recertification was a challenge for teachers because many members of the public believed it would create greater accountability.

ETFO had to show that this was a myth: teachers were taking part in professional development; accountability mechanisms such as performance appraisal were already in place; and the Federation had a credible alternative plan. ETFO needed to educate members to ensure their support for strong and united action, and also win the support of parents and politicians.

ETFO's campaign – *Accountability YES/Recertification NO* – was a call to members to boycott the PLP plan while continuing to engage in and document their professional growth activities. It continued for three years and involved every service area, provincial and local leaders, and each individual member.

The campaign was a prime example of a multi-pronged approach to defeat a government initiative: legal action, data gathering to put an elementary face on the issue, swift consultation with members to get their support for action, partnerships with other stakeholders to strengthen the opposition, a media campaign that told the real story behind the legislation, and extensive public and private lobbying with government representatives.

The campaign was a prime example of a multi-pronged approach to defeat a government initiative: legal action, data gathering to put an elementary face on the issue, swift consultation with members to get their support for action, partnerships with other stakeholders to strengthen the opposition, a media campaign that told the real story behind the legislation, and extensive public and private lobbying with government representatives.



The results were outstanding. Fewer than 14 per cent of teachers complied with the PLP. But the government didn't budge. It was clear that winning this fight would require a change of government.

Fair funding – A member priority

Government underfunding of education was widely criticized: teacher federations, school boards, and parents all spoke out. In the spring of 2002, the government appointed Mordechai Rozanski to head the Education Equality Task Force which would review the funding model. ETFO told the Task Force what members had said: class sizes were too large and supports too few, specialist teachers and programs were lost, special education was in crisis, workloads had increased, and the difference in per capita funding for elementary and secondary students was not only unfair but illogical.

The Task Force reported in December and confirmed that public education in Ontario needed an infusion of \$2 billion. The government quickly announced more funding for salary benchmarks, somewhat easing the 2002-2003 collective agreement negotiations.

Despite the extra money, boards were still under extreme financial pressure. Three public boards – Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Toronto – refused to make the spending cuts required to achieve a balanced budget. The government response was swift and brutal: they stripped these boards of their powers and appointed supervisors to oversee them.

In the spring ETFO launched *Fair Funding for Public Education* with a full public relations campaign based on the message *Restore funding. Restore programs. Restore democracy.* The specific plea to the public was *Help us help your kids.* Though Toronto, Hamilton-Wentworth and Ottawa-Carleton were targeted, the campaign rolled out across the province prior to the anticipated provincial election.

It's Elementary

Keeping in touch with members

From its inception ETFO reached out to members, checking on their attitudes to and their knowledge of their union. Did they read ETFO publications? Were they satisfied with ETFO programs? The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

For several years ETFO also gathered information through school-based surveys completed by ETFO stewards. These responses told the real story of the impact of funding cuts – bigger classes, heavier workloads, more paperwork, fewer programs, and crumbling schools.

At the same time, ETFO professional relations staff detected some alarming new trends – more teachers under review; more stress-related LTD claims; increased workloads due to the loss of administrators, support personnel, and specialist teachers; lack of supply teachers to cover absences; inadequate training and supports for teachers in new positions.

ETFO distributed this information widely. More importantly, however, the Federation was able to develop strategies to address the issues members identified.

Analyzing the landscape – 2003

For four years ETFO worked with parents, the public, its locals, and opposition parties to make education a major focus of the next election campaign. Both the Liberals and the NDP gave ETFO written commitments that they would rescind the recertification legislation and reform the OCT to make it a truly self-governing body. Both parties adopted the ETFO class size policy.

All ETFO collective agreements were due to expire on August 31, 2004, creating both challenges and opportunities for the organization. Workload was a major issue – teachers were seeking improvements and boards wanted to strip workload provisions from agreements.

The funding formula was also a problem.

Although the *Education Act* provided for an average of 200 minutes of preparation time for elementary teachers, the formula only funded 137 minutes. There were no provisions for special programs, lunchroom supervisors, or other supports necessary to run an effective school.

All of these factors converged to lead to the launch of *Building for Tomorrow*.

Building for Tomorrow

Delegates to the 2003 Annual Meeting approved a multi-year initiative to enhance bargaining and revitalize the organization. *Building for Tomorrow* included hiring additional bargaining staff; additional training for local negotiating teams, stewards, and members; a public relations campaign; and putting in place enhanced technology to support bargaining.

Election 2003

When the Liberal party won the October 2 election it promised to bring peace and stability to the education system. It pledged to treat teachers with respect, to form a genuine partnership with education groups, to inject more money into the system, to do away with PLP, to make the OCT truly self-governing, and to reduce primary class size.

During its first five years ETFO proved that it could advance and protect the interests of members, negotiate sound collective agreements, mobilize against regressive legislation, provide professional development, train new leaders, advance social justice, partner with other unions and education stakeholders, and win the support of parents and the public. And it did all this in the face of a hostile government.

Now ETFO would demonstrate that it could work co-operatively with government while maintaining an unwavering commitment to its members and the issues that mattered to them.

Despite the extra money, boards were still under extreme financial pressure. Three public boards – Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Toronto – refused to make the spending cuts required to achieve a balanced budget. The government response was swift and brutal: they stripped these boards of their powers and appointed supervisors to oversee them.

It's Elementary

Campaign 200 – the campaign for more preparation time

Campaign 200 – Planning Today, Building for Tomorrow, the first public manifestation of ETFO's multi-year plan, was unveiled in February 2004. With a government committed to reducing the size of primary classes, ETFO could concentrate on other member issues. Its bargaining priorities for teachers and ESP/PSP members were 200 minutes of preparation time, a cap on supervision time, real salary increases, and improved leave and benefit plans. Occasional teachers' bargaining priorities included ensuring the occasional teacher got the same timetable as the teacher being replaced and improved daily rates of pay. The demand for increased preparation time addressed workload issues but it also meant more programs and more specialist teachers.

On June 2, all ETFO locals signed takeover agreements making the provincial organization their bargaining agent. Bargaining began in earnest in the fall of 2004. During the winter teachers voted overwhelmingly in favour of going on strike to back their bargaining demands.

