

# Voice

Helping all kids  
succeed

— what teachers can do



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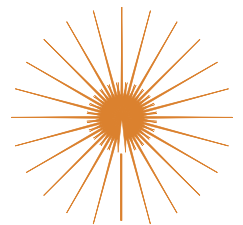
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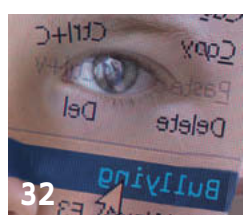


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## Focusing on Students Success

**F**or the past two years ETFO's Poverty and Education Project has been providing members with professional learning opportunities to help them address the needs of at risk students in their classrooms.

ETFO's programs and resources for members include the DVD, *One in Six*, released last February; the play *Danny, King of the Basement*, and related professional learning; and *Beyond the Breakfast Program* workshops. As well ETFO has supported research including one study that looks at high performing schools in high needs areas. Another ETFO resource, the June special issue of *Voice*, focused on what teachers can do and are doing to help their neediest students succeed.

The Poverty and Education Symposium held in early November brought together participants in all of these initiatives. They shared their knowledge and findings with conference participants from across Canada. Our coverage begins on page 12.

It's tempting to think that poverty issues are city issues. But Colleen Purdon and Marsha McLean know that poverty is a persistent concern in smaller communities and rural areas, even though it is less visible there. They describe the impact rural poverty has on women and children (page 17).

Similarly, when we think of children with ESL needs we often think of Toronto and the surrounding area. And it's true that new immigrant families are most likely to settle in Canada's largest cities: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. But increasingly children who need help learning English can be found outside these major centres, and their teachers may not always feel confident of being able to meet their needs. In "Welcome to Canada" (page 25), Jeffery Robinson and Peter Dorfman provide practical advice for teachers and schools and highlight some helpful resources.

What you do in the classroom makes a difference. Your involvement in the federation makes a difference. Yet one more way to make a difference is to vote knowledgeably in the upcoming Ontario College of Teachers elections. As Jerry DeQuetteville points out (page 28), the College should be working for you. Casting an informed ballot in College elections can help ensure that happens.

When this issue reaches you, you will probably be taking a well-deserved break. From all of us at ETFO, our very best wishes for a happy and relaxing holiday season.

  
JOHANNA BRAND

*Happy Holidays from everyone at ETFO.*

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# letters to the editor



## Re: Poverty and Learning

(June 08)

**CONGRATULATIONS** on your June 2008 issue of *Voice, Poverty and Learning*. I applaud you for your efforts to ensure that our teachers across the province are aware, knowledgeable, engaged, and committed to supporting some of our most vulnerable students.

Your efforts, coupled with those across the province at the local board level, are certain to have a positive impact on our determination to close the achievement gap. At the Toronto District School Board, we are coupling demographic data with achievement data, in order to determine where focused intervention to improve student achievement is needed. We look forward to sharing our experiences and improvements in this area with you – and learning from others across the province.

**Gerry Connelly**

Director of Education  
Toronto District School Board

## Re: Ten Years and It's Back to the Classroom for This Teacher!

(October 08)

**I WAS** reading the October issue and looking at the photo of Vera Teschow on p. 27 getting her classroom ready for September. Unfortunately, she is using a table as a ladder – a very unsafe practice.

The rest of your photos are great!

**Angie Mannella-Pisani**

Health & Safety Representative  
ETFO Niagara Local

**VERA TESCHOW** has a wonderful article offering a fresh view of the profession. Unfortunately it is illustrated with a photo of her wobbling on top of a desk presumably putting up decorations for the start of school. This is the most universal example of a dangerous practice followed by teachers. Those of us working in the health and safety area use it as an example at every training session.

**Duncan Abbott**

Vice-President, ETFO Upper Canada Local  
Co-Chair of the Upper Canada District School Board Joint Health and Safety Committee

**HER STUDENTS** are fortunate to have Vera Teschow as their teacher. Her enthusiasm for this next stage of her career shines through in her writing! I have been retired for about nine years and I know that there have been many changes since I left the classroom. (I have many friends still teaching.) During my 28.5-year career, I often wondered just HOW some of my administrators – or consultants – would handle the daily routines, schedules, and commitments that are part of actually being IN the classroom setting on a daily basis.

Some administrators, I think, would not accept the challenge that she has, due to their age, and also to not wanting to try something different at this stage of their lives.

I do hope she will provide a followup article halfway through, or for sure at the end of the year.

**Linda Henderson**

Tilbury ON



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## Correction

Adam Peer is an ESL/ELD/ RISE Facilitator with the Peel District School Board. Incorrect information appeared in our last issue.



DAVID CLEGG - President, ETFO

## Closing the Gap: Fairness for teachers and students

**E**TFO's campaign to *Close the Gap* is about standing up for fairness and equality for our students and ourselves. Providing funding for the elementary panel that is equal to that provided for the secondary panel means improvements in learning conditions for students and improvements in working conditions for teachers – in short, a better elementary education for this province's children. Our objective throughout our campaign has been to negotiate provisions that ensure fairness and equality in the collective agreements we negotiate.

Ministry data shows that currently the government provides \$711 per pupil per year more for a secondary student than an elementary student.

This funding gap has a significant impact on the learning conditions of elementary students. It means there are

- not enough textbooks, computers, or musical instruments
- fewer specialist teachers providing music, drama, art, and physical health programs
- fewer teacher librarians – current funding provides one for every 750 students
- not enough guidance specialists – one for every 5,000 students currently
- almost no design and technology and family studies programs – programs particularly important to at risk students
- larger class sizes, especially in grades 4 to 8.

