

Voice

December 2007
Vol. 10 • No. 2



The Joy of Belonging

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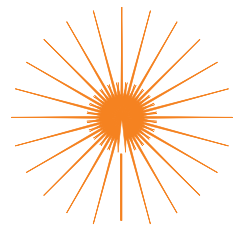
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A dynamic combination**

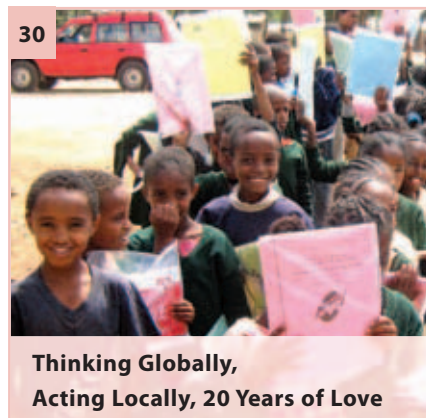
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FROM THE EDITOR

The cover of our magazine features a photo taken on a very hot day in June. At first I was concerned about this: after all, it doesn't exactly jibe with the winter holiday season that will be in full swing as you receive this issue. On further reflection it seemed appropriate after all, because it does illustrate a significant celebration.

The students in the cover photo were participants in the first Niagara District School Board track and field day for special needs students, an event that honoured their unique gifts and talents and their right to take part in an event that most students take for granted. The field day was the brain child of ETFO member Andy Dermatas and involved a host of volunteers, including all of the staff from the school board office. While the photo depicts competition, the event itself was a model of cooperation and inclusion. Truly something to celebrate.

Special needs students and their academic success are the focus of a unique collaboration in the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. There special needs teachers are working with literacy coaches to improve student learning. Nancy Baldree's story is on page 15. We also provide an excerpt from ETFO's new *Special Education Handbook*.

Liberals in Ontario were certainly celebrating on October 10 as they achieved their second back-to-back majority – the first in several decades. Vivian McCaffrey outlines ETFO's election involvement and profiles members who ran for office (page 11).

Among the promises made in the election was Premier McGuinty's undertaking to establish full day kindergarten programs. ETFO President David Clegg intends to hold him to that commitment (page 4).

The General Secretary focuses on health and safety, an issue that teachers neglect at their peril (page 5). Susan Ansara addresses the issue of mould in schools, the subject of a long dispute with the Lambton Kent District School Board (page 31) and Mary Bricco provides advice to members who feel their health may be compromised as a result of mould in their work environment (page 32).

Looking ahead to 2008, we see a new year likely to be dominated by one issue: the need to negotiate new collective agreements. (They expire in August.) As reported in the October issue of *Voice*, ETFO's *Close the Gap* campaign achieved considerable success during the election. Expect to see more about this campaign in the months to come.

But first, it is the season of celebrations and time to enjoy a well-deserved break.


JOHANNA BRAND



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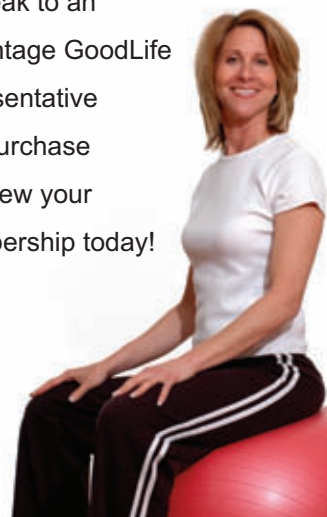
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Re: "French's Sad Lament" October 07

In 1976 school boards were provided some money to equip FSL classrooms if a room was designated as such. This phenomenon didn't last long as there were not many materials available and very few qualified FSL teachers. The itinerant teacher became the norm: some of us travelled among four different schools to teach 20-minute periods. Besides being very physically demanding, it was professionally unrewarding.

I then had the good fortune of encountering two forward-thinking principals – one in York County, the other in Grey County (now Bluewater) – who realized the value of having a classe de français. What a bonus for the students! A truly French experience was possible. Walls were covered with vocabulary picture cards, conjugated verbs and rules, art projects, etc. We could sing, dance, do plays, and not disrupt others.

We planned exchanges and went to French plays in Toronto. We also truly integrated the subject with other areas of the curriculum. From what I see and hear as a retired FSL teacher, many programs are being reduced significantly or the money is being funnelled elsewhere.

In a global economy when any additional language is a benefit it is a shame that we in Ontario are regressing, not moving forward. Most teachers are working under trying conditions – not least those who teach French.

BRAVO! Renée Meloche for all you are trying to do. May your enthusiasm and energy not wane!!

Beverley Thomas

Occasional Teacher, Simcoe County District School Board

WRITE TO VOICE

Here are some guidelines for the Letters to the Editor column.

- Letters should be short and to the point (150-200 words) and should relate directly to articles in the magazine.
- Member letters have priority. Please provide contact information, including a telephone number and the board where you work, so that your submission can be verified before publication.

You may submit letters by email to jbrand@etfo.org with 'Letter to the Editor' in the subject line. You may also submit letters by mail or fax to The Editor, at the address and fax number on the masthead.

Re: "Teaching in an Emotional War Zone" October 07

ETFO members in Renfrew who read in the latest Voice, "The Challenge of Teaching in an Emotional War Zone," are very pleased to see this informative and thoughtful article. Often specific challenges like this one are not recognized or understood by others. Highlighting these challenges shows ETFO's commitment to meeting the needs of members and the children we work with.

While we all have our own views on the war, we cannot ignore that it profoundly affects some of our members and their lives. We need to be careful not to mix support for individuals within ETFO with personal views of the war. I am hopeful we can continue to be sensitive to member needs and respond to them.

I have asked all workplace stewards to share the article with principals. I have requested additional copies of Voice to send on to the local media, our area MP and MPP, the Petawawa base commander, the Afghan ambassador and General Rick Hillier. I am sure they will be interested in reading about the support we offer!

Alice Paige

President, ETFO Renfrew County Teachers Local

ETFO book clubs

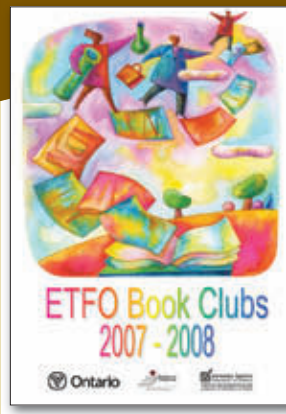
– an excellent professional learning opportunity!

Book club participants attend four after-school sessions that focus on specific chapters of a book, consider strategies they can try in their classrooms, and reflect on and share their experiences.

Locals creating and hosting book clubs this school year are: Algoma, Avon Maitland OT, Halton, Kawartha Pine Ridge, Peel and Peel OT, Lambton Kent, Niagara, Near North, Ottawa-Carleton OT, Rainbow and York Region.

Contact them for more information.

Or go to etfo.ca and click on *Professional Development* ► *ETFO Workshops, section 2. Workshops Offered Through Locals.*



FROM THE PRESIDENT



DAVID CLEGG

President, ETFO

Holding the Government to its Election Promise

During the recent provincial election the McGuinty Liberals promised to spend \$400 million to provide full-day kindergarten. The program would be in place by the end of the government's mandate in 2011.

ETFO welcomed this announcement. It is a progressive step that will benefit Ontario students. Research shows that an investment in early learning has a positive impact on a child's lifelong academic success. Furthermore, for many children getting a good education is the only way they can escape poverty and build a successful, fulfilling life.

Many families today do not have a stay-at-home parent. For their 4 and 5 year-olds parents have to juggle child care and kindergarten and child care providers and schools have to make arrangements for travel between the two programs. It is unnecessarily complicated and time consuming for everyone involved.

ETFO is on record as supporting universally accessible, high quality child care. We believe child care programs and kindergarten should be integrated so that school-based child care wraps around the kindergarten day by providing programs before and after school and during the lunch hour. This is what parents want and what young children need to develop into lifelong learners.

There is a temptation among politicians to promise many things while on the campaign trail and then to back away from those promises once in office.

During the campaign Mr. McGuinty explicitly identified the Liberal plan for full-day programming as 'kindergarten'; however, there are indications that the government may be considering a model in which half the instructional day is staffed by certified teachers and the other half by early childhood educators. The federation does not accept this model as "full day kindergarten."

The Harris government during its very destructive term of office – destructive to education, in particular – introduced the concept of replacing kindergarten teachers with child care staff as part of its infamous, budget slashing "education toolkit." ETFO and the other affiliates soundly condemned the proposal, as did the Ontario College of Teachers

There is no more reason today to adopt this model. We believe that only qualified teachers should be delivering kindergarten education to young children. Quality child care provided by appropriately trained early childcare educators complements the kindergarten program but cannot replace it.

As ETFO members I urge you to make this issue a topic of conversation in your staff rooms, at your school council meetings, and in your community. We cannot allow the government to go back on this promise. It is time to provide our young children with the quality education and child care they deserve. It's time to provide parents with the peace of mind that comes from knowing their children are being educated and cared for in the best possible environment.



GENE LEWIS

General Secretary, ETFO

Teachers Deserve a Safe Working Environment

Teachers are professionals whose foremost commitment is to their students. Teachers aim to provide their students with the best possible instruction and the best possible learning environment. They make sure their classrooms provide a stimulating atmosphere for students. They take seriously any threat to student safety.

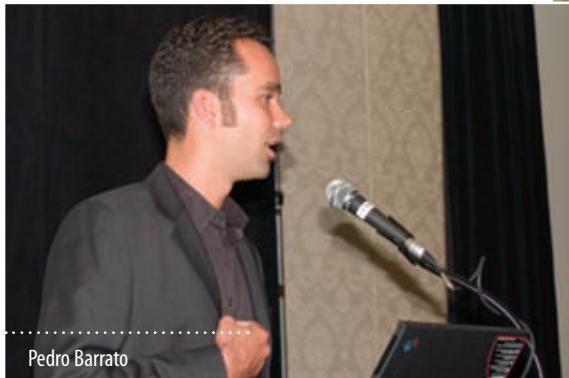
In part because they work in a caring profession educators are less likely to focus attention on their own working environment and working conditions. Generally, educators don't see themselves as workers exposed to occupational hazards in the same way that industrial workers are, and they often don't recognize that the schools in which they work can be dangerous to their own health and well-being. Because of budget cuts that began the mid-1990s schools have deteriorated physically and the people working in them are subjected daily to such things as poor quality air, mould, and electrical and trip hazards at every turn.

There are known and relatively simple remedies for the workplace health and safety hazards you face. But first you yourself have to recognize that you can do something about workplace hazards.

At a recent ETFO health and safety conference, lawyer Howard Goldblatt outlined his "commandments for health and safety." They included this important advice.

1. **Know your rights.** There's no substitute for knowing your rights as provided for in health and safety legislation and in your collective agreement.
2. **Take advantage of your rights.** There is an arsenal of weapons at your disposal. Engage in work refusals if necessary. Call in the Ministry of Labour representative. Use the grievance procedure.
3. **Be persistent.** You can expect to get negative replies from your employer and the Ministry. Ensure that the board investigates complaints and follows up. Ministry officials need to be educated about the circumstances in schools. Their orders are often incomplete or otherwise inadequate and can be appealed. Make sure any expert brought in is truly independent and knows the area of concern.
4. **Be creative.** Your working environment is your students' learning environment. Enlist the support of natural allies like parents and the press. Get the information out.
5. **Take ownership.** ETFO members must be leaders. No other union will represent your rights as well as your own.

If you have concerns about the safety of your working environment make sure you take action. Start by informing yourself, then inform others, especially your school steward and your local's health and safety committee. As ETFO found when addressing mould issues in the Lambton-Kent District School Board (see the collective bargaining column on page 31) achieving a satisfactory outcome means following the five health and safety commandments above. You deserve a safe workplace.