ETFO forges a new approach to bargaining

ETFO's bargaining goals had a hefty price tag and paying for them would require a funding commitment from the province. ETFO took advantage of the Minister's invitation to teacher unions to explore the feasibility of establishing a provincial framework for negotiations. For four months the Federation worked with the minister and with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association to develop a provincial framework for salary, preparation time, and supervision time issues. Agreement was reached in April. The four-year accord included 200 minutes of preparation time by 2008, caps on supervision time, and a 10.6 per cent salary increase. The govern-

ment would fund the framework. Negotiations on the framework and on local issues proceeded with each district school board

ETFO paved the way for a unique form of bargaining. It secured funding from the province for common issues but negotiated local issues and the application of the framework with individual school boards. By the end of June, all teacher locals had successfully negotiated new collective agreements.

There's no substitute ...

Occasional teacher bargaining followed. Occasional teacher leaders received training and another public relations campaign was unveiled to support bargaining – *There Is No Substitute for a Substitute Teacher*.

By the end of the year all occasional teacher locals had collective agreements that included the bargaining demands: timetable of the teacher being replaced and gains in their daily rate, some in excess of 25 per cent, closing the gap between the highest and lowest rate significantly. In May the Near North Occasional Teacher Local staged a three-week strike before it was able to successfully conclude an agreement. As we begin a new school year all members are covered by signed collective agreements, an historic first.

Looking to the Future

In the eight years of its existence, ETFO has served its members and won the respect of the public and recognition from the government.

But elementary education is still underfunded. Elementary teachers are still overworked. School boards and administrators are still trying to undermine collective agreements. Elementary students arrive at school each fall, eager to learn. But some are hungry, some are sick, and some need resources our schools aren't providing. So the work continues, as it has for the past 100 years.

www.accessibility.now

■ by **Christine Brown**

To “progress” means to move forward, and we like to think of technological progress as exactly that. Progress, however, sometimes leaves many people behind. Years ago, Internet information retrieval was largely a text-based affair. Databases operated through words, rather than the icons, images, and bells and whistles of today’s sophisticated web design.

“Creating websites that are accessible to all is the right thing to do. ... Increasingly, organizations of all types are also discovering the pitfalls of not opening up their sites.”

For many computer users with visual impairments, the move towards an image-based system of communication has meant less, rather than more, access to information. Those who use screen reader software – which reads aloud the text from a given website – often find themselves with only partial information about the site’s content. On the one hand are site sponsors pushing their web designers to create ever flashier, snappier, and more visually enhanced websites. On the other are the information needs of individuals with visual impairments.

Happily, there are also a number of ways around this tension. International standards for web accessibility have been developed by the World Wide Web Consortium. You can learn about current web accessibility guidelines at <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>.

How does web accessibility work? For one thing, redundancies can be built into websites; that is, web spinners can create alternative ways to access content. For non-text items, such as photographs and symbols, this might mean providing a text alternative to the image so that when the cursor is positioned over it, a text description is available, which can be picked up by a screen reader program. Video clips can be accompanied by an audio description of the images. Websites can be designed to eliminate or redesign columns and tables, both of which pose difficulties for screen-reading technology.

These few examples only scratch the surface of the accessibility question and deal with only one aspect of the challenges computer users with visual impairments face. There are also numerous design features that can be incorporated to make websites more user-friendly for individuals with learning disabilities, mobility-related impairments, or profound hearing loss.

Creating websites that are accessible to all is the right thing to do. In its current website upgrade, ETFO is building in features that will meet internationally recognized standards for web accessibility.

Increasingly, organizations of all types are also discovering the pitfalls of not opening up their sites. For one thing, they lose potential business. For another, they sometimes find themselves in trouble. Six years ago, a blind sports fan won a discrimination case against the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games. Among other complaints, he was unable to use its website to find out about events.

Recently, Google, Inc. announced the launch of Google Accessible Search, a search tool that ranks web pages based on the simplicity of their layouts and hence, their accessibility to those deploying screen readers. Other major internet companies, like AOL and Yahoo, are likewise introducing features to assist customers with visual impairments. Progress, the kind that moves forward, is long overdue.

Christine Brown is an ETFO research officer with an interest in disability issues.



Hamster teaches literacy—a

Literacy has become a priority in Ontario schools: uninterrupted literacy blocks are now part of the daily timetable in many primary and junior classrooms. But for literacy to genuinely flourish, parents and educators must provide the conditions and support that sustain children's interests and needs.

Literacy experts emphasize the importance of meaningful experiences to support children's reading and writing. David Booth, Canada's internationally recognized literacy guru, states:

children need to read and write frequently for authentic reasons as they come to realize that being an efficient reader and an effective writer contributes to their communication success and personal satisfactions, and gives them control over their lives.¹

Educator and academic, Alfie Kohn concurs: *Children are people who have lives and interests outside of school, who walk into the classroom with their own perspectives, points of view, ways of making sense of the world and formulating meaning. What we teach and how we teach must take account of these realities.²*

Booth further emphasizes the importance of authentic needs and interests, especially in encouraging reluctant male readers. In *Even Hockey Players Read – Boys, Literacy and Learning*, he suggests:





true story

■ by Jim Giles

...boys will need to make choices in their literacy lives – to sense ownership of their reading and writing selves – by having opportunities to select some of the books they read, the topics they write about, and the projects they research. They will care more about the activities that they feel are their own and will want to invest their time and interest in them.³

Here is a true story that illustrates how simple authentic literacy moments can be achieved.

In my Grade 2/3 class at École Rawlinson Community School, an inner-city school in Toronto, the arrival of a new class pet, a hamster, instigated a string of authentic literacy moments.

The 25 primary students were excited and asked a cascade of questions: “What does it eat?” “What does it like to do?” “What should we call it?” Many had never owned a pet because they lived in shared homes or apartments where pets were not allowed or where families could not afford them.

I answered their questions with one of my own: “How can we find the answers to so many of your questions?” Without hesitating Shaunel, a special needs student, suggested signing out hamster books from the library. “But where would she find them?” Her partner Eva suggested they look in the non-fiction section, so off they went.

Upon their return, the class read Peter Hollmann’s book, *My Hamster and Me*. They learned

all about caring, feeding, and playing with a hamster. The children wanted to know more so I showed them how to use the Internet to access such sites as www.hamsters.co.uk.

We also had to find a name for the hamster and spent a morning brainstorming appropriate names, narrowing the list, and finally voting to determine the most popular name – Coco.

Coco was a reluctant visitor. After about two weeks she finally emerged from her cage. I allowed small groups of students to take her from the cage each day during choice or activity time. Often they would build a structure or maze for Coco to explore. The cooperative play, problem-solving, and oral language development that ensued during this unstructured time was amazing!