Equal funding that provides a quality education from the very start of a child's school life pays off in improved lifelong academic success.

This is particularly true for at risk students.

But equal funding would also have a tremendous impact on the working conditions of elementary teachers. At your local meetings you will have heard the details of how the government's initial offer – the one accepted by other affiliates – would impact your working conditions. You've heard how little difference a 1 per cent salary increase will make in your working life, compared to the 115 hours more you teach each year than a secondary teacher; compared to the additional time you spend on report cards; or compared to the size of Junior/Intermediate classes, the inequities in preparation time, and all of the other unequal demands placed on us.

Equalizing the funding for the elementary panel and adding specialist teachers, teacher librarians, and guidance counsellors would also offset the potential loss of jobs resulting from declining enrolments. Protecting jobs is always the first job of a strong union

Yes, economic times are tough. However, in difficult economic times smart governments invest in public services. And future-oriented governments invest in education because they know that in a knowledge economy a well-educated population is the key to economic prosperity.

Not only is this the right time to invest in education, but the investment must go to improving the educational experiences of students in the elementary years, where the foundation for lifelong learning is laid.

For ETFO members, caving into provincial pressure to sign a deal by November 30 was not an option. We chose to stand up for fairness and equality for our students and ourselves.



GENE LEWIS - General Secretary, ETFO



## Closing the Gap: Helping disadvantaged students

In this issue of the magazine you will find a number of articles about how teachers' classroom practice can improve the chances for educational success for children from low-income families.

To its credit the provincial government has made a significant impact on learning in this province with its focus on literacy and numeracy and its support for teacher professional learning. We know that the work of the classroom teacher is the critical factor for student success.

Schools cannot do it all. To really address the academic achievement of low-performing students the government has to address the root causes of family poverty. Increasing the minimum wage, providing affordable housing – there are many supports that help alleviate the impact of poverty.

While schools can't do it all, giving them resources that specifically benefit the children of poor families makes a significant difference. For example, funding for school nutrition programs is essential, because we know that the hungry student can't learn. In addition there must be funding to give families access to such health care services as dental and eye care, speech therapy, and psychological services – services that more affluent families can more easily provide for their children.

Providing children from poor families with a better chance to succeed also requires closing the gap in funding for elementary students. It means funding that provides elementary schools with arts and physical education specialists and teacher librarians, so that children of poor families have access to programs and

opportunities that more affluent families pay for out of pocket. It means providing funding that gives teachers increased preparation time to prepare differentiated lessons, that allows smaller Junior and Intermediate classes, and that gives teachers time to reach out to and work with parents.

Also critical are full-day, every day Junior and Senior Kindergarten programs supported by quality before- and after-school child care: programs located in schools, taught by fully qualified teachers with access to resources and supports that schools provide.

We know what can work when it comes to improving the academic success of children living in poverty. We know that well-supported teachers can make a difference. We know that the foundation for student success is laid in the early years of a child's life. And we know that the government spends \$700 a year less on elementary students than it does on high school students.

Closing this gap is essential for a province that wants to leverage the skills and talents of all of its young citizens and make them into the most productive members of society they can be.

## Representative Council

Bargaining, teacher pensions, and the October 14 federal election were the topics in the forefront at the October Representative Council meeting. Representative Council brings together local presidents and executive members three times a year. The meeting is chaired by First Vice-President **Sam Hammond**.



**Dona Dasko**, a partner with Environics, provided an insight into the findings of public opinion polls leading up the federal election. "What is moving people in this election?" Dasko asked. The answer: "Nothing, nothing, nothing." Dasko noted that the absence of a single over-riding issue made the campaign unique.



ETFO President **David Clegg** outlined the latest developments in bargaining as well as negotiations surrounding changes to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. These pension plan changes and their impact on ETFO members are also described in a webcast on our website: [etfo.ca/multimedia/webcasts](http://etfo.ca/multimedia/webcasts). (For more on these changes to OTPP please see the OTF column on page 37)



To commemorate ETFO's tenth anniversary, President **David Clegg** presented local presidents with plaques. Above, **Mary Karchemny**, president of the Waterloo Region Occasional Teacher Local, accepts the plaque on behalf of her members.



## Federal Election 2008

Voters in Ottawa Centre re-elected ETFO member **Paul Dewar** as their MP in the October 14 election. Dewar was first elected to Parliament in 2006. Other ETFO members seeking election were Russ Aegard, Green Party, Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Katy Austin, NDP, Simcoe-Grey; Myrna Clark, NDP, Barrie; and Nigel Barrieffe, Green Party, Etobicoke North.



# FEDERATION



## Leadership 2008

Training for leadership in ETFO locals is just one of the many learning opportunities ETFO offers members and activists. In September about 120 local presidents and committee chairs gathered in Toronto for sessions focused on communication skills, political action, social justice, and equity.

Keynote speaker **Wendy Mesley** explored the implications of the digital age for teachers and parents and emphasized the importance of critical thinking skills in an age when we are swamped with information of all kinds.