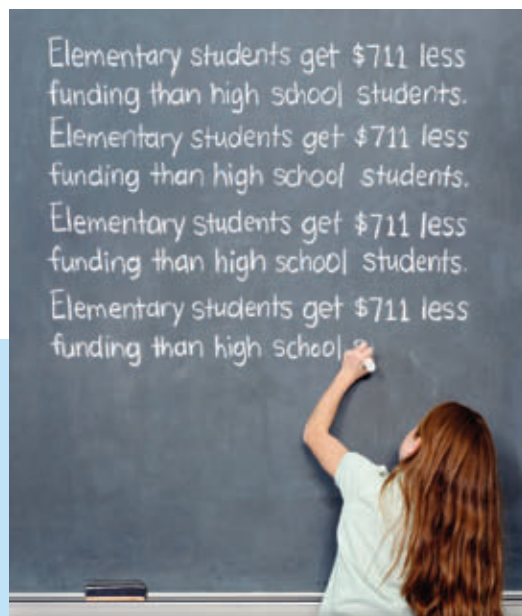
Pedro Barrato

QUEBEC is a Canadian leader and Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams wants to follow in that province's path. Lowering child poverty can be accomplished, according to Pedro Barrato, communications and outreach coordinator for the Atkinson Foundation. "Every industrialized nation can lower child poverty if it wants to," says Barrato, who was the keynote speaker at **Leadership 2007**. He pointed out that Quebec had set targets and a timetable and put in place a number of measures to support poor families. As a result Quebec's child poverty rate in 2005 dropped to less than 10 percent from 22 percent in 1996. The conference is an annual event that brings together local leaders for two days of intensive learning designed to help them be more effective in their roles as local executive members and committee chairs.



ELEMENTARY students in Ontario receive \$711 less than secondary students. ETFO is determined to *Close the Gap* in the next round of bargaining. Collective agreements

expire next August, and ETFO is focusing on making sure negotiators understand every aspect of their agreements and the bargaining process. Training sessions for negotiators were held in October in conjunction with the **October Representative Council**. President David Clegg presented ETFO's bargaining goals and underscored the organization's com-



CLOSE the GAP

mitment to achieving its goals. For more information go to closethegap.ca. Participants also heard about the impact of declining enrolments and received detailed information about how education is funded in Ontario.



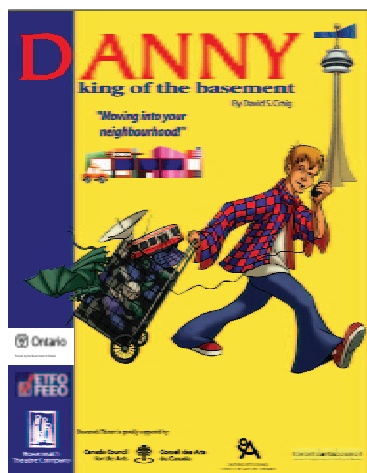
AS A SPOUSE, parent, and teacher Viletia Richards has experienced the impact of the war in Afghanistan. Richards, shown with her husband, Bill, and their two children, is a member of the Renfrew County Teacher Local. She spoke to participants at the October Representative Council meeting about the challenges faced by children whose parents are in the military and are deployed overseas. For more see “Teaching in an Emotional War Zone” in the October issue of *Voice*, or read the article online at etfo.ca ► [publications](#) ► *Voice*.



ETFO'S conference *Teachers Volunteering Abroad* drew a capacity crowd of members interested in learning about working overseas. Participants got tips from experienced colleagues and were able to connect with a variety of agencies that facilitate overseas placements. A list of these organizations can be found on our website at etfo.ca ► [Links](#).



ETFO'S UNION SCHOOL is an intensive training program for 51 local leaders. Keynote speakers, in-depth workshops, and case studies provide participants with practical, hands-on training that will make them more effective in their work with members. The program is delivered in three face-to-face meetings and includes online learning and networking. The first session in early November featured Dr. Elaine Bernard of the Labor and Worklife Program and the Trade Union Program, at the Harvard Law School. This is the second year the program is being offered.



DANNY and his mother have no money. They have moved frequently and Danny's academic learning has suffered. Just how a child like Danny faces the challenges of his circumstances is the subject of *Danny, King of the Basement*, a play written

by David S. Craig and mounted by the Roseneath Theatre Company. Participants at the Leadership 2007 conference saw an excerpt of the play and schools around the province are seeing it as part of **ETFO's Poverty Project**. Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the project provides educators with professional development that raises their awareness of the impact of poverty on their students and provides them with resources and concrete strategies to help their students succeed. Look for a feature story on this unique ETFO initiative in a future edition of *Voice*. More information about the project is available from ETFO executive assistant Jim Giles (jgiles@etfo.org).



DANIELLE HONOUR, a teacher with the Toronto District School Board, won the **2007 OTIP Teaching Award** for an elementary teacher. She is shown with ETFO General Secretary Gene Lewis (left) and Martin Long, president of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local.

ETFO Awards

Information about ETFO awards is posted on our website. Click on etfo.ca and follow these links: *Being a Member* ► *Member Services* ► *Awards and Scholarships*. Or contact Mark Fallis at provincial office: mfallis@etfo.org; ext. 2220. The November stewards' mailing also included information about awards deadlines. Applications for awards are available from your local president.

THROUGHOUT the fall and early winter, occasional teacher locals throughout the province in partnership with ETFO offered professional learning that focused on classroom management. These members from the Upper Grand Occasional Teacher Local attended a session in Fergus. The program is one of several made possible by professional learning funds provided by the Ministry of Education. For more information contact ETFO executive assistant Jason Johnston at provincial office: jjohnston@etfo.org.



ETFO in partnership with its locals across the province is training mentors who are part of the **New Teacher Induction Program**. Fourteen ETFO members are conducting the sessions. They are (back row) Charmain Brown, Laura DiMatteo, Lucia Rosatone, Heather Jessop, Alexandra (Charlie) Craig, Michelle Maker, Shannon Creedon, Trish Tapp, Sonia Ellis, Theresa Varney; (front row) Sherrie Guthrie, Roz Geridis, Jodi Cleveland, Michelle Hudon.

One Barrier at a Time

■ by **Christine Brown**

Every now and then, the long journey toward an inclusive Ontario gets just a bit shorter, and the following story illustrates how that can happen. It features two protagonists, and at first glance the power imbalance between the two appears insurmountable. The first is the movie industry, with its deep pockets and battalions of corporate lawyers. The second is the Caption Movies Now Coalition, an equity-seeking organization that champions the rights of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The coalition was formed in 2005 to help make a night at the movies with family or friends a real option for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Last year in this column I wrote about the barriers people with disabilities face at movie theatres. Some are physical, such as buildings that do not accommodate mobility devices. Some relate to the ways in which the movies themselves are delivered to the consumer. For some time, the technology has existed to produce video-described movies for patrons with visual impairments. Likewise, the means exist to provide an accessible movie-going experience for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Unfortunately, the movie industry has been slow to make these barrier-free screenings widely available.

There are two types of movie captioning. One is open captioning, whereby captions are displayed on the bottom of the screen. The other is closed, rear-window captioning (RWC), whereby captions are projected onto Plexiglas devices that

fit into a movie patron's cup holder. Though this latter technology has been around for a decade, it has been made available at only a small number of screenings. Even when moviegoers had access to one of the rare theatres with the right equipment, their choice of movies was extremely limited.

Three Ontario residents, Scott Simser, Nancy Barker and Gary Malkowski, eventually took their case to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Though the complaint was initially launched in 2000, it was referred to the Human Rights Tribunal only in 2004. Subsequently, the coalition worked diligently on the complainants' behalf, publicizing their case and garnering the financial and political support of individuals and organizations – ETFO among them.

This July, a settlement was reached with Alliance Atlantis Cinemas, AMC Entertainment International, Cineplex Entertainment, and Rainbow Centre Cinemas. It mandates new closed-captioning systems in multiple Ontario theatres. New technology is currently being developed that will eventually make it possible for captions to be displayed on handheld personal digital assistants. Should the new system not become commercially available, the companies have agreed to RWC installations or open captioning at a number of theatres. This arrangement will be phased in over time. Since some remaining companies within the industry are not part of the settlement, the litigation continues.

This is a victory that will resonate across the country. Though the settlement covers only Ontario, it has widespread future implications for social justice. The campaign that made it happen is an example of political action at its finest, and we all owe the complainants, and the Caption Movies Now Coalition, a debt of gratitude. **V**

Christine Brown is the coordinator of ETFO's Protective Services department. She has a special interest in disability issues.





ETFO member Dorothy Ramsay

by Vivian McCaffrey

Provincial election 2007

Defending

Public Education

Photos: Vivian McCaffrey

Last spring, as ETFO began preparing for the October 2007 election, the federation looked back on four years during which the government had worked constructively with education stakeholders to address issues affecting public education and the teaching profession. The Liberals also scored fairly high on keeping their 2003 election promises on education issues.

As a result, the recent election became the first in recent times in which ETFO, along with other teacher federations, did not campaign to unseat a government. Teachers have developed a reputation at Queen's Park for turning against unresponsive governments, so our approach to the 2007 campaign is noteworthy.

In 1999 and 2003, the federation marshalled resources to defeat the Conservatives in response to regressive social policies and attacks on teachers and public education. The 1995 election followed the unpopular Social Contract imposed by the one-term NDP government. In 1990, teachers were at odds with the Liberal government, which refused to grant them a partnership role in governing their pensions.

The stakes were high in the most recent campaign. Last spring, polls showed the Liberals and Conservatives in a dead heat among decided voters. If the Tories gained momentum, the Liberals faced a minority government or possible defeat. History was not on their side: they had not won back-to-back majority governments since 1937.

ETFO's goals and strategy

ETFO had three key election goals:

- to re-elect a Liberal majority or a Liberal-NDP minority government
- to ensure the NDP retained official party status and remained a viable force in the legislature
- to raise the profile of our *Close the Gap* campaign, which highlights the \$711 difference in funding between elementary and secondary students.

Our election strategy focused on providing members with information; highlighting the need to close the gap; and supporting candidates in targeted ridings.

Vivian McCaffrey is the ETFO executive assistant responsible for government relations.



ETFO VP Barbara Burkett campaigns with Kathleen Wynne.



ETFO members Julia Sweeney and Robert Fulford.



MPP Andrea Horwath and ETFO member Barbara Wallace.

ETFO's survey

Informing members of key election issues is an important goal of any election strategy. Because only the Conservatives had released an election platform by early summer, ETFO surveyed the four main political parties on education issues, childcare, child poverty, and the environment. We included the Green Party in our survey because it had developed significantly since the 2003 election and had gained popular support.

The parties' responses formed the basis for a special election newsletter (distributed to members at the beginning of the school year) and for the election fact sheets distributed to locals and posted on the ETFO website.

When they were released, the Liberal, NDP, and Green platforms included positive commitments for education. The federation could not support the Conservative platform that promised to introduce full funding for private religious schools, expand standardized testing, and financially reward schools that scored well on EQAO tests.

Highlighting the need to close the gap

The election also provided an opportunity to raise the profile of our *Close the Gap* campaign and solicit party support for the issue. Our broad media campaign included billboards, transit, newspaper, radio, and television ads, which gave the issue important profile. The Green Party platform included a commitment to close the gap, and during the campaign the Liberals announced the creation of a \$150 million fund to address class size and program issues in grades 4 to 8 as their next step in closing the gap.

These commitments were significant, given the unexpected and perhaps unprecedented impact of a single issue – funding for private religious schools. There is little dispute that this Conservative policy dominated political discourse during the campaign and played a major role in determining the party's fortunes on October 10.

Supporting candidates

ETFO's most significant impact on the election comes from supporting individual candidates. As in previous elections, ETFO, in cooperation with our locals, supported Liberal and NDP candidates in ridings where we calculated we would have the most strategic effect. We allocated greater financial and human resources than we did in 2003. In 2007 the federation released

members to work in 36 different campaigns. Our support extended beyond these targeted ridings: a number of locals made donations and released members to work for other candidates.

Our support of individual candidates was extremely important: of the 36 candidates we supported, 26 were elected or re-elected. Provincial and local donations assisted them in running effective campaigns. Members released to work in selected ridings provided profile for the federation, established important personal relationships with candidates, and gained valuable political experience to take back to their locals and their classrooms.

What lies ahead?

The re-elected government faces many challenges over the next four years. The Liberals have raised expectations about continuing to make improvements to health care and education, addressing environmental and energy issues, and making real progress in reducing child poverty. At the same time, the province is experiencing serious economic issues related to the fiscal imbalance with the federal government, job losses in the manufacturing sector, and financial pressures from overburdened municipalities.