Not surprisingly, Coco began to appear during our literacy block as well. Students wrote stories about their beloved classroom pet. Ivan’s story was called *Coco the Ninja*, while Preston’s was *Coco Turns into a Human Boy*. Suddenly the boys in my class were engaged in writing beyond anything I could have designed. Antonio and Zachary, two special needs boys, wrote long stories: *Coco’s Long Journey Home* and *Coco the Basketball Player*.

Students would often begin their stories with an illustration. This was never a quiet time as they usually chatted with their neighbour about their drawing. The desire to match the action or written text to the illustration followed. GuesSED or invented spelling was encouraged to develop phonetic awareness and word recognition. Many of the boys particularly would often get other classmates to help them with their spelling. Even my ESL students were eager to follow the lead of the other writers in my class. Songul, recently here from Turkey, excitedly wrote a story called *Coco Gots Babies*.

The writing, reading, and talk did not stop there. Students whose parents consented were allowed to take Coco home for the weekend. On Friday afternoon the hamster, carefully wrapped, in a clean cage with enough food and vitamins, was sent home with a child for a weekend of fun. Of course, we all wanted to know what Coco would be doing on the weekend, so the child also took home a duotang called *The Hamster Report* and used it to record significant events and observations, which were shared aloud first thing Monday morning when Coco returned to Room 217.

And what observations and events they shared! Alsa, in Grade 2, wrote: *6:43 am Saturday, Coco is sleeping. At 8:41 am, Coco looks around then she goes back to sleep. I changed Coco’s water and I gave her some food. She*

.....
Jim Giles taught a primary family grouping (Gr.1/2/3) at École Rawlinson Community School, Toronto. He is currently seconded to work at ETFO provincial office.



came to the front to see why I opened the cage. She started grooming herself then fell asleep again. Coco started shaking but she was sleeping at the same time. 1:42 pm Coco was trying to make her nest. I went to my Uncle's house. I played a card game. My aunt had a baby. I went to the hospital to see the baby but I couldn't bring Coco. When we came back, Coco was asleep.

The Hamster Report filled up with drawings, sketches, photographs, and articles about our beloved animal. These hamster literacy moments demonstrated skills the students had, or were developing; for example, Alsa's ability to tell time. They engaged each and every child, and promoted writing, reading, and storytelling.

Sadly, one morning I found the wire door of Coco's cage open and the nest empty. Our class quickly put together a search party but did not find Coco. The students created Missing Hamster posters and hung them up around the school.

In the end, we wrote memories and constructed theories about what had happened to Coco. Some students believed that she was kidnapped, some imagined that after seeing a world outside of school, she longed to return to that world. We all learned to share our grief and sorrow and remembered the happy times we had with Coco. Rereading some of the entries in *The Hamster Report* brought us comfort. We all agreed that despite the pain of losing our beloved class hamster we would do it all over again given the chance!

I know that when I meet these students sometime in the future they probably won't remember the fantastic math lesson or the pioneer unit we did together. But they will remember the hamster literacy moments that we shared. Even today, many of last year's students stop and ask me when this year's class will get a hamster.

An endless supply of interesting, authentic literacy moments come through our classroom doors everyday. Authentic literacy moments occur anytime a teacher connects reading, writing, listening and viewing to a child's lived experience.

References

- 1 Booth, David . *Literacy Techniques for Building Successful Readers and Writers*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers, 1996, p. 6.
- 2 Kohn, Alfie. *Punished by Rewards*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. p. 219.
- 3 Booth, David. *Even Hockey Players Read: Boys, Literacy and Learning*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers, 2002. p. 28.

A teacher who picks up on discussions or moments of interest shared by students, is building on their background experiences and is helping them develop higher-order thinking skills by drawing on that knowledge. By hunting for a book, newspaper or magazine article, or web page on that specific topic, the teacher is taking further advantage of that literacy moment.

A teacher who has two pupils write, illustrate and/or record their recess disagreement is also taking advantage of an authentic literacy moment as the children think about and discuss their experiences.

All of these actions foster environments that are conducive to sharing ideas and opinions – a place where the question is as important as the answer.

Literacy moments are lost daily in most of our classrooms, particularly when a teacher is rigidly locked into a program that doesn't provide time to deviate from pre-constructed tasks. In expectation-driven classrooms, the teacher decides what is to be learned, discussed, or shared and how this is to be done.

Programs that emphasize structure and pre-defined expectations require little preparation time. They outline learning outcomes and provide activities, assessments, and rubrics. As with a Betty Crocker cake mix, all the teacher has to do is to add water and stir – the morning literacy block is in the oven!

Tragically, what is lost in these environments is the creativity of teachers and their involvement in the development of relevant, engaging experiences, especially for the unique learners in their classroom. What is also lost is the excitement and satisfaction of making and doing something meaningful with children.

Sometimes Betty Crocker literacy moments are necessary. But a constant diet of prepared line masters and prescribed readings is not a balanced literacy diet. Education must be something students make and do with teachers, not something made in advance or done to them.

When the interest is there literacy is sure to follow!

Let's play school! New approaches to early learning



Photos: Aime deHaas

■ by Joan Littleford

This fall, like every fall, a new group of three- and four-year-old children across the province experienced their first day in elementary school. Some were excited, some were scared, and some were just curious. What was school going to be like? How would they spend their time?

Their teachers had many of the same questions as they prepared to return to their classrooms. What experiences were these children bringing to their learning? Which ones were comfortable interacting with others? Which ones had had little playtime with others? What experiences had they had with language? With literacy? With mathematics?

Kindergarten teachers face a unique challenge. Strategies or approaches that may be appropriate for Grade 2 or 3 students are not necessarily suitable for younger children, and Kindergarten teachers have had to learn to adapt many teaching strategies to mesh with their understanding of child development. Until now there have been few professional development opportunities to help them focus on this task.

To meet the unique needs of these teachers, ETFO, with funding from the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, offered the first-ever Kindergarten Institutes this summer. Almost 600 Kindergarten teachers took part in the three-day Institutes held in eight sites: London, Oakville, Toronto, Barrie, North Bay, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay.

The focus was to help teachers to think about programming that is appropriate for young children and how it is supported by the *Revised Kindergarten Program 2006*. This new curriculum document outlines in much broader detail than previously what children are expected to know by the time they reach Grade 1, and how they can demonstrate their knowledge. It offers a wide range of examples of how to address or to meet expectations,

Joan Littleford is an ETFO staff member with expertise in early learning.

including the use of learning centres and inquiry or play-based programming.