## Summer Academy

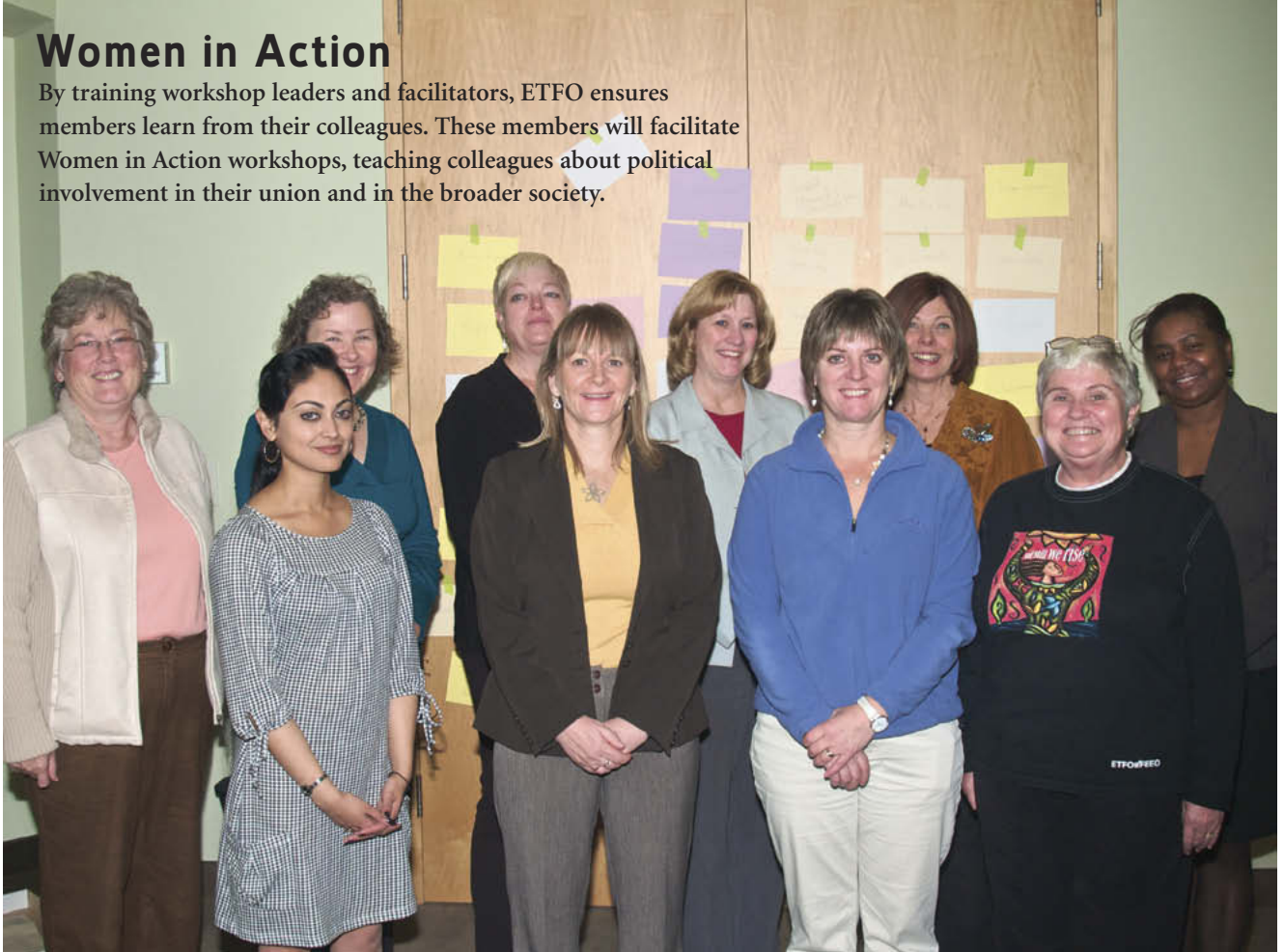
More than 2,500 members took part in Summer Academy courses in July and August. These two-day courses offer members practical information about a wide range of topics for every grade level. An expanded course selection was made possible this year thanks to Ministry of Education funding. Information about ETFO professional learning programs is available on our website [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca).



In October, ETFO provided training for activists who will be involved in negotiations during this round of collective bargaining.

## Women in Action

By training workshop leaders and facilitators, ETFO ensures members learn from their colleagues. These members will facilitate Women in Action workshops, teaching colleagues about political involvement in their union and in the broader society.



## Teachers Learning Together

This unique program enables classroom teachers to work on collaborative action research projects with the support of a faculty team from one of five Ontario universities. During the first phase of this program, last year, teachers' projects focussed on a wide variety of topics including oral language, the arts, and literacy. Mathematics is the focus of the second phase of the program this year. Some 200 teachers from locals across the province are involved. This is one of a number of professional learning programs made possible by funds provided by the province.



## New EWS professional learning communities



Equity and Women's Services is offering two professional learning communities during this school year. Men and women taking part in the social justice PLC engage in critical reflection on such topics as identity, and the privilege that relates to class, gender, sexual orientation, and race. This PLC will be offered again in the new year. For more information about

this program, please contact Belinda Longe, [blonge@etfo.org](mailto:blonge@etfo.org).

Participants in the second session of the PLC for women will examine the stories of immigrant educators and the implications of these experiences with regard to the development of equity-based curriculum. For more information, please contact Sherry Ramrattan Smith, [srsmith@etfo.org](mailto:srsmith@etfo.org).

## One Million Acts of Green

The kids at Armitage Village Public School in Newmarket are going green and they want the world to know about it. Grade 2 and 3 students taught by York Region ETFO members **Katie Lloyd** and **Roshni Sharma-Fleming** are featured in a public service announcement for One Million Acts of Green (OMaOG). The campaign is a collaboration between the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Teachers' Federation Green Street program. It features an interactive website where individuals can report their environmentally friendly actions. The PSA shows students making a pledge to protect the earth and talking about their green acts. To view it go to [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca)>Advocacy and Action>One Million Acts of Green. You can register your own green actions at [onemillionactsofgreen.com](http://onemillionactsofgreen.com).