ETFO will have to work diligently at Queen's Park and at the local level to ensure the important issues facing elementary education are fairly and effectively addressed by the Liberals in their second term in office. In the months ahead, ETFO members will be hearing about the next steps in the *Close the Gap* campaign and how they can lend their support. As always, member engagement will play an important role in the ultimate success of this endeavour. **V**

ETFO members who ran for office in the provincial election reflect on the qualities that teachers bring to politics and on the impact of the campaign experience on their teaching.

ETFO Members on the Campaign Trail

Katy Austin

NDP – Simcoe-Grey

Katy Austin says that running for office has underscored the importance of teaching critical thinking skills and encouraging students to take an active role in the democratic process. Being a teacher contributed to her confidence in public speaking and her ability to multitask during a campaign. Austin retired this spring after 23 years as a full-time teacher and currently has a long-term occasional assignment.



Austin Campaign photo



Yvette Blackburn

NDP – Scarborough-Agincourt

Yvette Blackburn's candidacy attracted strong support from her grade 8 students in Scarborough, many of whom volunteered in her campaign. Blackburn believes their involvement improved their leadership skills and got them more involved in the Student Vote campaign that coincided with the election.

Blackburn has also worked as a program counsellor for at-risk visible minority students, an employment readiness counsellor for women facing barriers to workplace participation, and an instructor with a police foundations program.

Cory Judson

NDP – Burlington

Cory Judson ran for office in large part because as a teacher he sees the impact of poverty and the lack of affordable housing and nonprofit licensed childcare. He identifies organization, goal setting, and self-reflection as useful teaching skills he brought to his candidacy.

Back in his grade 5/6 classroom in Brantford, Judson values the enhanced critical thinking skills he acquired as a candidate and the experience of having to consider issues from different perspectives.



Frank de Jong

Green Party – Davenport

As leader of the Green Party, Frank de Jong is a seasoned campaigner, having run for federal and provincial office a dozen times. These experiences have deepened his understanding of how politics affects education and strengthened his commitment to teach young people about their civic responsibilities and the importance of being politically engaged. Teaching has helped de Jong be well organized, listen before speaking, and read his audience. His assignment as a half-time teacher of grade 7 and 8 design and technology provides him time to serve as party leader.



De Jong Campaign photo

ETFO Members on the Campaign Trail



Lynda McDougall

NDP – Dufferin-Caledon

Lynda McDougall first entered provincial politics when she ran in the 2005 Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey by-election. Her teaching experience helped her to focus during all-candidates' meetings and to see questions through the lens of what is best for children, families, and the community.

Politics has taught McDougall valuable listening skills. She asks herself how her response relates to the thinking of the person asking the question, a process that often moves others towards change.

McDougall has spent 28 years teaching. She is vice-president of the Upper Grand Teacher Local and served on the ETFO provincial executive for four years.

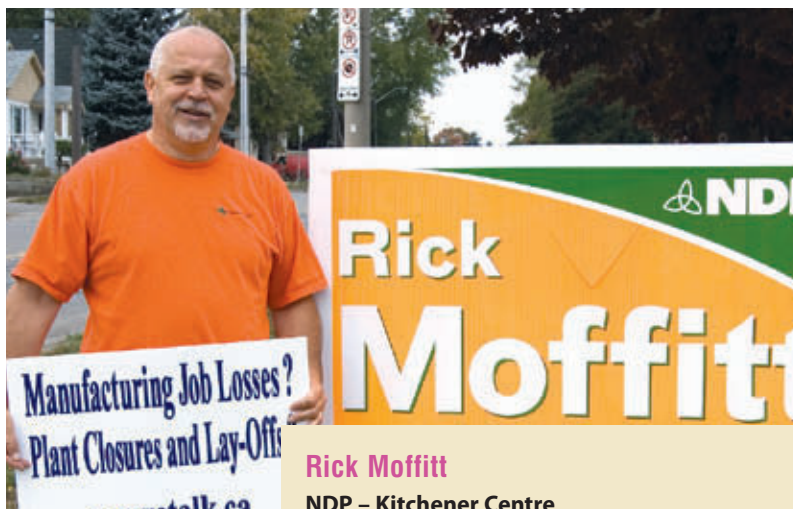


Virgin Campaign photo

Nerene Virgin

Liberal – Hamilton Mountain

In addition to her teaching background, Nerene Virgin brought several years of media experience to her candidacy. She starred in TVOntario children's programs and later worked in news for both CBC and CFTO. An occasional teacher with the Hamilton-Wentworth board, she has also been a full-time teacher with assignments that include special education.



Rick Moffitt

NDP – Kitchener Centre

Rick Moffitt says his federation experience, including four years on the ETFO political action committee, and his time on the Waterloo Region Labour Council executive – he has been president since 2005 – helped him in his run for provincial office.

Moffitt teaches grade 7 language arts in Waterloo. He's been a teacher for 20 years, but spent a number of years as the communications officer for the Waterloo Region Teacher Local.

Back in the classroom, Moffitt is using his political experience to assist students with public speaking and to develop a unit on advocacy for students.

Literacy Coaches and Special Education Teachers:



Teaching is no longer an isolated, private practice. In schools across the province, teams of teachers are working together to support each other and to provide students with the best possible learning opportunities.

Nancy McFarland and Jennifer Massie

A dynamic combination

■ by **Nancy Baldree**

Special education teachers and literacy coaches with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board have found the rewards of a collaborative and collegial working partnership to be worth the effort. At two schools, Roger Neilson and R.F. Downey in Peterborough, the literacy coach and the special education teacher work together to support classroom teachers as they strive to meet the needs of the wide range of learners in their classes.

“Through collaboration we’re giving everyone’s best, including the principal’s and all the teachers’, to our students. The sum of our parts is definitely greater than any one of us individually,” says Nancy McFarland, literacy coach at Roger Neilson.

Special education teacher Jennifer Massie agrees. “My specialty isn’t literacy, it’s special education. It’s really beneficial for us to know we have that expertise to draw from each other and to share with our colleagues and, likewise, the expertise our colleagues have as classroom teachers to share with us and each other.”

Working collaboratively to support the 11 classroom teachers in their kindergarten to grade 6 school has also been a positive experience for literacy coach Pat Wade and special education teacher Karen Dillon, at R.F. Downey, “We’re a team and everyone here is part of it. I don’t think anyone feels alone or that they can’t ask for help,” Dillon says.

Nancy Baldree is an ETFO executive assistant in the Professional Services department.

Photos: Johanna Brand



“Through collaboration we’re giving everyone’s best...”

Sharing knowledge, becoming leaders

Time is a challenge

One of the biggest challenges to overcome is finding the time to collaborate.

Designated release time that allows for formal opportunities to collaborate has been a big part of the success of this model. Special funding that has provided time during the instructional day has given teachers the opportunity to discuss the students and their work, and to plan for improvement. It has also given them an opportunity for professional learning within the school day instead of after hours. Sharing occurs among the staff and grade partners, and teachers help drive their own professional learning opportunities.

The principal plays an important role as leader and partner in this collaborative model, helping to set the tone and demonstrating commitment through regular weekly meetings and by providing release time for teachers to meet. “Everything comes back to the importance of having an administrator who supports us working together as literacy coach and special education teacher, and as a staff working together,” McFarland states.

Teachers have also found that there is a lot of meaningful collaboration happening on the fly – in lunchroom discussions and hallway conversations, through school email and electronic conferences, as well as through more structured opportunities. In both schools, the literacy coach and special education teacher have scheduled weekly meetings with the principal to discuss the school’s SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-sensitive) goals.

Collaboration allows teachers to share their expertise. The literacy coach can work with the teacher on interpreting student data and making suggestions for next steps for students, and bring to the conversation a wealth of knowledge and expertise in research-based literacy practices. As well, the literacy coach is available to work with the teacher to plan lessons based on students’ needs, and to model lessons, which helps to build the classroom teacher’s expertise in literacy instruction.

The special education teacher also works with the teacher in the classroom. She brings her knowledge and expertise in differentiating instruction, assessing struggling students to help determine the areas of need, providing suggestions for accommodating or modifying a student’s program, and helping the classroom teacher plan for individual needs and write individual education plans.

While the collaborative model has been successful in many ways, one unexpected side effect has been the opportunity for teachers to become leaders within their school community. Some are choosing to design and deliver professional learning opportunities for their colleagues, with the goal of sharing effective practices. One group of teachers has chosen to expand on their learning and to be involved in ETFO’s *Teachers Learning Together* project over the 2007–08 school year.

Positive results for students ...

The short-term results indicate that this collaborative model has been a success. Developing SMART goals around reading strategies paid off for R. F. Downey School where Pat Wade and Karen Dillon teach. Post-assessment results indicated significant improvement in student achievement after a specific reading strategy was studied, discussed, modelled, and practised. Focusing on inferencing as a strategy resulted in 60 percent of grades 2 and 3 students achieving levels 3 and 4, up from a preassessment level of 0 percent. The number of grade 3 students at levels 3 and 4 increased to 85 percent from 47 percent preassessment. After focusing on the strategy of questioning, the number of grade 6 students performing at levels 3 and 4 more than doubled, going from 33 to 72 percent.

... and for teachers

But the impact of these partnerships is even greater. Helping classroom teachers think about their students who need accommodations or modifications and helping them learn how to meet these individual needs have

“a dynamic combination”




been very rewarding for the special education teachers. “When you have more than one adult teaching in the room, students are exposed to a range of instructional styles – for example kinesthetic and visual – so they get a mix of approaches, and you can’t beat that,” says Jennifer Massie. “With SMART goals helping to frame our school’s focus and professional learning, there is a consistency across language, strategies and processes school-wide that the students and teachers can carry forward to the next school year,” adds McFarland.

But it’s not just students who have benefited from the collaboration between special needs and literacy teachers. Other teachers appreciate the help they receive in coplanning, working with class profile information, and supporting individual students’ programs. Sharing ideas and strategies creates a ripple effect throughout the building, with the culture of collaboration

resulting in increased dialogue among staff members. Grade partners are sharing what’s working, what isn’t, and problem-solving together.

“Things have changed. Teaching, being part of the school team, it’s a positive thing,” says Pat Wade. “We all speak a common language and use similar research-based teaching strategies.”

Karen Dillon adds: “More than ever before we share our successes and celebrate our student achievement. I love coming to work now, I really do. Not that I didn’t before, but I really love it now.” 



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IEPs: Making the Assessment – Instruction Connection

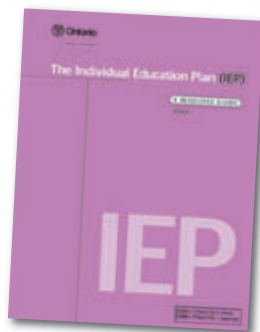
■ by Nancy Baldree

The *Education Act* requires individual education plans (IEPs) for students identified as exceptional through an identification, placement, and review committee (IPRC). Boards may also choose to put an IEP in place for students receiving special education programs and/or services but who have not been identified as exceptional through an IPRC.

IEPs are more than an exercise in paperwork. An IEP is a working document that helps define and reflect the fluid program provided to a special needs student. Ensuring that the program and services outlined in the IEP are based on assessment information is a critical step in developing a sound program for our most vulnerable students.

The Ministry of Education document *Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide 2004* (page 6) defines an IEP as:

- a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs – that is, the strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn and to demonstrate learning
- a record of the particular accommodations needed to help the student achieve his or her learning expectations
- a working document that identifies learning expectations that are modified from the expectations for the age-appropriate grade level in a particular subject or course
- a working document that identifies alternative expectations
- a record of the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed and evaluated
- an accountability tool for the student, the student's parents, and everyone who has responsibilities under the plan for helping the student meet the stated goals and learning expectations.



(The full text of the ministry document is available at edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/index.html)

Assessment information should be driving student IEPs. Assessments may be provided by outside professionals, such as psychologists or speech language pathologists. Special education teachers and classroom teachers also provide valuable assessment information. All of these should be used to inform programming for the student with special needs.

The reports of outside professionals will identify, if possible, the underlying cause of the student's difficulty. It is helpful for teachers to know and understand this information in developing the student's program and to put in place strategies that address it. If an IEP refers only to the student's academic needs – for example, if each year it says “reading, writing, and math” – we run the risk of each year's teacher making a best guess at addressing the student's needs.