In the early years, children learn best through active participation, experimentation, observation, and inquiry. By interacting with others as they learn, they have a chance to share their learning, to consider their conclusions, to synthesize their thinking, and to reflect on what they are learning. At the same time they learn the important social skills and develop emotionally.

Children become excited about learning when it starts from what they already know and are interested in, and they challenge themselves to represent their knowledge in a way that makes sense for them – through words, symbols, letters, drawings, dramatizations, and manipulation of materials. The love of learning and the desire to explore new ideas that they develop in these early years can set the stage for a lifetime of academic success.

Institute participants considered how to use learning centres to build richer experiences for children that would:

- encourage enhanced vocabulary and more extensive oral language experiences
- incorporate the application of literacy and mathematical knowledge
- require problem solving and higher order or critical thinking.

Let's play school

All Institutes began with a session on child development that reminded teachers that young children's brains are still developing, particularly in the areas of social/emotional intelligence and vocabulary development. Programming must support brain growth.

Teachers were encouraged always to carefully consider their rationale as they make programming decisions. Leaders of a session devoted to reflective practice guided participants through scenarios and activities that caused them to consider the many decisions they make every day – How best can I assess this? How can this child demonstrate her learning? What materials is this child or group of children ready to work with?

Unlike typical workshops, the Kindergarten Institutes will bring each of the 600 teachers back to the regional workshop sites to share their successes, their challenges, and their questions. This will allow participants to discuss with their colleagues the changes they have made in their programs.

Appropriate Kindergarten programming happens when teachers combine curriculum expectations with a thorough knowledge of the specific needs of young children. As a result of this professional development program, a large group of ETFO members had the opportunity to consider their programs through a unique lens.



At a Toronto workshop teachers practiced using drama as a way to engage at-risk students.

Summer Academy:

Members learn new ways to support student success

Some 2000 members took advantage of ETFO professional development courses this summer.

Summer Academy, now in its fourth year, was bigger than ever thanks to provincial funding. That funding allowed the Federation to double the number of courses, add special learning institutes for Kindergarten teachers, provide enhanced resources, and lower the cost to participants.

This was first time ETFO has received provincial government funding for professional development. All courses are taught by ETFO members.

In addition to grade-specific courses, members took part in:

- *Reflections of Me*, ETFO's pioneering course on body image and self-esteem
- The *Summer Aboriginal Learning Experience* focusing on First Nations culture and history
- Credit courses for teachers wishing to obtain additional professional qualifications
- A *Women's Leadership Institute* for women wishing to enhance their leadership skills
- ETFO's *Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)* courses for teachers wishing to take leadership roles in their federation or in their school.

For more information about professional development at ETFO, please go to etfo.ca and click on Professional Development.

Local program creates cultural connections

Last October the Grand Erie Elementary Teacher Local executive decided to restructure the organization.

■ by Krista Swanson

There was a lot to be gained by creating partnerships. The teachers from Six Nations and New Credit wanted professional development ideas and those from Grand Erie were hoping to gain some knowledge to help them teach the Native Canadian Aboriginal content of the new curriculum.

We met with staff from provincial office to discuss better ways of including members in the local. After several brainstorming sessions, we were asked to create a plan for implementing one of the ideas we had come up with.

For some time Grand Erie president Susan Swackhammer had wanted to create a bridge between teachers with the Grand Erie District School Board and those in Six Nations and New Credit reserve schools.

At the first local representative council meeting our stewards agreed to a proposal to form an Aboriginal Initiative Committee.

The committee was unique in that its members included a principal from the New Credit Reserve, a trustee from the Grand Erie District School Board, a representative of the professional development committee from Six Nations Reserve, an ETFO representative and teachers from Grand Erie.

We decided that there was a lot to be gained by creating partnerships. The teachers from Six Nations and New Credit wanted professional development ideas and those from Grand Erie were hoping to gain some knowledge to help them teach the Native Canadian Aboriginal content of the new curriculum.

On May 5, we hosted a professional development day at a Six Nations Reserve school. The day began with a greeting from an elder from the Reserve and then each participant attended two sessions.

During the morning break the participants had an opportunity to meet with publishers who offered a wide variety of resources. Two groups of children drumming songs during the lunch



break provided a cultural experience.

Participants were able to select from workshops that dealt with Aboriginal culture as well as with literacy, numeracy, and assessment.

Workshops were designed so that teachers from different grades and schools were able to meet and exchange ideas. During the collective gatherings, we encouraged participants to sit with members from different schools to brainstorm and come up with new ideas for their classrooms.

The evaluation forms we received showed the event was a success.

"Met some great friends; connected with great resource people." "Well planned and organized. It was a pleasurable learning experience."

"Learned very valuable information about First Nation culture. It will certainly assist me in planning units using correct terminology."

After the event, several new members joined the committee, a testament to its success!

The committee hopes to make this an annual event. We also plan on providing more opportunities throughout the school year for creating new friendships and invaluable teaching connections.

The committee would like to thank ETFO for their assistance with this exciting professional development opportunity!

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¹ The \$60 Premium Blackberry rate plan will offer users a combined total of 30 MB of Blackberry data and HTML browsing on the handheld device. The plan also includes 30 MB of “Laptop Internet Bridge” which allows tethering the Blackberry to a laptop and using Voyageur to surf the internet. Out of bundle Voyageur usage is charged at \$6 per MB. ² The \$100 Ultimate Blackberry Plan offers users a combined total of 250MB of Blackberry data and HTML browsing on the handheld device. It also offers users 250 MB of “Laptop Internet Bridge”, which allows users to tether the handheld to a laptop, and surf the internet on their laptop using voyageur. Out of bundle Voyageur usage is charges at \$3 per MB. Edvantage is a registered trademark of OTIP/RAEO.

Equity programs are a catalyst for action

■ by Kanwer Singh and Allina Lee

Toronto is one of the most diverse cities in the world, and our education system should be a model of how society should embrace our differences, so that every student feels comfortable, safe, and included at school and in the classroom.

The Elementary Teachers of Toronto (ETT) invited students from diverse communities to share and reflect on the reality of student life today at its Equity Conference in February. A sub-committee of ETT's Human Rights Committee organized the conference, which took place at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Teachers presented workshops on racial stereotypes; bullying; ableism; taking it global with IT; and racial discrimination, stereotypes, and the media.

The students who attended were nine to 11 years old. The teachers who accompanied them generated discussion about how to make the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Equity Document a part of school improvement plans.