# ETFO Olympians

## Tonya Verbeek

It's not competing at the Olympics, it's the journey to get there that is the biggest challenge.

Olympic wrestler Tonya Verbeek says it's a journey that requires discipline and motivation. "You can't lose your eagerness for the sport. You have to want to keep pushing yourself, keep looking forward, and keep asking yourself what you can do to be better.

"Sometimes you think there is nothing left. That's when you have to be creative, and persistent and listen to and rely on your coach. For these games I had to qualify three times. I didn't know I was going until March."

But, once you're at the Olympics, "Most of the work is done. You have to rely on your training and preparation."

Verbeek who won her second Olympic medal at the 2008 Beijing Summer Games shared her insights with ETFO local leaders attending Representative Council. Verbeek won the bronze medal in women's wrestling, in the 55-kilogram weight class. She won a silver medal in women's freestyle wrestling in Athens in 2004.

An ETFO member, Verbeek is an occasional teacher with the Niagara District School Board. She also continues to train for competition and coaches other women at Brock University.



Tonya Verbeek, centre, with ETFO President David Clegg and Vice-President Barbara Burkett.

Verbeek shows her bronze medal to interested fans including ETFO General Secretary Gene Lewis.



Victoria Allen with her guide dog Angus.


## Victoria Allen

ETFO member Victoria Allen also went to Beijing – as a member of the Canadian paralympic rowing team.

Allen began rowing three years ago. "I wanted to do something active as a way to help overcome depression. It surprised me how much I liked it," she said. She found she had natural talent and was encouraged to compete.

Allen has suffered from retinitis pigmentosa since birth and, because of her severely limited vision, had never taken part in sports. For her, rowing was "life-changing. It was an enormous boost to my self-confidence."

Allen's adaptive coxed four (LTA4+) team came in sixth at the Paralympic Games, a disappointment since they had won the bronze medal at the World Championships in Munich last year.

Allen is a mother of two young children and a teacher with the Toronto District School Board. She received support from ETFO and from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local during her training. 



Construction of the geothermal field

## Waterloo ETFO Local Goes Green



The building canopy sports a green roof.



Meeting rooms are well-used by the local and the community.

The ETFO Waterloo Local officially opened its new headquarters in September, to much acclaim from members and the public.

Why all the excitement?


The new building was designed with the environment in mind and will probably qualify for a Silver LEED certification. (LEED – Leadership in Energy and Design – is a rating system created by the United States Green Building Council in 1998.) Local President James McCormack believes it will be the first union office in Ontario – and possibly in North America – to get the LEED certificate.

“Everybody always had that perspective on things,” McCormack said, explaining why the local chose to build green. “Our board was one of the first boards to begin recycling office paper. We’ve always had outdoor centres and outdoor education. We put it to a vote and it’s what the membership wanted.”

Two other characteristics make the building noteworthy: union labour was used exclusively “right down to the landscaping” and the building was also designed to be “member-friendly,” incorporating meeting spaces available to all of the local’s committees and to the community. It has already been the site for Waterloo District School Board workshops.

The building’s green features, which will reduce energy use by 50 percent, include:

- geothermal heating and cooling
- a cistern that captures rainwater used to flush toilets
- low-volume toilets, with dual flush levels
- superior insulation levels that reduce energy loss and noise
- energy-rated doors, windows, and window blinds
- white reflective, high-emissivity roofing to reduce the heat-island effect that occurs when the sun’s heat is absorbed by roads and buildings
- a small “green” roof that boasts living plants
- parking spaces that are porous to reduce runoff
- a catch basin that collects runoff water and filters it before it enters storm drains
- low-emission, green-certified materials, including paints, tiles, and replaceable carpet tiles
- cabinets made of new-growth wood products
- low-energy lights with timers and motion sensors
- bike racks and showers to encourage bike commuting
- low-water-demand landscaping that includes native plants and shrubs that are bird- and butterfly-friendly.

You can see photos of the building during its construction phase at [mcq.wrdsb.on.ca/Green/index\\_green.html](http://mcq.wrdsb.on.ca/Green/index_green.html). 





# What teachers can do to help all students succeed — and why they must

BY JOHANNA BRAND

It is well known that children from poor families are less likely to succeed academically. Moreover, the factors that contribute to their lack of success often lie outside the school. Nevertheless, according to Dr. Charles Ungerleider, there is much that teachers can do to improve the academic success of these students.

Furthermore, Dr. Ungerleider argues, failing to do so undermines public education because opponents use these students' lack of success to indict the whole system.

"If public education fails our country will fail," Ungerleider told those attending ETFO's Poverty and Education Symposium. "Addressing the education of children living in poverty is pivotally important for them, for Canada, and for the survival of public schooling in Canada.

"If we do not ensure success for all students, members of the public who do not support public schooling will use those failures to erode support for public schools ... They will strengthen their attempts to return schooling to the private privilege it once was — and is in some countries — instead of the public benefit it should be."

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Photos: Nlr Bareket





Dr. Charles Ungerleider

Ungerleider noted that critics of public education highlight the experiences of the poor “to make their case for privatizing public schooling.”

Schools are limited in what they can do to address the impact of poverty, Ungerleider said, noting that less than 30 percent of the total variation in student achievement can be attributed to schooling. “But,” he added, “recognizing the limitations of schooling does not absolve us of our responsibility for both its successes and its failures.”

Teachers and schools “can’t have it both ways,” he argued. “We can’t claim success if we are unprepared to assume responsibility for failure.

“Nor can we in all honesty make claims that our professional knowledge and expertise should be properly recognized and remunerated if we don’t apply that knowledge and expertise in the service of educating students who face the most serious challenges ... We must demand more of ourselves and promote the success of all students – especially those students living in poverty. They must be our first priority.”