The teacher must determine how best to work with the information the assessment provides. For example, a teacher will not be able to improve the memory of a student with a memory deficit, but she will be able to teach the student strategies to help accommodate the memory deficit.

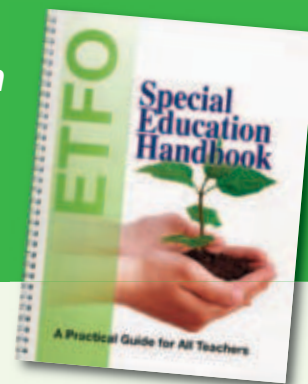
It is also important to consider the student's strengths in developing a program. When working with a strong visual learner, for example, the teacher should ensure that learning opportunities include information that is provided visually and not just orally.

As a final note, teachers must take care about how they communicate assessment information. It is appropriate for a teacher to note, document, and inform parents/guardians that a student is having difficulty memorizing multiplication facts. It is not appropriate to inform the parents/guardians that the student has a memory deficit; that should be done by a qualified professional. ♥

The *ETFO Special Education Handbook: A Practical Guide for All Teachers* assists teachers in developing programs for individual students with special needs. This book includes useful information tables with a plain-language definitions of learning problems and their causes, descriptions of behaviours and other indicators that students with specific needs may demonstrate, and suggested instructional, environmental, and assessment strategies to address and accommodate the identified need.

Nancy Baldree is an ETFO executive assistant in the Professional Services department.

These pages are excerpts from *ETFO's Special Education Handbook: A Practical Guide for All Teachers*. They provide information and advice on working with students with attention and organizational difficulties.



Area of Need: *Organizational Skills*

A student with organizational skills needs has difficulty in keeping storage areas, work, and play orderly.

Indicators

Students with organizational skills needs may:

- be unable to find their materials, and so may come to class without the materials they need
- have a desk and personal space area that is messy
- produce written work that is not organized by topic, or by major points and supporting evidence
- have difficulty following timelines
- have difficulty breaking assignments into an orderly sequence of work units
- miss deadlines for handing in work
- have notebooks and notes that are disorganized
- have difficulty bringing order to information to appreciate the main idea or key concepts when learning or communicating information
- get caught up in details and miss the big picture

Instructional Strategies

- provide and teach organizational schemes to work with, and provide supervision on their use
- teach the student to use an agenda book to record assignments
- provide colour coded notebooks, one for each subject
- provide written outlines of assignments to organize their work
- break down projects into a sequence of clearly-defined work units
- provide graphic organizers and checklists, according to the student's learning style
- cue the student to use the organizers and schemes that have been provided
- reinforce the student for using the organizers and schemes that have been provided
- fade out the prompting and reinforcement as the student internalizes the schemes and uses them
- provide a list of all needed equipment for each of the student's activities
- attach daily schedules to notebooks
- utilize technology (e.g., graphic organizer software)

Environmental Strategies

- provide an organizational scheme for each environment, e.g., backpack, desk at school, desk at home, locker
- provide an individual work space
- seat the student close to the teacher to facilitate teacher prompting
- locate the student's locker close to the teacher or a classmate who can prompt the student
- post visual reminders in the classroom
- supervise weekly "clean-up and organizing" sessions with outcome expectations clearly specified

Assessment Strategies

- provide individual work space for writing tests and exams
- highlight key words and phrases on the test
- provide review outlines in point form
- provide testing materials and equipment (e.g., pencil, pen, eraser, ruler, paper)
- prompt the student about time remaining and progress expected when writing tests, e.g., "There are 30 minutes remaining now. You should be starting question 10 now."



Photo: Jorge Uzon



Photo: Jorge Uzon



Photo: Anne de Haas

Area of Need: *Attention Skills*

A student with attention skills needs has difficulty sustaining concentration and focusing on an activity while ignoring distractions.

The student can concentrate on tasks that are exciting or interesting, but may have particular difficulty concentrating on uninteresting activities.

Indicators

Students with attention skills needs may:

- be easily distracted
- be disorganized
- appear restless
- have difficulty starting and/or finishing tasks
- not be able to sit still
- lack impulse control
- crave immediate gratification
- have trouble connecting cause/effect
- wander around the classroom
- appear to be daydreaming
- have difficulty taking turns
- talk off topic
- often have writing problems
- become quite frustrated and overly stressed when asked to complete tasks that are difficult for them
- have attentional processes that vary from day-to-day

Environmental Strategies

- reduce stimulus (e.g., sit student at front of class)
- preferential seating and use of a single desk
- keep student's space free of unnecessary materials
- use a study carrel
- provide more than one acceptable work area



Photo: Jorge Uzon

Instructional Strategies

- chunk or shorten assignments
- have student repeat instructions
- give only one or two instructions at a time
- present directions both orally and in writing, particularly if they involve a sequence
- map information
- provide a posted, written, and structured program to student
- provide direct instruction of organizational skills
- provide positive reinforcement program
- vary presentation format and test materials
- provide access to writing or speech to text software
- use colour coding or highlight critical information
- use overhead projector
- use novelty to help elicit attention
- use a multimedia approach to learning
- allow the restless student opportunities to change focus or tasks
- provide the student with appropriate opportunities to move around the room (e.g., passing out papers, delivering attendance or forms to the office)
- identify critical bits of information and print these or highlight in bright colours or use coloured paper
- provide opportunity for rehearsal/repetition/practice
- present in different sense modalities
- use cueing strategies to help the student identify when off task
- engage the student in helping to deliver the lesson
- utilize a home-school communication book
- provide opportunity for physical exercise
- post visible and clear rules and instructions

Assessment Strategies

- provide opportunities for the student to demonstrate understanding in a variety of ways, such as oral presentation, audio-video taped assignments, bulletin board displays, dramatizations, and demonstrations
- oral tests
- fill in the blanks
- short answer questions
- make assessment expectations explicit
- provide periodic breaks
- provide a quiet location, free from distractions
- allow additional time when required
- allow student to write down the main points and to expand on them verbally
- divide the test into parts and give it to the student one section at a time or over a period of days
- provide prompts for the purpose of drawing the student's attention back to the test



Providing Practical Help for Students with Autism

■ by Susan Ducau

In 2006 the Autism Spectrum Disorders Reference Group was set up to provide recommendations to the minister of education and the minister of children and youth services about effective, evidence-based educational practices to meet the strengths and needs of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). One result of the final recommendations was the Ministry of Education's Policy and Procedure Memorandum 140 (PPM 140) released in May 2007. My heart raced with excitement as I read about the framework to support Ontario school boards with the implementation of "Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) as an effective instructional approach in the education of many students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (p. 1)." For me, this memorandum represented a successful collaboration by researchers, practitioners, parent representatives, and the ministries to ensure that schools address the wide variety of needs of students with ASD.

For most of my teaching career I have worked with children who have ASD, and as both a classroom and itinerant resource teacher, I have witnessed the success of ABA techniques. While valuable for teaching students with autism, the principles of ABA can also be used with positive results for students with other special needs.

Applied behavioural analysis (as outlined in the PPM 140) is based on scientific principles of learning and behaviour. Its ultimate goal is to change behaviour by increasing desirable skills and decreasing undesirable ones. When applying ABA in the classroom, it is important to consider its fundamental principles: creating an individualized program, using positive reinforcement, collecting and analyzing relevant data, and generalizing skills.

Susan Ducau is an itinerant behaviour resource teacher in special education in the Simcoe County District School Board.

Using ABA in the classroom

Emily* was diagnosed with autism when she was two and a half years old. When I met her she was in grade 1 and had been fully integrated into a mainstream class since junior kindergarten, and was receiving some support from an educational assistant.

To address the problems Emily was experiencing in the classroom, we began by meeting as a school team: an administrator, special education resource teacher, the classroom teacher (who shared information provided by the educational assistant), Emily's mother, the school board speech and language pathologist, a community-based occupational therapist, and myself, a behaviour resource teacher.

The school personnel and Emily's mother described the little girl's strengths and needs. Their primary concern was the difficulty she had following the teacher's directions, especially when told what work she was expected to complete. The classroom teacher said that after she gave directions, Emily would cause a disruption by yelling and saying no. She was then usually removed from the classroom to allow her to calm down. The teacher, educational assistant, and parent were frustrated, as these behaviours were resulting in incomplete work and classroom disturbances.

The next step was to collect observational data about Emily's daily disruptions. The classroom teacher and EA completed ABC tracking for 10 school days. This tracking outlined what happened immediately before the behaviour occurred (Antecedent), what the behaviour looked like (Behaviour), and what happened immediately after (Consequence). The school professional support staff observed Emily at different times, in a variety of settings, and completed their assessments within a four-week period.

By sharing documentation and observations, the school team was able to determine that Emily's behaviours occurred most frequently when she was presented with a writing task that did not have a clear beginning and end (for example, writing a journal about her weekend). Removing her from the classroom caused her behaviour to continue because when she returned either the class had changed tasks or the task expectations had to be reduced due to time constraints (such as approaching recess). In other words, a lose-lose situation.

Once the behaviour patterns and its causes were determined, the occupational therapist suggested that Emily use an AlphaSmart (a small desktop keyboard) because she had observed that her fine motor skills were impaired. The speech pathologist suggested Emily use photographs or notes in her home-to-school communication book to help her remember what had happened on the weekend. I assisted the classroom teacher by providing ideas and modelling how to structure a writing task for Emily: provide



Susan Ducau and Stacey Lewis

her with sentence starters; using a checklist format, outline how many sentences she needed to write; and provide her with an exemplar.

When Emily did complete her journal, it was important that she receive positive reinforcement. Emily's reward was to walk independently to the learning centre, where she printed her journal from the AlphaSmart and she received a token. After she had accumulated four tokens she was allowed to choose from a selection of rewards.

The school team implemented the strategies immediately and continued to use ABC tracking to see if there were changes to Emily's behaviours. I returned to the class two weeks later and saw Emily completing her journal with minimal disruption. The tracking reflected a significant decrease (about 70 per cent) in her behaviours during journal time.

The principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (individualization, positive reinforcement, data collection, and generalization) are effective for working with a variety of special needs students. As teachers we are continuously taking data on students' progress with their academic skills (running records, Rubrics, checklists, tests, and so on). When we find students struggling with a task or subject, we determine what skill needs to be increased (reading comprehension, math computation facts, note-taking skills) and teach that skill through whole-class, small-group, or individualized instruction. We then praise students and/or provide some external reinforcement (sticker, point system, positive phone call home) when they show improvement in the area we are focusing on. Finally, we help students generalize this new skill and use it in different contexts by reporting to other teachers and to parents on the improvement and how they can help. When we follow this process, we are using ABA principles. **V**

Did you know?

- Children are usually diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder between the ages of 18 months and six years. The diagnosis is based on observations by parents and others involved with the child (staff at preschool or early years centre, classroom teacher, etc.).
- Children with ASD will have impairments in three areas: social interactions, communication, and repetitive or restrictive patterns of behaviour.
- The diagnosis may be characterized as Asperger's, autism, or pervasive developmental delay-not otherwise specified.
- Autism is now recognized as the most common neurological disorder affecting children and one of the most common developmental disabilities. Approximately one in 165 children have an ASD and the number of cases is increasing worldwide. For more information, consult autismsocietycanada.ca
- April is Autism Awareness Month. Contact your local chapter of Autism Society Ontario (autismontario.com) to obtain information about their "Together for Autism Program."

Summary of how the principles of ABA were applied:

Behaviour to decrease: removal from classroom due to disruptions

Behaviour to increase: time on task and written output

Documentation used: ABC tracking

Solutions: collaboration with school team, accommodations for fine motor difficulties, planning and structuring the task

Reinforcement: independent walk (purposeful movement break) and token economy

Generalization: When Emily was able to complete the journal with an 80 percent reduction in disruptive behaviours, the strategies were applied to other writing tasks.

IEP: accommodations for writing (use of AlphaSmart, written outline, exemplar). No modifications required, as Emily was working on curriculum expectations.

**This example was compiled from different experiences working with children with autism. The name and identifying information do not reflect an individual child.*

The Joy of



On a hot, cloudless day in June, 200 special needs students in the District School Board of Niagara took part in their first track and field day.