Teachers who take a leadership role in equity need collaboration and support from the administration, parents, and the community. It is important to make



parents aware of equity issues and address any concerns they may have. The TDSB has done an excellent job outlining key equity issues and providing resources for the classroom and for use with parents and the community.

It was clear from the follow-up discussions that the conference served as a catalyst for action among these emerging leaders of social change.

The students from Highfield School brainstormed how action plans could be implemented in school. They came up with the idea of putting on a play that would expose students to racial stereotypes and show how bullying hurts people.

Here are some of the students' reflections:

Lesante: "We should not judge people because of their race, or the way they look. It is not fair to say all Italians make pizza, or that people who wear bandanas are criminal. Race and colour don't matter; inside we're all human."

Disha: "They don't know how the people feel when they bully them. People who bully lack something."

Thadachayani: "Now that I've learned a lesson, I think we can have a fundraiser that's educational and fun. We'd send the money all around the world, every week, so that the homeless will have a chance to get food and shelter."

Chloe-Symone: "Because you think someone's a different colour, don't make fun of them. Remember that everyone is equal in each and every way. Students need to learn respect for others."

Lila: "If you see a woman they're usually portrayed as models. That doesn't mean that's all they can do. They can do other things, like be writers."

Kimberley: "The special needs students learn at a different level. The rest of the students need to learn not to take it hard on them, and treat them the way you want to be treated. Don't take advantage of them."

J.C. "Everyone already has leadership skills but different qualities. You can also learn that a good leader stands up for people, has good cooperation skills, and sets an example."

.....
Kanwer Singh and Allina Lee are teachers with the Toronto District School Board



Letting the leader shine

The concept of a Girls' Leadership Conference sprang from a successful three-day Girls' Leadership Retreat with 80 Grade 7 girls. These same girls and eight teachers who attended the retreat were also invited to attend the conference.

■ by **Katrina Kenny**

By inviting the retreat participants to the conference, organizers intended to meet some specific goals. The first was to provide a venue where the participants could reconnect with each other, re-energize, and reignite the leadership skills they had begun to develop at a retreat sponsored by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in the fall. The second was to offer workshops that would give the girls the knowledge and skills they could use to transform the world they live in. The final goal was to compare the effects of a one-day conference with a three-day retreat.

The Elementary Teachers of Toronto and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario provided financial support. Katrina Kenny and Dara Schwartz, (in photo above) teachers with the TDSB, were the organizers.

The retreat featured indirect approaches to develop leadership and communication skills, and promote self-confidence. The girls participated in co-operative games, team and individual challenges, and outdoor education activities. The conference, on the other hand, aimed to promote leadership by tackling gender-based issues directly in four interactive workshops.

In one workshop the young women discussed abuse against women, and were helped to identify the signs of abusive relationships. A second workshop got them kicking and punching as they learned self-defence moves, which empowered

them and enhanced their self-confidence. A third workshop highlighted healthy eating and active living while challenging the stereotypes of women's bodies our society presents. The fourth helped the girls illuminate their personal strengths and interests, matching them with a wide variety of career options.

The goal of both initiatives was to support young women as they travel through the murky waters of adolescence. The events were designed to invoke a sense of leadership through self-reflection, empowerment, and confidence, and to promote academic achievement. The development of these leadership attributes, along with the increased support network established between many of the girls, dovetails with decreased aggression in relationships and

other at-risk behaviours.

To determine which initiative was more effective, some of the girls were interviewed and all of them, as well as the teachers who attended, completed surveys. The preliminary results demonstrate that overall the retreat had a strong influence on skill development. Activities which actually required girls to display bravery, camaraderie, and compromise appeared to instill in them a better sense of what it means to be a leader.

These results do not mean that we should no longer organize one-day conferences for students. The data collected from the conference indicate that it did have a positive impact. However, the experiences of the retreat may be more effective at achieving these goals.

Katrina Kenny is a teacher with the Toronto District School Board and a doctoral candidate, OISE/UT

November 13 is municipal election-day in Ontario. By getting involved in the upcoming school board and municipal elections you can have an impact on issues that directly affect you and your students.

Your ETFO local can give you information about election activities and the candidates it is supporting. Fact sheets outlining some key issues that you can raise with the candidates are available on the ETFO website, etfo.ca. Click on: *Getting involved* > *In the issues*.

Most importantly, remember to vote on November 13.

The poster features ETFO member Elizabeth Dixon.

Have an impact

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Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario

Photo: Anne de Haas



Il n'est jamais trop tôt ... pour apprendre le français!

La rentrée scolaire est un moment palpitant pour la communauté, tant pour les élèves, pour les enseignantes et enseignants que pour les parents. Pour les élèves, on retrouve les amis qu'on n'a pas vu depuis deux mois. Pour les enseignantes et enseignants, c'est le retour dans leur salle de classe, leur milieu de travail coutumier. Pour la plupart d'entre-eux, le retour à l'école leur permettra de mettre en pratique les notions et les stratégies apprises lors des cours ou de formation reçus durant l'été. Pour les parents, c'est le retour à la routine quotidienne.

André Charlebois enseigne à l'Université d'Ottawa. Il était précédemment coordonnateur de l'enseignement, langues secondes, au conseil scolaire du district Upper Canada.

■ *par* **André Charlebois**

Il existe un groupe d'élèves qui jubilent – « Enfin, je vais à l'école! Maintenant, je vais apprendre à lire, à écrire, à compter et à parler français! » Même si dans la province de l'Ontario, l'apprentissage du français langue seconde débute en quatrième année, plusieurs conseils scolaires offrent un programme de français langue seconde dès le jardin d'enfants ou le niveau primaire.

Quelques idées à considérer...

Chez les élèves d'un jeune âge, l'apprentissage de la langue seconde doit se faire dans un contexte aussi naturel que possible. Les informations suivantes sont tirées des documents d'appui publiés par le Ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario.

- 1-Les enfants sont naturellement curieux au sujet de leur entourage. Les enseignantes et enseignants doivent guider les élèves dans un processus de recherches. Ceci amène les élèves à poser des questions et explorer de nouveaux apprentissages.
- 2-Les enfants apprennent mieux lorsque l'apprentissage se fait de façon naturelle.
- 3-L'apprentissage est intégré à la vie quotidienne des élèves. On planifie des situations d'apprentissage qui rejoignent le vécu des élèves, tout en leur permettant d'interagir avec leur milieu.
- 4-L'activité physique est primordiale chez les jeunes élèves. Ils ont un besoin de bouger et d'être actifs.
- 5-L'apprentissage se fait par le biais de liens interdisciplinaires. On planifie son enseignement dans cette veine.