Ungerleider outlined specific steps that schools and school boards can take to enhance student success, as well as specific classroom strategies that teachers can employ.

## Classroom practices to enhance success

“We can ensure that students perform well in core subjects. That is something that we know how to do.” *Dr. Charles Ungerleider*

Here are Dr. Ungerleider’s recommended classroom practices. These are particularly important for struggling students.

### 1. Daily review

Daily review and successful repetition are essential for learning. Review is essential for solidifying knowledge and for ensuring that learners have the foundation knowledge upon which new learning builds. Review of foundational knowledge is crucial prior to beginning a new lesson or unit that is based upon prior learning.

### 2. Systematic presentation of new material

Break complex tasks into smaller, more manageable parts. Arrange the material from simple to complex. Provide a meaningful context. Use advance organizers. Provide an overview of how the small parts fit into a larger pattern. Ask many questions that require students to be actively engaged. Maintain a clear focus.

### 3. Guided practice

Clearly describe the task to be performed. Demonstrate how to go about the task. Use prompts to direct student attention to key features. Carefully observe how students perform the task. Reteaching when students encounter difficulty is essential. Maintaining the practice until students are able to perform the task accurately with success well above the 80 percent mark is essential.

### 4. Correction and feedback

Praise should be used sparingly, be genuine and be specific. Prompt students who are hesitant about what they know. Correction is essential.

### 5. Independent practice

Students should practise independently – “without supervision” – after they have achieved high levels of accuracy under the teacher’s direction. If they practise independently before they can perform well, they will make mistakes and practise them, making it difficult for them to unlearn the mistaken practice and substitute the accurate process for the inaccurate one.

### 6. Weekly and monthly reviews

Without such reviews, especially with a crowded curriculum, students will not draw upon the foundational knowledge they need to succeed and will not consolidate their learning.




In workshops at the Poverty and Education Symposium teachers shared best practices.

## WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Here are some essential systemic elements in a strategy to improve students' academic success:

- *Identify children at risk of poor performance upon entry to school.*  
There are assessments teachers can make with just a few minutes spent with each student that will help identify such factors as limited vocabulary or poor visual or auditory processing.
- *Address the most vulnerable students immediately.*  
Raising the performance of the students who perform least well will benefit everyone in the class by diminishing, in the long run, the amount of time and attention they will need.
- *Provide the additional assistance that vulnerable students need in the classroom.*  
Students who must leave class for special help are often stigmatized, make time management for teachers difficult, miss in-class work, and achieve less well as a result.
- *Ensure an orderly and productive school and classroom environment.*  
Reducing misbehaviour increases student achievement.
- *Provide vulnerable students with instruction designed to address the difficulties identified and maintain the additional effort until the student consistently performs within grade-level expectations.*
- *Collect and systematically analyze data about individual student progress over time.*

## AS WELL

- A school board faced with scarce resources should devote differential resources to under-achieving students.
- Create smaller classes with intense attention to foundational academic knowledge (reading, writing and numeracy).
- Focus on learning to learn skills (note taking, organizational skills, etc.).
- Provide assistance to students so they learn to complete work on time and successfully. 







## Praise for ETFO's Anti-Poverty Work

An emotional Dr. Avis Glaze commended ETFO's poverty and education work.

"You have absolutely exceeded expectations," Dr. Glaze told the conference. "It shows what can happen when you trust teachers. ... It is the best retirement gift I could have received."

In 2006 ETFO received funds from the Ministry of Education to develop professional learning programs so that members could improve their effectiveness as they worked with students from low income families. As head of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Dr. Glaze was an advocate for having the federation develop this professional learning. (The programs and research ETFO has supported were the focus of the June special issue of *Voice*.)

ETFO's programs included a strong emphasis on arts programming, which Dr. Glaze singled out as important for children without a lot of money. She reinforced the importance of teaching the whole child: "It matters that we educate their hearts as well as their minds." The conference heard that the play *Danny, King of the Basement* allowed children in some schools to have their first-ever experience of live theatre. It became an important catalyst for focusing attention on the causes of poverty and its impact on student achievement.

Dr. Glaze said reading writing and numeracy were crucial foundational skills for poor children, but certainly should not be the only focus of their education. She also noted the importance of character education and of providing equal access to technology.



Schools that received enhanced funding from ETFO presented their projects at ETFO's Poverty and Education Symposium. The June 2008 special issue of *Voice* highlights some of these projects.

## Facts to consider

- The average Canadian family requires 75.4 weeks per year on the job at an average wage – more than one full time job – to cover basic annual expenses.
- Women earn 30 percent less than men performing the same work, making it much more likely that single mothers and their children will live in poverty. While two-thirds of men's work is paid, two-thirds of women's work is unpaid.
- Hunger is common for children from low-income households. It is very difficult to think clearly on an empty stomach.
- More than 50 percent of the households that experience hunger receive their main income from employment. Poorly paid jobs mean they don't earn enough to meet their needs.
- Children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds have fewer resources at home, such as books and computers. Low-income parents often have less time to spend with their children.
- Children in low-income families are over two and one-half times more likely to have a problem with basic abilities such as vision, hearing, speech, or mobility.
- Only one-quarter of children in low-income families participate in organized sports compared to three-quarters of high-income children.

Source: "Why Failing Kids Is Not an Option," Address by Dr. Charles Ungerleider to ETFO's Poverty and Education Symposium, Nov. 7, 2008. See also *One in Six – Education and Poverty in Ontario*, a DVD produced by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2008



## Know Your Students; Know Their Community

American sociologist and educator Pedro Noguera told the Poverty and Education Symposium that there are three main areas that teachers and schools must address in their effort to create equitable schools.