The event was the brainchild of special needs teacher Andy Dermatas. "I had a couple of students in wheelchairs and at the end of our track and field meet I would get in a wheelchair and race them. Then it occurred to me that I had to do something more," Dermatas said.

Dermatas worked with physical education teacher Bryan Keyes, physical education consultant Ron Lopez, and special needs coordinator Carol Purser, to organize the day.

Special Olympics Ontario provided startup funds, donated ribbons, and came out to support the event. The parent council at Power Glen School in St. Catharines donated bottled water.

The volunteer list was "enormous," according to Dermatas: "All of the people at the board office – a total of 40 – from the chair to the secretaries came to volunteer at the event. We had four people at each event for the whole day."

Children with all kinds of challenges participated in the six events. In some cases, events were modified to take their challenges into account.

There was 95 percent participation from schools in the Niagara board. "Parents, teachers, and kids talked about it the next day and for many days thereafter," Dermatas recalled proudly. **v**



Belonging

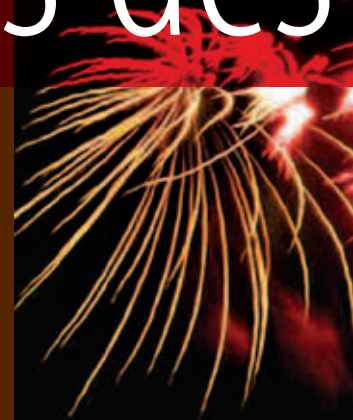
■ Photos and story: Johanna Brand



Célébrez les fêtes des

Ces plans de leçons sont tirés du document *Effaçons les préjugés pour de bon*, traduction de l'excellent document d'appui au curriculum, produit par la FEEO *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good*. Cette ressource renferme une multitude d'excellentes idées et suggestions pour les enseignantes et les enseignants des programmes de français de base, de français intensif et d'immersion. Le document d'appui est offert gratuitement sur notre site Web, à l'adresse etfo.ca ► *Resources/ForTeachers/Documents/Effaçons les préjugés pour de bon.pdf*

Les leçons sont suggérées à un certain niveau, mais l'enseignante ou l'enseignant peut les adapter en fonction de ses classes et leurs besoins particuliers, ceux des classes combinées, par exemple.



Thème : Fêtes des lumières

Niveau : 6^e année

Overall Expectations

Core French:

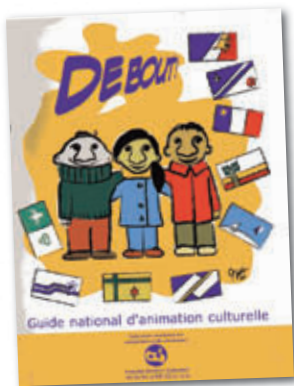
- participate in dialogues about familiar topics, and listen to and talk about short oral texts.

Extended French:

- produce written texts, using a variety of forms, for various purposes and in a range of contexts.

French Immersion:

- produce written texts, using a variety of forms, for various purposes and in a range of contexts.



Titre : **Debout, Guide national d'animation culturelle**

Écrit par : Judith Charest et Félix Saint-Denis

Publié par : Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et enseignants (FCE), 2002

ISBN : 0-88989-334-9

Ce livre offre des activités pour toute l'année. Téléphoner (sans frais) au 1 866-283-1505 ou visiter la version en ligne de DEBOUT à www.ctf-fce.ca. Remue-ménages sur l'utilisation des bougies.

Faire une liste des fêtes culturelles que vous connaissez et pendant lesquelles on utilise des lumières.

Demander aux élèves de faire des recherches au sujet de Diwali, Eid, Hanukah, Kwanzaa et Noël. Choisir deux fêtes et les comparer :

- Temps de l'année
- Symboles
- But/sens historique
- Comment elles ont changé

Remue-ménages sur l'utilisation des rubans. Expliquer pourquoi les gens portent un ruban blanc en décembre? Lire le passage à la page 79 sur la violence qui a eu lieu le 6 décembre 1989. En discuter. Utiliser les nombreuses activités proposées.

À noter : ce livret offre aussi une bonne description de la fête de Saint-Jean Baptiste, célébrée le 24 juin, et des activités pour cette fête.

lumières

Les auteurs d'Effaçons les préjugés pour de bon sont *Mark Duwyn, Clelia Trinca et Sherry Ramrattan Smith*. Réviseurs : *Mark Duwyn et Carol Zavitz*. Traduction : *Mamadou Seck, Talibé Communications*.



Titre : **Des battes de baseball pour Noël**
Écrit par **Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak**
Illustrations/Photographies par : **Vladyana Krykorka**
Publié par : **Annick Press, Toronto, 1994**
IISBN : **1-55037-379-X**

Thème : Fêtes des lumières Niveau : 6^e année

Overall Expectations

Core French:

- participate in dialogues about familiar topics, and listen to and talk about short oral texts.

Extended French:

- express ideas and opinions on a range of topics, using correct pronunciation and appropriate intonation;
- read a variety of texts and media works and demonstrate understanding through a range of oral and written responses.

French Immersion:

- express ideas and opinions clearly on a range of topics, using correct pronunciation and appropriate intonation;
- read a variety of texts and media works and demonstrate understanding through a range of oral and written responses.

Prélecture : Examiner l'image à la page couverture. Où et quand a lieu cette histoire? Faites une liste des choses qui vous indiquent l'endroit où se passe l'histoire. Parlez d'une période où vous avez voulu donner quelque chose que vous aimiez beaucoup à quelqu'un d'autre.

Lire l'histoire à haute voix. Examiner une carte du Canada. Situez Cape Fullerton. Ensuite situez Repulse Bay. Utilisez un instrument de mesure métrique pour déterminer la distance entre ces endroits et là où vous habitez.

Comparer les habitations à Repulse Bay en 1955 à celles de votre lieu de naissance à la même époque. Pourquoi, selon vous, les maisons étaient-elles différentes? Trouver des renseignements pour comparer les habitations d'aujourd'hui. Pourquoi ne trouve-t-on pas d'arbres à Repulse Bay? Comment vous sentiriez-vous si vous étiez dans un endroit où il n'y a pas d'arbres? Comment utilisons-nous les arbres dans les régions du sud du Canada?

Faire un projet d'études indépendantes sur le processus et les problèmes rencontrés pour apporter l'électricité à des communautés telles que celles de Cape Fullerton et Repulse Bay. Réviser et faire les corrections en petits groupes. Corriger sa dernière ébauche pour la grammaire, la ponctuation, l'orthographe et le style.

Comment les gens reçoivent-ils des fournitures à Repulse Bay? Pourquoi? Utiliser des ressources principales et secondaires pour fournir plus d'information sur les rapports entre l'environnement et le mode de vie des Inuits. Comment recevez-vous des fournitures chez vous? Si vous ne receviez des approvisionnements que deux fois l'an, quelles sont les fournitures que vous demanderiez? Faire une liste et expliquer l'importance de chacun des articles à une ou un camarade.



The Importance of Teaching the Whole Child

■ by Jerry DeQuetteville

A session at a conference I recently attended focused on a provocative and compelling new report from the Commission on the Whole Child, formed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). *The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action* offered a vision for education reform that embraces all the factors that influence children's lives and development.

Jerry DeQuetteville is the coordinator of ETFO's Professional Services department.

The conference also explored the impact the controversial American legislation *No Child Left Behind* has had on the American school system. *No Child Left Behind*, which led to the most comprehensive overhaul of the American school system since the 1960s, has a narrow view of education and its cornerstone is a series of annual literacy and numeracy tests.

American policy makers reasoned that the best way to ensure all students were successful was first to test achievement annually and then to offer resources to help schools improve their students' scores. Sanctions are eventually applied to those schools deemed unsuccessful. The narrow focus on a specific score and content area had the unintended consequence of taking the focus away from the whole child – and from some children altogether.¹ To make more time for the subjects tested, 71 percent of school districts “reduced elementary school instructional time in at least one other subject.”² Thirty-three percent of school districts cut social studies, 29 percent science, 22 percent art and music, and 14 percent physical education.

Discussions with American colleagues about this initiative made me think about our own Ministry of Education's focus on literacy and numeracy. When the McGuinty Liberals were elected in 2004, a key part of their platform was that 75 percent of grade 6 students would reach the provincial standard on reading, writing, and math tests by 2008. This focus has transformed our school system.

While welcoming the positive focus on elementary education, ETFO has expressed concern that the target could not be achieved in four short years. We also worried about the impact this focus on literacy and numeracy would have on schools and teachers; certainly we have heard complaints from teachers who feel that the employer-provided professional learning has been too focused on these areas.

Concerns have also been raised that students with special needs do not receive the supports they need to be successful. Anecdotally we heard that schools have placed such an emphasis on literacy and numeracy that other subject areas (particularly the arts) are receiving less emphasis than they once did. Thankfully this dynamic appears to be less pronounced here than south of the border.

When ASCD issued the final report of the Commission on the Whole Child, these words resonated:

Our current, well-intentioned focus on academics is essential.

Global economics require that each citizen be prepared to live in and contribute to a worldwide community of shrinking size and growing complexity.

If, however, we concentrate solely on academics and on narrowly measured academic achievement, we fail to educate the whole child. We shortchange our young people and limit their future if we do not create places of learning that encourage and celebrate every aspect of each student's capacity for learning.³

Based on this report, ASCD initiated a campaign focusing on the need to broaden the idea of what it means to be well educated. This campaign has five pillars.

- Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.
- Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults.
- Each graduate is challenged by a well-balanced curriculum and is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment.⁴



Similarly, ETFO recognizes that there is far more to preparing students for their future roles than reading and writing. Our professional programs and course offerings reveal a strong focus on such things as a healthy body image, arts institutes, professional learning series, environmental education, global education, information and communication technology, supports for special education teachers, supports for impoverished children, supports for teacher mentors, French as a second language, and anti-bullying initiatives. Clearly, as an organization we recognize that there is far more to being a contributing member of society than literacy and numeracy.

ETFO also has strong views on large-scale assessment and the manner in which that data are used. Luckily our experience has been different: unlike the situation south of the border, when Ontario schools demonstrate that their students are struggling with core skill areas, the schools receive additional resources and supports (although in some instances the magnitude of these supports has been overwhelming!). This is the result of intense lobbying by ETFO and of our government's recognition of and respect for teachers' professionalism.

Given the recent re-election of the McGuinty Liberals, it will be incumbent upon ETFO to lobby the government to ensure this province does not continue down the road of concentrating on narrowly measured academic achievement. We will have to work with the government so that teachers are provided with the tools they need to help students become contributing citizens of a rapidly changing world. ♥

NOTES:

1. D. Laitsch, T. Lewallen, & M. McCloskey (2005). "Framework for Education in the 21st Century, Infobrief (40), pp. 1–8. Reston, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from: ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.bfaa683e7841320fb85516f762108a0c/
2. Center on Education Policy (2006), From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act, pp. 115–16. Retrieved from cep-dc.org/nclb/Year4/CEP-NCLB-Report-4.pdf
3. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2007), The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action; A Report of the Commission on the Whole Child; p. 6. Available at ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/WholeChild/WCC_Learning_Compact.pdf
4. Ibid., p. 9



by Jana McDade



Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: 20 Years of Love



Project Love is celebrating 20 years of helping Canadians make a difference. Since 1987 CODE, the Canadian international literacy agency that manages *Project Love*, has shipped more than a 1.5 million *Project Love* kits of school supplies to students in Africa and the Caribbean.

Project Love was started by a committee of CODE volunteers in London, Ontario. The program now involves about 500 schools across Canada and assists more than 80,000 students and teachers in the developing world each year.

Over the years, *Project Love* has been adopted by hundreds of thousands of Canadian teachers, who recognize the project and its accompanying curriculum-based educational resources as a unique opportunity for their students to learn about international issues and assist their peers in the developing world.

"*Project Love* is a very real way for students to get involved," says one teacher participant. "It brings to light big ideas and helps them realize the importance of education in the development context."

Project Love is only a small part of what CODE does. While students and teachers are assembling kits in Canada, CODE is working to address the

needs of a literate society more broadly through local publishing initiatives and support for the professional development of teachers, librarians, authors, and publishers in developing countries.

"We know education is a powerful weapon against poverty," says CODE Executive Director Scott Walter. "But to win this battle we also need qualified teachers, school resources, appropriate books and information, and an environment that supports learning."