Quelques stratégies utiles...

Les points mentionnés ci-dessus auront une incidence dans la planification de l'enseignement, des stratégies et des styles d'apprentissage des élèves. Les stratégies suivantes seront utiles, et tiennent compte du développement

cognitif, social et intellectuel des élèves.

Il faut aussi savoir qu'à l'exception du programme d'immersion, le Ministère de l'Éducation n'a pas établi de programme de français langue seconde pour le niveau primaire. Certains conseils scolaires auront toutefois développé et mis en œuvre un programme-maison et des ressources qui serviront aux enseignantes et enseignants de français langue seconde. Il existe quelques ressources commerciales qui sont utiles et pratiques. .

Ainsi font, font, font les petites marionnettes!

Des enseignantes et enseignants d'un certain âge se rappellent sûrement des paroles de cette comptine de la belle époque de la télévision en noir et blanc. Déjà, on réalisait l'importance de l'art dramatique dans le développement des enfants.

Les marionnettes sont vos alliées. Lorsque les enfants acquièrent une nouvelle langue, il existe toujours cette période silencieuse tant qu'ils n'ont pas encore acquis la confiance et les connaissances de base de leur permettant d'entamer des conversations. La marionnette manipulée par l'enseignante ou par l'enseignant sera souvent l'autre personnage, celui en qui l'enfant reconnaît la fantaisie, pas l'adulte qui le guide.

Cette marionnette peut tout faire – parler, chanter, compter, culbuter, jouer – enfin, tout ce qui attire l'enfant dans son développement et son apprentissage. Que ce soit des marionnettes à gaine, pour les doigts ou de grandeur nature, en se servant de boîtes de carton, ce mise en scène permet d'amener les élèves à parler français.

Et un, et deux, et trois!

Courir, sauter, lancer, marcher, à gauche, à droite – tous ces mouvements deviennent des moments privilégiés afin d'amener les élèves du niveau primaire à améliorer leur compréhension de la langue tout en faisant de l'activité physique.

L'enseignante ou l'enseignant dit le vocabulaire, exécute le mouvement et les enfants l'imitent. On inverse les rôles – les enfants disent le vocabulaire et exécutent le mouvement. Une activité simple, amusante et motivante pour les élèves. On les

encourage à créer des suites de mouvement, des séquences qui amènent les élèves à intégrer les mathématiques, et tout ceci, en français.

On peut faire l'activité *Simon dit*, des charades, des imitations; des répétitions – toute activité de ce genre amène les élèves à parler dans un contexte qui leur est familier.

Montre et raconte!

Les enfants aiment beaucoup partager des objets de leur milieu. C'est pourquoi plusieurs enseignantes et enseignants du programme régulier invitent les élèves à apporter un item personnel ou de la maison, de le montrer à la classe et d'en parler. Cette activité est communément appelée *Show and tell*.

Voici un moment opportun afin de créer un lien entre le foyer et la classe de français. L'enseignante ou l'enseignant de français langue seconde peut suivre le même horaire de présentation que son collègue anglophone en invitant les élèves à partager l'information à nouveau dans le cours de français. Sans connaître tout le vocabulaire pertinent aux objets, les élèves auront quand même la satisfaction de partager avec leur amis, et tout ça, en français, avec l'aide de leurs amis et de leur enseignante ou enseignant.

L'échafaudage

Comme le mot l'indique, l'activité d'échafaudage permet de partir des connaissances acquises des élèves, et d'y greffer du vocabulaire supplémentaire. Dès que les élèves connaissent un minimum de vocabulaire, cette activité prend un nouveau sens.

Tout comme une activité close en écriture, alors que l'élève doit ajouter le mot approprié selon une liste ou puisé dans ses connaissances antérieures, l'enseignante ou l'enseignant dit une phrase ou une expression et omet un mot ou une idée. À ce moment, l'élève, individuellement ou avec un partenaire, doit dire un mot qui est approprié.

Par exemple, si on veut revoir les couleurs, on montre l'image d'un chien et dit : « Voici un chien ». L'enfant complète la phrase avec « brun », par exemple. On passe ensuite au suivant. Le but est d'ajouter à cette phrase des mots reliés au thème et de créer ainsi une phrase riche de vocabulaire, créée par les élèves.

Plus on se sert de cette technique, plus on bâtit le vocabulaire, la confiance et la conversation chez les jeunes élèves.

Ces quelques stratégies peuvent être employées avec les élèves plus âgés. Il s'agit d'ajuster selon sa classe, ses élèves et à son milieu.

Ne soyez pas étonné si vos élèves arrivent à l'école un matin et vous disent : « Devine ce que j'apporte à l'école aujourd'hui! » Soyez prêt pour une belle surprise!

Références :

- 1- *The Kindergarten Program*, Revised, Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2006
- 2- *Many Roots, Many Voices: A practical guide for Ontario educators*, Ministry of Education, 2005

Pension plan changes to come into effect in January



■ by **Hilda Watkins**

To be considered fully funded the plan must have sufficient assets to pay pensions to all current and retired members over a 70-year span.

My first year as OTF table officer has been both rewarding and challenging. At the forefront of the challenges were pension negotiations, which were complicated by historically low interest rates and an escalating actuarial deficit. Nevertheless, on June 30, 2006 the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) filed a valuation with the provincial regulators that showed a fully funded pension plan.

The History

The Teachers' Superannuation Fund became Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan in 1989 and at that time the plan's partners – OTF and the Ontario government – became responsible for it, determining pension benefits and setting the contribution rates. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board (OTPPB) administers the plan, invests its assets, and determines the economic assumptions on which it is valued. In 1998 pension benefits were enhanced when the retirement factor was reduced from 90 to 85. However, contribution rates have remained constant since 1990.

The Challenge

In June 2005, the OTPPB reported assets of \$90 billion. Despite this stellar performance, the plan's liabilities were greater than its assets, thereby creating an actuarial funding shortfall. To be considered fully funded the plan must have sufficient assets to pay pensions to all current and retired members over a 70-year span. Low interest rates, the declining ratio of active to retired members, and the longevity of retirees are all factors affecting the cost of pensions.

The Solution

By law the plan must file a valuation with provincial regulators every three years. Although not compelled by legislation to file until 2006, the partners agreed to file the 2005 valuation, as the shortfall for 2005 was significantly less than the

shortfall for 2006. To eliminate the \$20 billion actuarial deficit for the 2005 valuation a number of measures were taken.