Successful schools have teachers who know how to teach the students they serve. They are teachers who know how to teach across cultural differences, how to make material relevant, and how to teach in a variety of ways. They adapt their teaching styles to their students. Teachers demonstrate that they care and have high expectations of their students.

Teachers and schools focus on building relationships with children and parents. Parental involvement is a key factor in student success. Schools and teachers should help parents understand the importance of teacher-parent con-

ferences and should work to make parents feel comfortable at such meetings. Teachers must also understand the reality their students live outside the classroom.

Schools have to have strategies to address the non-academic needs of students – their health, social, and emotional needs. Thus they need to make available ancillary services such as social workers and health care professionals.

Pedro Noguera is a professor in the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University and Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. He is the author of *City Schools and the American Dream* and co-author of *Unfinished Business: Closing Our Nation's Achievement Gap*. You can hear him at [med.umn.edu/peds/ahm/programs/konopka/home.html](http://med.umn.edu/peds/ahm/programs/konopka/home.html).



Principal Tim Pearson of William Merrifield VC School (Algoma) explains how library improvements made possible by ETFO funding improved literacy scores.





# The Hidden Poverty of Rural Ontario

BY COLLEEN PURDON AND MARSHA MCLEAN

Colleen Purdon is a researcher and community activist working on a multi-year project to address poverty for rural women and their families in Grey, Bruce, Huron, and Perth counties. Marsha McLean teaches at two elementary schools in Owen Sound and sees about 200 children every week. In this article, they reflect on the challenges facing women living in poverty in rural areas and the impact poverty has on their children.

**Colleen Purdon:** In 2007 the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee conducted a Report Card on Rural Women and Poverty in Grey, Bruce, Huron and Perth counties. Over 170 people took part in surveys and focus groups to provide information for the report card. The voices of children were not included in our data collection and we didn't consult with schools directly.

We collected information on four community benchmarks:

- Basic needs for food, housing, health and safety are met.
- Women are treated with respect and dignity.
- Women have access to training, education, information, and supports.
- Women and men have equal opportunities and status.



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*"When I have no food for their school lunches, I just keep them at home."*

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### Meeting basic needs

**CP:** Over two-thirds of survey participants said their ability to meet basic needs for food and housing was poor or fair. That's a failing grade on the basic needs benchmark. Half reported their ability to meet school expenses was poor – another failing grade.

**Marsha McLean:** Children show the impact of poverty in many different ways – they may be tired, or sad, or angry. Their lunches have no fresh fruit or veggies; they bring food that's not nutritious, but is cheap. Children come with inadequate winter clothing, or no winter boots. There are families that can't pay for field trips.

You can also see it in their faces. You can see the concern, the sadness, and the worry. Sometimes when kids haven't eaten they act out. Their blood sugar levels go down, they can't concentrate, and then they lose it in the classroom. Other kids lose their focus, don't co-operate, or they are just "gone" and can't be reached. We want to believe that our children's basic needs are being met, so we don't always make the connection between the struggles of children and poverty. And people do their best not to show their need so it's not always easy to know which families are struggling.

### Housing

**CP:** It's not just in schools that this issue is invisible. Report card respondents said that we underestimate the amount of poverty in the area and the serious impact it has on the health and welfare of people and communities.

Women who depend on social assistance or minimum wage jobs can't make ends meet. Survey respondents reported that when they can't pay rent, or lose their homes, they often move to temporary places, living with friends or family, or in women's shelters. We even had reports of women living in cars.

**MM:** Children who are not doing well in school are also often those who have moved a lot. When you look at their records you see that this is their eighth school in four years.

### Respect

**CP:** Women in our studies said respectful treatment is critical for their sense of worth and hope. Respect is demonstrated when people listen, provide practical supports, and make connections to other services. Women reported they experienced high levels of disrespectful behaviour from organizations and agencies they deal with. Services like Ontario Works, children's aid societies, banks, and employment insurance all got failing grades. Women said they were treated inconsistently or unfairly, not told of their rights, and treated in arbitrary ways by these agencies. When advocates were present, women were treated better. One advocate said she would never let a woman go to Ontario Works by herself.





Photos: **Francesca Dobbin**

*"Very often, even women living with their husbands are subjected to extreme poverty. There is the idea that all financial resources must be put back into the farm to generate income . . . When there is abuse, it is a desperate situation."*

*"How do you raise a child or keep a healthy relationship when you don't know the hours of the day or night you will be working? Sixty hours one week, 28 the next. Who can plan for a life or future?"*

**MM:** In the schools I'm in now there is a lot of work done to treat children with respect and they are truly loved for who they are. Teachers look at the strengths of the children and for ways to help them. But I have worked in schools where that wasn't the case.

When the school leadership demonstrates respect, and values building relationships with children, children learn that too. Leadership that supports respect, dignity, fairness, relationship building and play doesn't just happen by itself; it needs to be taught – by administrators, teachers, and parents.

### **Access to information and supports**

**CP:** Respondents in our studies said it's hard for single women raising families to access supports when they spend all of their time and resources trying to meet basic needs. They also said that lack of transportation, poorly coordinated services, stigma, isolation, the welfare system, and government cutbacks were barriers to information and support.

**MM:** There is a lack of funding for psychological and academic testing for children. It can take years. By that time children can be in the Junior



*"You can't get a job if you have no child care and you can't get child care unless you have a job."*

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*"I did not choose to get hurt at work. I did not choose to go bankrupt and lose my home, my car, my savings, and finally, my mind . . . And yet I get this stigma that we are drunks, druggies, losers who take advantage of the government assistance programs. It hurts deeply because not only do I have to be the only provider for my children but I have to keep hearing things from people around me."*

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levels and they can't read. We desperately need more student services, educational assistants, and teaching resources.