CODE works in partnership with local education-based organizations that distribute *Project Love* to schools. Partners also distribute books, some donated from North American publishers and others published locally, to build library collections in remote communities and schools. Professional support is given to teachers who are often accustomed to teaching with few resources. *Project Love* kits and the books assist students and further enrich their learning environment.

While *Project Love* contributes to education in Africa by assisting with the everyday needs of classrooms, it also supports education in Canada. The program is a springboard to a wide range of lessons and activities, and a strong tool for introducing global education issues to young Canadians.

This year *Project Love* kits – each containing a pencil, an eraser, a ruler, and a notebook – will be sent to primary school students in Tanzania, where only 69 percent of youth can read or write, and Senegal, where only 39 percent of the population is literate. Resources for education in both these countries are limited, and such school supplies are beyond the means of most families. ♥

For more information on CODE or to get involved in Project Love, please visit www.codecan.org or contact Code communications officer Jana McDade at jmcdade@codecan.org or at (613) 232-3569 ext. 252.

Mould in Schools: A continuing health concern

■ by **Susan Ansara**
and **Jackie Pynaert**

The negative health effects of mould in public buildings first came to light about two decades ago. Despite years of research and media attention, the potentially debilitating health effects of mould are still poorly understood. Proper identification and effective remediation continue to be challenging.

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers have an obligation to provide a healthy and safe work environment for workers. Health Canada's recent research indicates that exposure to mould results in cellular and biochemical changes in the body and, therefore, supports "the need to prevent damp conditions and mould growth and to remediate any fungal contamination in buildings."¹

Unfortunately, many of Ontario's school boards are still not taking the presence of mould seriously enough. The health concerns expressed by teachers and educational workers are trivialized by their employers and, disappointingly, sometimes by their colleagues.

ETFO and the Lambton Kent District School Board's dispute over mould

During the last school year, ETFO was engaged in a long dispute with the Lambton Kent District School Board regarding the presence of mould in the board's schools, the investigation techniques the board used, and its remediation practices.

In an effort to ensure the health and safety of our members, ETFO undertook a media campaign (paid media as well as media releases), filed complaints with the Ministry of Labour and the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and filed grievances.

The two sides reached a resolution to the dispute in a settlement mediated by William Kaplan. This settlement stipulates that a mutu-

ally agreed-upon independent consultant – Echo Management Inc., under the direction of the highly renowned environmental specialist Dr. Om Malik – will conduct a thorough assessment of all Lambton Kent elementary schools. It also provides for the remediation of any issues that Dr. Malik finds during the course of his assessments.

This mediated settlement should have positive implications for all ETFO locals in the province and is in the best interests of ETFO members and the students we teach.

What to do if you suspect exposure to mould

The issues surrounding mould in public buildings are complex. If you believe that your work environment may be compromised follow these steps:

- Fill out the proper "incident form" from your school board
- Notify your supervisor
- Notify your local
- Bring your concerns forward to your worker member on your Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

All research indicates that, in order to prevent mould from growing, "prompt attention to condensation and water leaks in the building fabric, and wet building materials (resulting from plumbing or other causes, such as flood or storm damage) will eliminate the growth of mould."² Therefore, if you notice water damage, including leaking roofs, report it immediately.

Whether it is mould or another issue, you should take your health and safety seriously. Remember that if something does not feel right, it probably isn't. Take the steps necessary to ensure your work environment is healthy and safe. **v**

Susan Ansara is an executive assistant in ETFO's Protective Services department and one of ETFO's appointees to the Provincial Stability Commission. Jackie Pynaert is a member of the Lambton Kent Teacher Local.

Common Myths

Mould is a problem only in portables.

Mould can grow on any surface. It feeds on drywall, carpet, underpad, ceiling tiles, wood, and wallpaper, and in drains and HVAC systems. Any area that has sustained water damage is a potential source of mould. Therefore, classrooms and other rooms in the main school building have the potential for mould growth.

Mould cannot hurt you. It grows everywhere.

Mould does grow everywhere; however, if amplified levels of mould growth are occurring indoors, there is a problem. Also, certain species of mould (often referred to as black mould) – *Aspergillus*, *Penicillium*, and *Stachybotrys* – produce toxins that are extremely dangerous to human health.

Dead mould is not dangerous.

Dead mould is dangerous. It is still allergenic. Some dead mould is toxic.

Cleaning mould with bleach will solve the problem.

Bleach is not recommended. In most cases, it is not desirable to sterilize the area where mould has grown. Some mould spores will continue to exist. They will continue to grow if a source of moisture reappears.

Air quality tests detect the presence of mould.

Air quality tests do not detect the presence of mould.

Moisture-level tests detect the presence of mould.

Moisture-level tests are sometimes useful; however, they can be unreliable and should never be used in isolation. Dangerous levels of mould have been detected when moisture levels were found to be in the “acceptable” range.

If you cannot see mould, it is not there.

The majority of dangerous mould is not visible. Guidelines indicate that in cases where there is a history of water intrusion and where occupants have health complaints, multiple methods of investigation are necessary. Other recommended tests include bulk sampling (tape lift), spore-trap sampling, and Andersen (N6) air sampling for mould. If illness persists, invasive testing must be employed.³

If only one person is sick, it cannot be because of the building.

People react differently to different stimuli and not everyone will have a negative reaction to mould. Common complaints of people who are allergic to mould include skin irritations, respiratory complaints, coughing, eye irritations, headaches, nosebleeds, and ongoing flulike symptoms.

Once removed from the dangerous environment, a person will no longer suffer adverse health effects.

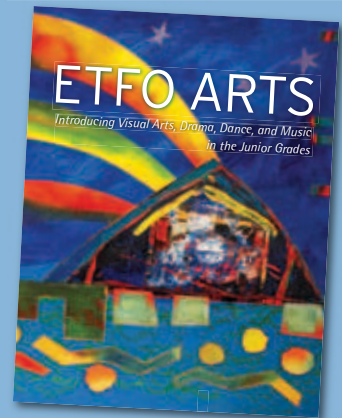
For some persons that may be true; however, for others the condition will persist and will require ongoing medical intervention. For those who are highly susceptible, exposure may result in a permanent disability.

Notes

1. Health Canada (2007), Environmental and Workplace Health, hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/index_e.html

2. Health Canada (2007), op. cit.

3. Echo Management Inc.



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What's Lurking in Your Classroom?

Filing a WSIB Claim After Exposure to Mould

There are a number of factors that can result in mould in a classroom. Older, crumbling schools, lack of funding for building maintenance and repairs, and loss of custodial staff to monitor the operating mechanics of a school are just some of the reasons for mould infestations.

■ **by Professional Relations Services staff**

Disability resulting from exposure to mould in the workplace is considered an “occupational illness” by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Such exposures may or may not lead to disability. Individuals may react differently even to similar exposures: one person may experience no symptoms or difficulties whatsoever, while another may develop serious – even disabling – health issues. People exposed to mould are sometimes not even aware and the delay in the appearance of symptoms presents its own challenges. It is no wonder, then, that filing a WSIB claim for mould exposure can be complicated and frustrating.

The WSIB has very specific policies and criteria for approving claims for mould-related exposure. There is no automatic entitlement to benefits because mould has been discovered in a classroom, even if there has been an extended exposure.

The WSIB will look for medical evidence that substantially supports a connection between workplace exposure and your becoming ill: proof that mould exists, and that you were exposed to it; and proof that the exposure has had a direct impact on your health and has significantly contributed to your inability to perform your job.

Here is some of the information you will need to provide if you elect to file a WSIB claim because you have developed a work-related illness as a result of exposure to mould.

Proof that mould exists and that you were exposed to it

When mould is disturbed it releases spores that contaminate the atmosphere. It is important that tests that establish the presence of mould – such as a visual building inspection or an analysis of samples – be conducted as soon as possible after an exposure is discovered and a claim is made. Copies of the results should be provided to the WSIB. You must also be able to verify that you were regularly exposed to the mould.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS

SERVICES staff provide confidential advice and support to assist you.

They deal with a wide variety of issues: the performance appraisal process, work-related conflict,

College of Teachers investigations, and human rights issues, including

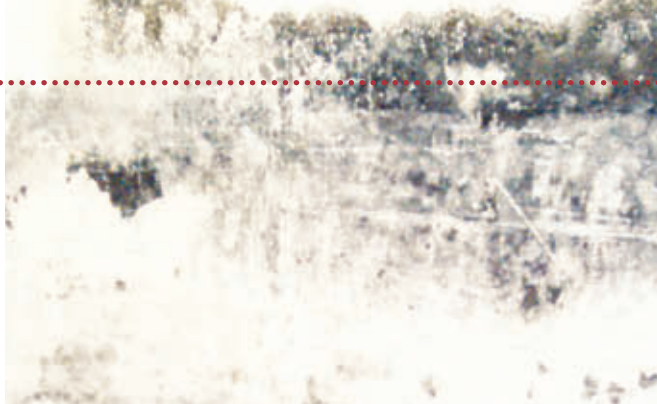
harassment and discrimination,

professional boundaries, and

allegations. Call 416-962-3836 or 1-

888-838-3836 and ask to speak to the

PRS counsellor on call.



Medical evidence to support claim

The medical information you submit should address whether there is a probable connection between the illness and workplace exposure. When it comes to mould-related claims, it is critical that you see a physician who specializes in occupational diseases and who can diagnose your illness and show how workplace exposure played a role in its development. Your family doctor may be able to refer you to a specialist or you could attend one of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW). A listing of these clinics is available at ohcow.on.ca/clinics/index.html.

The WSIB will also investigate whether there could be other explanations for your illness, such as a pre-existing condition (for example, asthma or allergies) or a family history of respiratory difficulties. For this reason it is important to have strong medical evidence connecting the development or exacerbation of your condition to your exposure to mould. Mould thrives in moist, dark environments and can be found anywhere, so your specialist will need to determine that your illness resulted from exposure to mould in your classroom and not somewhere else.

Disability and impairment

Once the connection is made between your illness and the workplace exposure, the WSIB will look at the severity of your symptoms and whether you are unable to work. Again, it is your specialist who will be able to comment on these issues. Your doctor may determine that you are unable to work in any capacity or that there are restrictions and limitations to the kind of work you can do.

Witnesses and colleagues

As part of its investigation of a claim, the WSIB will often request the names of witnesses who may also have been exposed to the mould and developed symptoms, or colleagues who were aware of your worsening condition. The more complaints of problems due to mould exposure from members in your school, the better chance a claim will be approved. Multiple complaints will also prompt a school board to take more seriously its responsibility for removing the mould and maintaining a clean and safe working environment. **V**



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jlanguay@etfo.org

Supporting Members in Their Equity Work

■ by **Sherry Ramrattan Smith**

To engage in social justice advocacy and activism we must first acknowledge that inequities exist. To work for equality means that we question why things are the way they are, why some people hold power and others don't, why some can have their voices heard while others are silenced.

Equity and social justice work demands that we admit to mistakes, misinformation, and misunderstandings. As educators, when we critically examine our ideas and actions and agree to learn from each other, we can establish a collective vision of a more just and equal society. Working for this type of visionary change requires commitment and responsibility from all stakeholders. Addressing these complex issues demands patience, time, and willingness to build our knowledge and skills to seek solutions.

One of ETFO's goals is to support members as they enhance their education in the area of social justice and equity. In the coming year, members can participate in a variety of programs designed to support their professional development and extend this learning to students.

These include a variety of programs, workshops, and resources:

- ETFO Equity network – members share ideas, provide collegial support
- Professional learning communities – members critically examine their practice, individually and collaboratively build knowledge and skills
- Focus on Ability – this workshop builds awareness and understanding about disability issues
- Occasional Teaching for Today's Diverse Classrooms – this workshop provides practical suggestions for occasional teachers to address social justice issues while meeting curricular demands
- Beyond the Breakfast Program – teachers explore the stigma of being poor in this workshop.

ETFO's curriculum resources include:

- *Imagine a World that Is Free from Fear* – addresses issues relating to homophobia and heterosexism; workshop available
- *The Circle of Learning* – advises on how to include Aboriginal perspectives in teaching; workshop available
- *The Roots of Equality* – raises awareness about violence against women
- *Take a Closer Look* – teaches students to become informed consumers of mass media; workshop available.