- The OTPPB revisited and revised assumptions to reflect current retirement rates and salary increases.
- Current benefit levels, including the 85 factor and indexing were maintained.
- Ontario government contributions will increase by 2 per cent on January 1, 2007, and by 1.1 per cent on January 1, 2008.
- Members' contribution rates will increase by 2 per cent on January 1, 2007, and by an additional 0.3 per cent on January 1, 2008. The 2008 increase has been offset by a \$76 million credit from a 1998 surplus.

As well, the partners have agreed to form a work group to review the assumptions used by OTPPB. The work group intends to survey plan members to ascertain their views about what action it should take should there be another funding shortfall. The next evaluation – due in 2008 – will determine the need for adjustments. They could be pension rate contribution increases, benefit reductions or both.

You will be fully informed of all the changes that are taking place. At its annual meeting in August the OTF Board of Governors approved a communication program to make members aware of the various issues impacting their pensions.

During this coming year, as OTF president, I will continue to work hard on your behalf to make sure that your pension plan continues to work for you.

Hilda Watkins, ETFO's table officer at OTF, is the 2006-2007 OTF president.

CTF co-sponsors first National Media Education Week



■ by **Winston Carter**

To be media literate in this complex new environment, young people need to develop a range of critical thinking, communication, and information management skills.

Media are a powerful force in the lives of youth. In particular, digital media have changed the way they communicate, play, and learn. Young people are immersed in media, moving beyond geographic and regulatory boundaries as they access, absorb, create, repurpose, and distribute media content.

To be media literate in this complex new environment, young people need to develop a range of critical thinking, communication, and information management skills. Media education is an essential tool to help them acquire these skills.

In order to highlight the importance of media and Web literacy as key learning areas in the new media environment, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) has partnered with Media Awareness Network (MNet) to create Canada's first National Media Education Week, November 19-24, 2006.

To mark National Media Education Week, MNet and the CTF are working with partners in the education, library, broadcasting, NGO, and government sectors to develop and promote media education programs and activities as well as professional development opportunities.

Proposed activities, leading up to and during National Media Education Week, include:

- Launch event for the week
- Web-based professional development tools for teaching media literacy
- Conference presentations and panel discussions
- Academic institutes and symposiums
- Web-based teleconference for media educators

- Distribution of a flyer, poster, and booklet promoting media education
- Articles in educational publications and mainstream magazines
- Public service announcement (PSA) campaign for broadcast and print
- Information evenings and workshops for parents
- National multimedia student contest

The CTF Web site has a portal (<http://www.ctf-fce.ca/nationalmediaeducationweek/default.htm>) to act as working tool to provide resources and information on the week's activities for participants and interested stakeholders.

The National Media Week Advisory Committee is composed of Media Awareness Network, Canadian Teachers' Federation, Concerned Children's Advertisers (CCA), Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO), Association for Media Literacy (AML), Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and Alberta Teachers' Association.

To find out how you can incorporate media education in your classroom, visit the MNet Web page for teachers at <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/index.cfm> or visit the National Media Education Week portal page: <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/nationalmediaeducationweek/default.htm>

Winston Carter is president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.



Canada's Prime Ministers, Governors General and Fathers of Confederation

By Irma Coucill

Pembroke Publishers, 2005
184 pages; \$24.95

Reviewed by Marjan Glavac

As a longtime student of history, it pains me to confess that I barely know Canada's early prime ministers. Canada's first and second prime ministers, John A. Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie, come easily to mind, but numbers three, four and five are a mystery.

Worse still is my knowledge of the names of the early governors general of Canada. And let's not even talk about how many of the 36 Fathers of Confederation I can identify or whose contributions to Canada I am familiar with.

Irma Coucill gives life to the leaders of Canada through her easy-to-read descriptions and black-and-white drawings. Each profile is short and to the point. Each drawing is detailed and life-like.

The story of Canada's prime ministers is the story of Canada: since Confederation, each one

has played an important part in guiding the country through its many changes. Canada was physically united by a railroad, participated in two world wars, evolved from a Crown colony to a country, repatriated its Constitution and instituted a Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Coucill also highlights the role and impact of the governors general on Canadian culture. The Earl of Dufferin saved Quebec City's historic sites from urban renewal. Lord Stanley gave hockey the Stanley Cup trophy. Earl Grey gave Canadian football the Grey Cup. Other governors general established awards, fellowships, scholarships, and festivals.

Rounding off the profiles are the 36 statesmen, the Fathers of Confederation who worked to unite Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia to create the Dominion of Canada on July 1, 1867. Each of their stories reveals the contributions and sacrifices they made to create the Canada we know today.

Students and teachers will find these stories an enjoyable addition to their knowledge of Canadian history.

.....
Marjan Glavac teaches at Wilfred Jury PS in the Thames Valley District School Board.



Health for Kids/Health Beats

Core Learning
\$19.95 per CD

Reviewed by Chris Vert

These two sets of CD offer excellent support for health and science programs.

Health for Kids is made up of two volumes – *Explore Your Body* and *Explore Your Health*. Designed for Grades 3 to 5 they support topics and concepts related to the human body and how it works to stay healthy. The information is presented in an animated, interesting, and interactive format, with sections on the respiratory, immune, and digestive systems; taste; smell; and dental hygiene. The screens are interactive; for example, students click on a part of the respiratory system and a close-up picture with text appears.

Students can also navigate animated episodes which follow a diverse group of characters as they travel through the respiratory, immune, and upper digestive systems. Short content quizzes are included with the animated episodes.

The five-volume *Health Beats Series*, for Grades 5 to 8, includes volumes on the human body, illnesses and injury, healthy living, becoming an adult, and emotional health. (This series is also sold as the *Family Health* series.) The information is appropriately geared to the junior and intermediate student and delivered through a variety of methods – from text and interactive labelled diagrams, to games and activities.

Students are engaged as they click on diagrams to see close-ups to learn more about specific body parts, follow the path of a hamburger as it travels through the digestive system, or watch what happens to the lungs when a person smokes. Quizzes and activities offer feedback throughout.

The Lesson Builder CD-ROMs that accompany each volume are an additional, invaluable resource for teachers and provide printable quizzes, worksheets and activities that can be used for assessment.

This is a highly recommended addition to the school library or classroom software collection.

.....
Chris Vert is a primary teacher with the Toronto District School Board



Songs, Stories and Rhymes That Bind.