**CP:** The report card shows that recreation, the arts, and organized sports are not affordable for most families living with poverty. School programs can help children develop interests and skills that they wouldn't get any other way.

**MM:** Our school has a really well-developed intramural program so kids can participate in sports and activities at no cost. There are lots of clubs and extracurricular activities that help make up for what kids may not be able to afford at home. The parent council works to make sure all children can participate in school activities. But some schools and teachers don't have a real understanding of the realities parents face.


### Equality

**CP:** Most women in our study had little or no control over the circumstances that pushed them into poverty, and all of them want out. Half of the women in our study worked, but were still poor. Women earn less, can't find well-paid jobs in rural communities, and often have to work part-time to care for their families. There is a lack of affordable child care. Women

are also more likely to be abused. Because men don't always pay child support, if the marriage ends, women and children are often left in poverty.

**MM:** There are practical things that we are doing that really make a difference – like the breakfast program that provides 20 to 30 students with a nutritious breakfast every day. And the food is left out for the children at lunch.

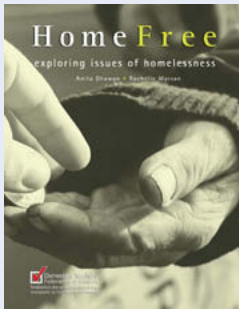
We help all children to keep up in school when we have homework clubs and adult volunteers. We can make space at schools so they are a community resource and can be used for activities for all children.

We need a more balanced approach to education. It has become so focused on test scores and curriculum expectations that some children fall through the cracks. If children are to succeed teachers need enough time with them; having fewer children in the Junior classes would help to make sure that no child is overlooked. 

*For more information about the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty project contact Colleen Purdon at [cpurdon@bmts.com](mailto:cpurdon@bmts.com).*



An excerpt from *Home Free:*  
Exploring issues  
of homelessness



BY ANITA DHAWAN AND RACHELLE MARSAN

*"I ask you and myself, can we morally, ethically and economically allow homelessness to become the 'norm' in Canadian life?"*

Christopher Bognat in *Homelessness: A Message for Working Canadians*

1. *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control.*
2. *Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights,  
Article 25, Proclaimed by the United Nations General  
Assembly on December 10, 1948.

### Actions We Can Take to Eliminate Homelessness

- Acknowledge homelessness as an important social issue
- Educate yourself and others by reading research literature
- Attend meetings, vigils and special events arranged by the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) and other community groups
- Interact with homeless people on the street
- Volunteer in a shelter or agency working to end homelessness
- Write letters demanding politicians' commitment to the issues
- Challenge stereotypes wherever you encounter them
- Participate in National Housing Day, November 22. For schoolwide activities, go to [tdrc.net](http://tdrc.net)
- Talk to your students about homelessness. Use picture books in the Bibliography of Picture Books and Novels on pages 32 and 33. They will serve as a springboard for initial discussion on homelessness issues. These books can be used from kindergarten to grade 8. One of the ways might be to use these books as a read-aloud and have open discussion, accepting all answers. Be vigilant of stereotypes and myths and take those teachable moments to provide facts.

Some of us will have students in our classrooms who are homeless. As you discuss homelessness with your students, be aware of this and be sensitive to the effect you might be having on them. Although we have listed some resources, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee has an extensive list of books, websites, videos, research facts, and articles, plus a list of speakers available on their website, [tdrc.net](http://tdrc.net).

## Suggested Activities – Grade 4 to Grade 6

(These activities can be adapted for both older and younger students)

### Synopsis

This topic focuses on the concept of homelessness. The students imagine themselves without a home and begin to explore what the immediate and long-term needs of the homeless might be. They consider and challenge stereotypes of homelessness and look toward solutions.

### Materials

LM2 “Home Free/Si j’avais un foyer,” paper, tempera paint, brushes, strips of paper, chart paper, markers

### Curriculum Expectations

*Choices into Action* (Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools)

Interpersonal development	In grades 1 to 6, students will learn to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• self-management</li><li>• getting along with others</li><li>• social responsibility</li><li>• self-assessment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– demonstrate their understanding of socially acceptable responses to a variety of situations in school</li><li>– identify the variety of characteristics, skills, competencies, qualities, and talents of others</li><li>– demonstrate their understanding of using skills to build positive relationships at school (e.g., co-operating with others)</li><li>– demonstrate their understanding of “being a responsible citizen” in the classroom and the school</li></ul>
Career development	In grades 1 to 6, students will learn to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• self-assessment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– identify their personal interests, strengths, competencies, and accomplishments</li></ul>





## Grade 4 students will:

### The Arts

#### Visual Arts

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences

### Language

#### Oral Communications

- listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes
- use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

#### Writing

- generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

## Grade 5 students will:

### The Arts

#### Visual Arts

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences

### Language

#### Oral Communications

- listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes
- use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

#### Writing

- generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

## Grade 6 students will:

### The Arts

#### Visual Arts

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences, using a variety of familiar art tools, materials, and techniques

### Language

#### Oral Communications

- listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes
- use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

#### Writing

- generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

Source: Ministry of Education. *The Ontario Curriculum*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario

Science and Technology, Grades 1—8. (2007).

The Arts, Grades 1—8. (2006).

Language, Grades 1—8. (1997).

Social Studies, Grade 1—6. (2004).

History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8. (2004).