Sherry Ramrattan Smith is the coordinator of ETFO's Equity and Women's Services department.

Equity and social justice materials are available at shopETFO.
Order online from etfo.ca ► *shop ETFO*.

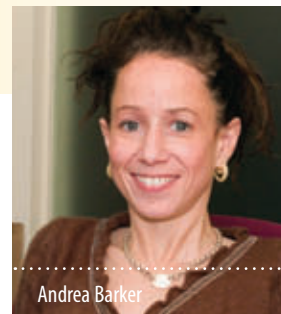
ETFO members choose to foster a positive social transformation through education, networks, and resources. At the workshop for local social justice and equity chairs, held in Toronto at Leadership 2007, representatives met and shared their knowledge and experiences. Here are some of their comments.



Andrew Aloe



Sumona Roy



Andrea Barker

"I attended the ETFO Equity and Social Justice Chair Seminar held on September 28 at Leadership 2007. I went in not knowing what I was getting myself into. After talking with a few people and listening to the discussions and issues that were current, I knew I was in the right place.

"I found the seminar to be informative. We had the opportunity to work through some terminology and definitions that we thought we knew, yet what emerged really demonstrated the complexities associated with social justice endeavours. There were many perspectives to consider.

"We listened to a great speaker who shared her experiences and knowledge and encouraged us to participate in difficult conversations. There were many resources available for us to read, share with colleagues, and support our learning.

"What I found extremely exhilarating was that right away I was able to connect with a colleague and begin to collaborate on planning and presenting an equity event. Together we are organizing a workshop on poverty. It makes a lot of sense to bring equity representatives together to learn and support our vision for a better world.

"For those of you still reluctant to jump into equity work, I ask you to please consider my example. This is my first step and I fully anticipate that there will be challenges along the way. But I feel inspired to take on my part in this work."

—**Andrew Aloe**, vice-president, Upper Grand Occasional Teacher Local

"As a teacher, I know a considerable amount about the practical hands-on side of things. I know how to follow what is in my heart and express this vision and my goals to colleagues. However, this type of sharing is sometimes not enough to help me connect with allies.

"It is important to me that people understand why I am passionate about social justice. I believe that we, as social justice advocates, need to find ways to reach everyone and it is becoming clear to me that having theoretical knowledge can be very helpful. People seem to want facts and figures and models and proof of why it is important to have social justice and equity intertwined in all we do. I like the idea of developing the self first, and one of the equity professional development activities that I attended earlier this year helped me to begin building that foundation. To me, this background theoretical knowledge is a key area for anyone who works on equity and social justice issues. It can frame the work we do with students, colleagues, and our global community.

"I am very proud of our social justice accomplishments locally. We held a very successful first annual Social Justice Dinner with Dr. Blye Frank as our speaker. We had an overwhelmingly supportive response from our members and other locals around us. We provided multicultural calendars to new teachers in our local as a gift from the Social Justice Committee to welcome them and remind them

of the work we do. I am very lucky to be in a supportive local when it comes to equity and social justice issues. It makes a difference when executive and members alike take on this type of commitment. Social justice work is challenging but watching the positive changes unfold is very rewarding."

—**Sumona Roy**, Social Justice Committee chair, Hamilton-Wentworth Elementary Teacher Local; Member, ETFO Human Rights Committee

"My hopes as the chair of Human Rights Committee for the Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teacher Local are that as a group we can collectively raise awareness about equity and social justice issues that are a priority for ETFO. Since we are a new committee, we can start by taking small steps. Each step counts though and takes us to a new place. Collaboration is what is needed to confront inequities.

"Working provincially, I have come to realize that it is important to take the examples set provincially to the local level. Committees represent the grassroots voices of our membership and can provide a natural cohesive link for equity and social justice work."

—**Andrea Barker**, chair, Human Rights Committee, Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teacher Local; Chair, ETFO Human Rights Committee

ETFO Protocol Concerning Members' Self-Identification



1. Current practice

Self-identification for ETFO members is voluntary and confidential.

Since 2000, all ETFO application and registration forms have invited members of designated groups to self-identify. Members of designated groups are those who are Aboriginal; persons with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT); racial minority; women.

Members are also invited to self-identify on ETFO's annual member information survey. Beginning in 2007, members who elect to self-identify on the survey will have two options:

- to self-identify for statistical purposes only
- to self identify for statistical purposes and outreach (including direct mail), so that they can be made aware of ETFO programs, including leadership programs, focus groups, writing groups, and standing committees.

2. Personal identity

Many people bear identities that have been imposed on them by society. These identities are often based on stereotypes and they may result in social marginalization.

Voluntary self-identification provides individuals with autonomy in defining their identities according to their own criteria. These criteria can include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, personal history, culture and tradition, and social and political knowledge.

Since identities are multiple and shifting, the process of self-identification is never straightforward or clear-cut. The objective is not to categorize people, but to increase our collective knowledge of the identities of ETFO members in order to meet their needs better.

3. Why ETFO has chosen to collect self-identification information only for particular designated groups

With one exception (the LGBT group) ETFO's designated groups are the same groups identified in Ontario's *Employment Equity Act* (enacted in 1994 and repealed by the Harris government in 1995) and in *Canada's Employment Equity*

Act (1986, still in effect). ETFO has added the LGBT group because in recent years it has been identified by courts throughout Canada as a key equity-seeking group.

These designated groups are identified in ETFO's "Statement on Social Justice and Equity," approved by the provincial executive in 2002.

4. Why ETFO is collecting this information

ETFO's constitutional objectives and current priorities include commitments to social justice and to member involvement. Collecting and reporting self-identification statistics is one way ETFO holds itself accountable to members for those commitments.

Members' self-identification information enables ETFO to reach out to members from equity-seeking groups, to alert them to relevant programs, and to seek their input and assistance in developing inclusive services and programs.

Self-identification helps to ensure that all of ETFO's policies and practices are inclusive and reflective of our diverse membership and priorities.

ETFO's priorities for 2007–08 are

- 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 antipoverty, nonviolence, and equity
- to support international assistance and co-operation
- to promote the care and protection of the environment
- to actively engage members in the federation
- to promote and protect the health and safety of members.

5. ETFO's commitment to members' privacy

ETFO is committed to respecting members' privacy and protecting members' personal information, and handles all personal information in accordance with Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. **v**



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— Elizabeth Schaeffer
Lead Teacher
TDSB Model School project
MEd student (part-time)

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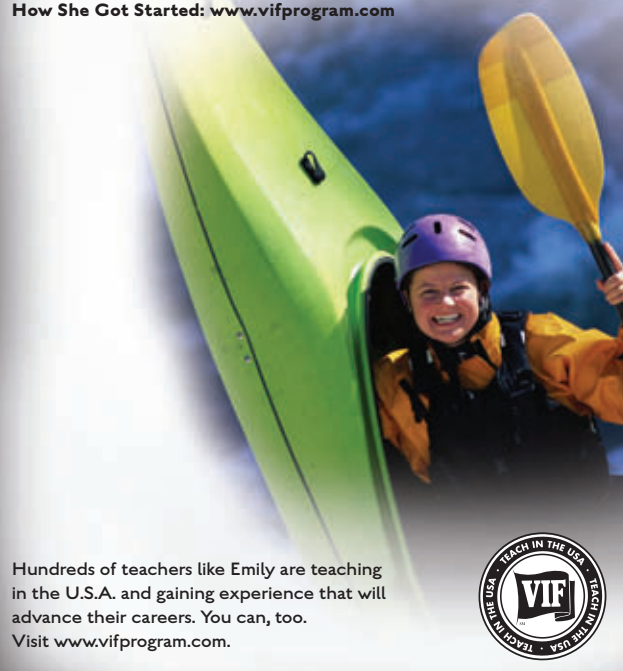
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Pension Outlook: A small contribution increase



■ by **Hilda Watkins**



The monetary value of a member's pension is usually a member's greatest asset upon retirement.

Members of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan understand that they enjoy a superior array of benefits as part of their pension package. Recognizing that fact, members in a survey last year supported phased increases in their benefit contributions.

The pension rate increase of 0.3 percent that goes into effect on January 1, 2008 represents the second phase in a series of staged increases negotiated to moderate the effect on plan members. The first scheduled increase of 2 percent went into effect on January 1, 2007.

As you may recall, the preparations for filing the 2005 pension valuation were fraught with challenges. Despite the plan's stellar performance, an actuarial deficit existed. In order to balance the assets and liabilities, thereby complying with the legal requirement to file a fully funded plan with the provincial regulators, the OTPP board agreed to revise the actuarial assumptions and the partners (OTF and the government) agreed to increase contribution rates, thus preserving the integrity of your pension provisions.

The OTPP partners determine pension provisions and contribution rates. Ordinarily, the government matches your contributions to the plan dollar for dollar. However, for 2008 only, the government will contribute an additional 1.1 percent while OTF members will contribute 0.3 percent. This difference is due to a \$76 million credit from the 1998 surplus that OTF used to decrease the contribution increase for members. On January 1, 2009, the final 0.8 percent increase for members is scheduled to take effect, making a total contribution increase of 3.1 percent for each of the partners.

As part of the settlement reached during negotiations, an expert panel was commissioned to report to the partners on the actuarial assump-

tions by August 2007. However, unforeseen circumstances made this deadline impossible to meet. The panel has spent considerable time discussing and conducting research into mortality rates, demographics, the funding management policy, as well as contribution and discount rates. As requested, the expert panel has presented its preliminary findings to OTF in a series of meetings, thus giving us the opportunity to pose questions and provide input. OTF's pension lawyer and actuary have been an integral part of this process.

The next mandatory valuation of the plan, scheduled for January 2008, could result in further adjustments. If there is a surplus in the future, those funds will be used to return to previous contribution rates before there are any benefits enhancements. The recovery of the real return bond rate has improved the economic climate. However, we must also be cognizant of the 2005 deficit that was amortized over 15 years.

Nevertheless, teachers can be assured that:

- Members' input from the survey as well as the results of the expert panel will be used to inform future discussions with the government and the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board (OTPPB).
- Members enjoy a superior array of benefits as part of their pension package.
- Members' pension contributions are matched dollar for dollar by the government to fund their defined benefit pension plan – a plan for which the pension entitlement of the member upon retirement is set out in a clearly defined set of rules.
- The monetary value of a member's pension is usually a member's greatest asset upon retirement. **v**

Hilda Watkins is an ETFO vice-president and is ETFO's OTF table officer.

Cyber Conduct: A reality check

■ by **Emily Noble**




New technologies have had a tremendous impact on learning. They have brought many benefits to students and teachers. But they have also led to some destructive behaviours.

Cyber bullying has been much in the news recently. As an educator, you may have either witnessed firsthand or heard news reports about the misuse and abuse of communication technologies such as email, cell phones, text messages, instant messaging, and social networking websites (Facebook and MySpace). They are sometimes used to anonymously spew out hateful, derogatory, and disrespectful images and messages to students and teachers. These are deliberate, hostile behaviours intended to harm other people.

In the spirit of creating a positive learning and teaching environment, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) has decided to tackle the issue of cyber bullying head on. A newly established CTF work group is exploring all possible ways of promoting and protecting the rights of individuals with regard to communications technology in the educational environment. The first issue the work group will address is the lack of a comprehensive policy that defines, supports, and promotes appropriate cyber conduct in our schools and communities. Currently, there is no national policy on this emerging challenge. Very few Canadian school boards have adopted policy on what constitutes appropriate conduct in cyberspace.

The work group will develop a well-articulated policy as it works with member organizations like ETFO, parent groups, educational organizations such as the Media Awareness Network, law enforcement agencies, policy makers, and legislators.

Other teacher organizations around the world have expressed an interest in working with CTF through Education International. The overarching challenge is that the Internet has no geographical boundaries. The laws of the land have limited effect on the conduit that transmits the cyber bully's poisonous messages and images. We are currently sailing in uncharted waters. However, I truly believe we will find solutions at the global, national, and local levels through our collective efforts. We need to regain some control over the negative impacts of technology so that our teachers can teach and our children can learn in an environment safe from bullying, including cyber bullying.

For more information on latest developments on this issue as well as others related to the teaching profession and education, I encourage you to visit the CTF website at www.ctf-fce.ca and to subscribe to any of our free online publications, including Vision, CTF's monthly electronic newsletter. 