KYHA Productions,
Audio CD; \$15

Reviewed by **Catherine West**

This collection of mostly traditional finger-plays, bouncing rhymes, nursery rhymes, songs, and stories includes many old favourites, such as *Round the Garden*, *Knock at the Door*, *Jeremiah*, *Twinkle Twinkle, I'm a Little Teapot*, and a charming version of the story many will know as *Something from Nothing*.

Such timeless materials make up a priceless repertoire for parents and early childhood educators everywhere. Young children never tire of them. The helpful 12-page booklet includes all the lyrics/words, and brief descriptions of actions or games that accompany the materials.

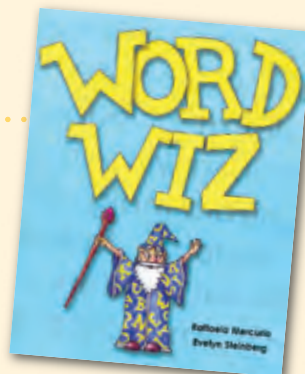
The production is very simple, often just a single, untrained but

pleasant voice of a man, woman or child singing or speaking. Occasionally the child is not secure in pitch. Unfortunately the producers do not seem to have paid attention to a young child's usual singing range – many songs are recorded in a range that is too low, and children would struggle to sing along. Some cuts feature a simple accompaniment on guitar, piano, accordion or small percussion instrument, creating some interest and variety without overwhelming the sound – an appropriate approach for early childhood.

The CD would be best used to provide a repertoire for teachers, daycare workers, and parents who do not have a great knowledge of traditional materials. Children would have fun listening to and joining in the many enjoyable rhymes and stories. Care needs to be taken with the pitch of some of the songs, so use for join-in singing with caution.

To order email info@kyha.ca.

.....
Catherine West is an instructional leader in music with the Toronto District School Board.



Word Wiz

By **Raffaella Mercurio and Evelyn Steinberg**

Pacific Edge Publishing, 2004
50 pp; \$6.95 each or \$34.95 for 6

Reviewed by **Jodie Howcroft**

Beginning writers face the complicated task of communicating their ideas on paper. *Word Wiz* is a resource designed to help them write independently.

Each booklet acts as a mini-dictionary, containing frequently used words in alphabetical order. They are accompanied by simple line drawings (where appropriate) as well as basic word lists such as "months of the year" and "days of the week." Definitions are not included. According to the authors, "*Word Wiz* is intended to help with the writing process, not the meaning of words."

Word Wiz is for use in Grades K – 2 with ESL and special needs

students, or remedial students in higher grades. It is meant to accompany other literacy strategies such as word walls and charted word lists. *Word Wiz* uses Canadian spelling and supports language outcomes in the Ontario curriculum. This resource passes the equity test.

Word Wiz is a useful tool in the classroom, whether teachers have a few on hand for students to share or, if budget allows, one per student to be carried through the lower primary grades.

The *Word Wiz Teacher's Guide* is a solid companion to the booklets. The authors have included indicators of each stage of spelling based on the work of Gentry (1987) and Parry and Hornsby (1985) (precommunicative, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional) as well as suggestions to help students move to the next stage. The black line masters that follow are designed to teach beginning dictionary skills and how to use *Word Wiz*. The *Teacher's Guide* is \$19.95.

.....
Jodie Howcroft teaches at Memorial School in Stoney Creek.



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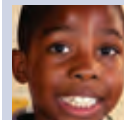
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Teachers' Trivia



by Peter Harrison

Adding up

This time, the class has been experimenting with regular tetrahedrons, made with four cardboard equilateral triangles taped together to make small pyramids with three sides and a base.

Every child has made four such pyramids and the four faces of each one are then marked with one of the numbers 1, 2, 3 or 4 so that each face bears a different number.

In the experiment, the children throw their four tetrahedrons into the air and they fall with one face of each pyramid face-down. The four numbers on the face-down sides are added up; for example $3+2+1+2=8$, and the result placed on a communal list.

The experiment is repeated many times by each child to produce a very long list.

Assuming that the additions are all correct and that the tetrahedrons fall in a totally random way:

What number appears most frequently on the list?

Send your answer to ETFOvoice@etfo.org with the word "Trivia" in the subject line. You may also mail you entry to Editor, ETFO Voice, at the address on the masthead. Three winners will be drawn from all the correct entries received by November 20, 2006.

Answer to our last puzzle One too few: The colour Blue is in contact with the table.

The winners are chosen by lottery. They are:

Judy Stoner, Robert Thompson, and Nancy Haggith.

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Sept. 18 - Feb. 28, Toronto

The Hundred Languages of Children

This exhibition of the Municipal Infant-Toddler Centres and Preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, depicts the factors that have made these infant-toddler centres and preschools a model for early childhood educators worldwide. From Sept. 18 to Dec. 20 at the Toronto-Dominion Centre, 95 Wellington St.; From Jan. 12 to Feb. 28 at the Columbus Centre, 901 Lawrence Avenue West.

For more info go to 100languagestoronto.ca.

Blastball Kits

Blastball is a more exciting version of T-ball. This school year Softball Ontario is making blastball kits available to teachers free of charge.

Contact Lisa Crompton at 416-7150 or

Lcrompton@softballontario.ca; or visit the website, softbalontario.ca.

Oct. 20 - Feb. 12, Montreal

McGill Distinguished Educators Seminar Series

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Donna Wilkinson, at 514-398-6961 or donna.wilkinson@mcgill.ca

Oct. 30 - November 4, Canada-wide

National Technology Week

Sponsored by the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists to enhance knowledge of career choices in technology.

More information, including teacher resources, at technologyweek.ca

November 15 Canada-wide

Geography Challenge

A national student competition. Registration deadline for Grades 7 to 10 - Nov. 15; for Grades 4 to 6 - Dec. 15. Schools must register to take part.

For more information go to geochallenge.ca

November 30 - December 3, Ottawa

Building the Movement

A labour education conference and literary forum to encourage union members to engage in the struggle for social justice, equality and workers' rights.

Cost: \$250. Registration deadline: November 3.

Contact: clceducation@clc-ctc.ca;

613-521-3400, ext. 555.

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Jivin' Johnny's LET'S TALK!: 'Learning through Discussion' - 'A user-friendly classroom guide...that marries well with all areas of the Ontario language curriculum.' - ETFO Voice, Summer 2006 For free lesson and to order, see johannypress.com.

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