Emily Noble is president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.





Talking, Writing & Thinking About Books:

101 Ready-to-Use Classroom Activities That Build Reading Comprehension

Jo Phenix
Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers, 2005
\$24.95
128 pages

Reviewed by **Jane Cliff**

Teachers are continually searching for ways to engage students in reading, responding to what they read, and improving reading comprehension. Jo Phenix, a popular workshop leader and experienced elementary and high school teacher, has created a teacher-friendly resource with 101 ready-to-copy activities that involve students in all aspects of the reading process.

Talking, Writing & Thinking About Books offers creative activities that focus on five major aspects of language arts: talking and reading aloud, drama, visual arts, writing, and research. Each chapter contains activities that fall into five main categories: character, setting, plot, personal response, and language and words, although not every chapter contains activities from all five categories. Most activities

are suitable for individual work, and many can be used for group/partner work.

The activities are varied, appealing, simply explained, fairly open-ended, and allow wide flexibility in the method of responding. For example, in the chapter on writing with a focus on understanding character, students are asked to imagine that they are web designers and to design a website for one of the characters from the story. After listing five different things the character is interested in or good at, students use the ideas to make a home page and design pages for each of the five items, with information and pictures. The next step is to create an address for the site and invite other classmates to visit the site.

Jo Phenix writes that comprehension is enhanced and

strengthened when the reader is able to apply information from a text to new situations. The activities encourage students in grades 3 to 8 to investigate and think about what they're reading. Some of the activities will be familiar to teachers who have searched out reading comprehension resources in the past; however, the more than 100 activities serve as a comprehensive package that is adaptable to many teaching situations and compatible with all areas of the Ontario language arts curriculum. Teachers will need to create rubrics specific to criteria that they discuss with students, prior to each activity.

~~~~~

*Jane Cliff teaches in the Peel District School Board.*



### Unexplained: An Encyclopedia of Curious Phenomena, Strange Superstitions, and Ancient Mysteries

Judy Allen  
Illustrated by Richard Hook and Patricia Ludlow  
New York: Houghton Mifflin/Kingfisher Books, 2006  
\$24.95  
144 pages

Reviewed by **Debra Menary**

This is a large hardcover volume, with a mysterious eye-catching cover. While it is subtitled an encyclopedia, it is more readable than your usual 26-volume set.

Before reading this book, I had little interest in reading an entire volume about "the unexplained."

However, once I got started, I was intrigued. It covers a range of phenomena from UFOs to amulets, talismans, jinxes, cat lore, crop circles, and everything imaginable in between.

One of the volume's strongest points is that it cuts across cultural boundaries. Ancient and modern superstitions and beliefs, from various cultures and corners of the globe, are included.

The illustrations are a combination of paintings, drawings and photographs. While they add to the interest of the subject matter, they tend to be perhaps too

graphic at times. Younger audiences may be frightened of some of the pictures and text. Nonetheless, it is my prediction that older students, especially difficult-to-reach boys, would lap this stuff up. Why they might like it so much remains ... unexplained.

Surprisingly, I would rate this book four stars out of five.

~~~~~

Debra Menary is a teacher-librarian at Tottenham Public School, in the Simcoe County District School Board.



Merry Christmas, Curious George

Cathy Hapka
Illustrated by Mary O'Keefe Young
New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006
32 pages, \$19.95

This is a timeless tale of a mischievous little monkey in a sticky situation. The colourful and enchanting drawings, illustrated by Mary O'Keefe Young in the style of Curious George originator H.A. Rey, remind primary students and

adults alike of these classic picture books, which have adorned library shelves for decades and have been first choice at bedtime.

The story begins with Curious George and the Man with the Yellow Hat visiting a Christmas tree farm. Though he promises to stay close and be good, Curious George just can't help but wander off to investigate. He spots the tallest Christmas tree in the lot and quickly scampers up to take a closer look. Meanwhile, two men below see the same Christmas tree that Curious George is in and decide to cut it down for their own. The men load the tree into their pickup truck, not noticing that Curious George is

inside! An adventure ensues as Curious George finds himself inside the Children's Hospital, where he wreaks havoc on staff and patients by stealing X-rays, bouncing on beds, and redecorating the Christmas tree to suit his own taste. Luckily, all of Curious George's innocent pranks are forgiven, the Man with the Yellow Hat runs into the room with arms outstretched, and life returns to how it should be.

An interesting feature of this hardcover book is that the jacket can be unfolded to reveal free Curious George gift wrap! This especially intrigued my grade 3 students as they imagined the endless possibilities that Curious George wrapping paper could

afford.

During our read-aloud I felt compelled to pause and revisit safe and appropriate behaviour with my students. Though Curious George can wander off on his own, ride away with two strangers, steal hospital supplies, and choose not to listen to adults, this is not how the real world works.

In the end, we chose to enjoy *Merry Christmas, Curious George* for what it is, a fun-loving and carefree tale of an inquisitive little monkey who can't seem to resist a good adventure.

~~~~~

Stephanie Bell teaches at  
Rawlinson Community School in  
the Toronto District School Board.

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ONTARIO ENGLISH  
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# Teachers' Trivia

■ by Peter Harrison

## The Money Game

Carol has invented a new game.

She collects a number of five-cent coins and the same number of one-cent coins and arranges them in a single line from side to side in front of her. All the five cents are on the left, almost touching, and all the one cents are on the right with the centres about the same distance apart as the others. She leaves a space for one single coin in the middle between the two sets.

The aim of her game is to move the coins so that all the five-cent coins exchange places with the one cents as follows.

- A coin can only move into the space next to it or jump one other coin to enter the space. Each counts as one move.
- Each coin can only move in one direction, forwards not back, so that five-cent coins always move to the right and one cents to the left.
- If no move is possible, the game is lost and must be restarted.

After several attempts, Carol finally wins the game. She notices that the number of moves she made is numerically the same as the value in cents of the coins used.

*What total value of coins did Carol use?*

.....  
Send your answer to [ETFOVoice@etfo.org](mailto:ETFOVoice@etfo.org) with the word "Trivia" in the subject line.

You may also mail your entry to Editor, ETFO Voice, at the address on the masthead. Three winners will be drawn from all the correct entries received by January 18, 2008.  
.....

### Solution to our last puzzle

"In the Balance": 36, 39, 41, 42 & 43 Kgs

The Winners are:

Julie Breeze, Ottawa-Carleton

David Cox, Toronto

Ryan Roth, Waterloo

Winners are chosen by lottery from all the correct answers received.

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613-533-6960

# calendar

**January 30 - February 2, Toronto**

## 2008 Super Conference

Ontario Library Association  
Metro Toronto Convention Centre  
Information and Registration at  
[accessola.com/ola](http://accessola.com/ola).

**February 8 - 9, Toronto**

## ETFO ICT Women's Conference

An information and communication technology conference for women.  
Contact: Jennifer Mitchell, [jmitchell@etfo.org](mailto:jmitchell@etfo.org)  
Information and registration at  
[etfo.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment/ETFOconferences](http://etfo.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment/ETFOconferences).

**February 15 - 16, Toronto**

## Reading for the Love of It 2007

31<sup>st</sup> Annual Language Arts Conference  
Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto  
Keynote speakers include Justin Trudeau.  
Contact: Mary Wilson - 416-444-7473 or go to  
[readingfortheloveofit.com](http://readingfortheloveofit.com) to register.

**February 21 - 23, Toronto**

## OAME Leadership Conference 2008

"Investigating Pathways to Understanding Mathematics." The Ontario Association for Mathematics Education.  
Go to [oame.on.ca](http://oame.on.ca) to register.

**March 13-14, Vancouver**

## 2008 Crosscurrents Conference

The Special Education Association of British Columbia. For regular classroom teachers, para-professionals, special educators, and parents.  
Westin Bayshore Hotel  
Contact B. J. Foulds at 250-964-8267, or email  
[bjfoulds@telus.net](mailto:bjfoulds@telus.net). Visit [bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA](http://bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA)

**April 3 - 5, Toronto**

## OMLTA Spring Conference 2008

"Languages - our natural legacy/Les langues - notre Heritage naturel." Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association  
Keynote Speaker: Julie Barlow, co-author of *The Story of French*.  
[omlta@omlta.org](mailto:omlta@omlta.org).

**April 4, Kingston**

## Reunion to celebrate 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

of the formation of FWTAO.  
Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 8 p.m.  
Former FWTAO members contact  
Carol (Green) Parker at [parker\\_3@sympatico.ca](mailto:parker_3@sympatico.ca)  
or 613-623-3870 for details.

**May 4 - 8, Atlanta**

## International Reading Association 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention: Engaging Learners in Literacy

IRA Annual Convention  
Georgia World Congress Centre  
Information and registration at [reading.org](http://reading.org).

**May 2, Hamilton**

## Beauty and the Beast - OAGEE Spring Conference

Ontario Association for Geographic and Environmental Educators.  
Visit [oagee.org](http://oagee.org).

**May 8 - 10, Toronto**

## The OAME 2008 Annual Mathematics Conference

"The Path is Made by Walking." The Ontario Association for Mathematics Education.  
Sheraton Parkway North, Richmond Hill  
Information and registration at  
[oame.on.ca/oame2008](http://oame.on.ca/oame2008).

**May 8 - 10, 2008, Alliston**

## OCTE Conference 2008

"Technological Education: Knowledge You Can Use; Real Knowledge Real Skills Real World."  
The Ontario Council for Technological Education.  
Information and registration at [octe.on.ca](http://octe.on.ca).

# classifieds

**CHINA:** Experienced teachers are required to teach Chinese Teachers of English for the Suzhou District School Board during the month of July. For further information please contact [gmgreen@interlog.com](mailto:gmgreen@interlog.com).

**LEARN TO WRITE FOR CHILDREN** with an author of 28 children's books. Seminar in vacation area near Long Point, Ontario, July 1 - 4, 2008. Learn to write three genres - novel, picture book and early reader. This course may qualify for local PD funds. Check with your local. Contact: Mary Labatt, Box 386, Port Rowan, Ont., NOE 1M0 Phone (a.m. only): 519-586-8021; E-mail: [labatt@amtelecom.net](mailto:labatt@amtelecom.net).

**New Square Log Home** 1000sf / 3BR / walkout basement. Immaculate. Deeded water access to Buckhorn Lake - Trent Severn Waterway Perfect Retirement! \$249,000 Cathy 705-877-1328.

**TEACHING POSITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS** through the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers' Overseas Recruiting Fair at Queen's University, 8-10 February, 2008. Hundreds of K-12 positions in dozens of countries. Most contracts for 2 years. Pre-registration required. <http://educ.queensu.ca/placement>.

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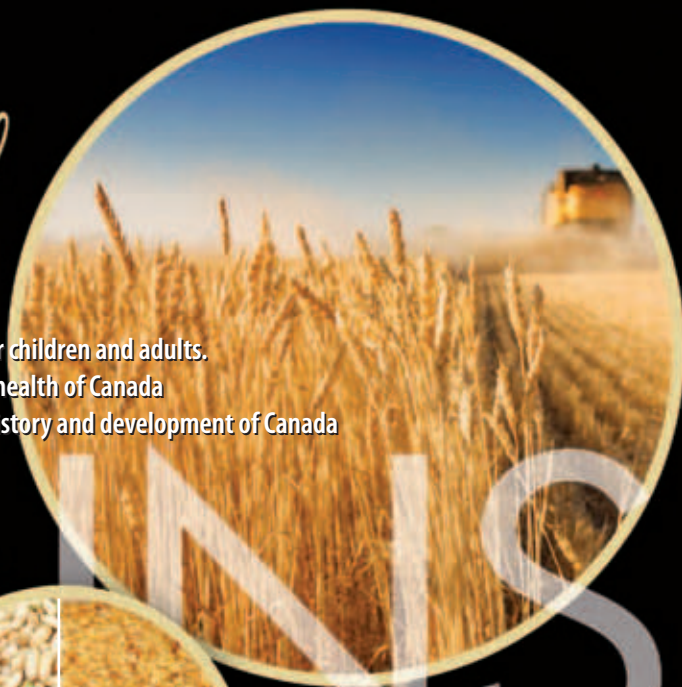
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