## Lesson Outline

1. **Show students** a backpack and tell them that they should imagine that they have five minutes to pack everything they would need if they were suddenly homeless. With a partner they should make a list of the necessities. Only items that fit in a backpack can be included.
2. **Have the students record** all the activities they do at home after they leave school until they return the next day. The next day they will share their lists with a partner. Ask the students to decide which of these activities would be difficult or impossible without a home. Then ask the students to imagine that they are a homeless child. Discuss with a partner what kinds of problems they might have. Examples: They wouldn't have a phone so they could not call friends or be reached easily; they could not invite their friends over; it might be difficult to be clean because they would not have a shower; they may not have enough to eat, no school supplies, enough sleep, etc.
3. **Have the students write** a journal entry about what it would be like not to have a home: "Without a home ..." The students should consider where they would go, how it would feel, what they would miss.
4. **Hand out strips of paper** and ask students to write three different sentences about the homeless: "Homeless people are ..." Discuss the meaning of the word *stereotype*. Have students share their sentences and decide whether the sentences are true or stereotypes.
5. **Introduce students** to opinion papers. Each student will complete an opinion paper on the topic, "Homeless people should not be allowed to sleep/live in public places." Have students formulate their thoughts (introduction, opinion, evidence to support the opinion, and conclusion) and prepare arguments.

6. **Debate.** Separate the students into small groups based on whether they agree or disagree and have them debate the topic “Homeless people should not be allowed to sleep/live in public places.”
7. **Read the poem** “Home Free/Si j’avais un foyer” LM2. Discuss as a class whether those things would really help the homeless. Discuss that although these things are necessary in the short term, they do not address the long-term needs of the homeless.
8. **Divide the class into groups.** Allow each group to read the poem and practise one verse. Read the poem together, with each group presenting their verse.
9. **Ask students** to provide a definition of the word *stereotype*. A stereotype is an overly generalized image of a particular person or group. It may be positive or negative. Stereotyping assumes uniformity within the group. What stereotypes exist about the homeless? Ask students to brainstorm the reasons for homelessness. Share these as a class and compare with the list provided.  
Why might someone become homeless?
  - Not enough money
  - No job
  - Mental illness
  - Natural disaster (i.e. fire)
  - Family violence
  - Alcohol and drug addiction
10. **Think/Pair/Share.** Make a list of things that could be done to help the homeless in the long term. Share ideas with a partner. As a class, create an action plan. Encourage the students to make a plan to help the homeless. This may include organizing a coin drive or a clothing drive.
11. **Create posters to educate others.** Display these throughout the school.

### Assessment

Teachers may choose to use the LM1 At-a-Glance (page 8 of *Home Free*) provided, which includes some “Hints for Teachers” to guide observations and help to determine appropriate student responses based on the lesson expectations.

### Support for Every Learner

Teachers should consider, when forming the groups, that students’ strengths need to be promoted.

### Home Connection

Students will complete lists of activities that are carried out at home.

### LM2 Home Free

If I had a home and you did not  
 I would look for you when winter came  
 I would look in all the places you might go  
 If I found you  
 I would wrap you up  
 In thick, clean blankets  
 That smell like Spring  
 And bring you tea  
 If you wanted me to  
 I would help you find a place where you felt safe  
 If you were afraid I would stay with you  
 I wouldn’t tell you anything  
 Of what to do  
 Or where to go  
 I would listen  
 I would look at you  
 Past what others see  
 I would look at you  
 The wonder  
 That is you  
 And I would let you tell me how to help you  
 But I do not have a home

*Rachelle Marsan*

### LM2 Si j’avais un foyer

Si j’avais un foyer et toi sans foyer  
 Je te chercherais dès l’hiver venu  
 J’t chercherais partout où tu pourrais te trouver  
 Et si je te trouvais  
 Je t’envelopperais d’épaisseurs de chaleur  
 Au parfum printanier  
 Je t’apporterais du thé  
 Si tu le souhaitais  
 Je t’aiderais à trouver un endroit  
 Où tu serais en sécurité  
 Si tu avais peur je serais restée avec toi  
 Je ne te dirais rien  
 Ni quoi faire  
 Ni où aller  
 Je t’écouterais  
 Je te regarderais  
 Je verrais en toi  
 Ce que les autres ne voient pas  
 Je verrais en toi  
 La merveille qui est toi  
 Je te demanderais  
 De me dire comment t’aider  
 Si j’avais un foyer  
 Mais je n’en ai pas

*Rachelle Marsan*

Translated by **Kathy Wazana**



# Welcome to Canada



Last fall, the Ontario Ministry of Education released a new policy on English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD). The ideas presented in this article will help your school meet the requirements set out in that policy.

BY JEFFERY ROBINSON AND PETER DORFMAN

**J**ill Donner (not her real name) is a grade 4 teacher in a small, lively school in a typical Ontario town. In four years of teaching, Donner has worked with students from various cultural backgrounds, but she has just received her first English language learner (ELL), Azmina. Although she is a skilled and conscientious teacher, Donner does not feel prepared to teach a student who doesn't speak English. With no ESL/ELD teacher onsite, Donner feels frustrated and unsure about the first steps she should take with Azmina. Like many mainstream classroom teachers she needs some guidance.

The following suggestions include some practical ways for teachers and schools to prepare for and meet the immediate needs of newly arrived students.

## Develop a reception plan

Developing a clearly described plan for receiving students who are new to Canada will go a long way toward ensuring their success in their first days at school. The key players in the school should meet to make decisions about who will be responsible for each part of the plan and what needs to be done. They should then share that plan with the whole school team: administrators, secretaries, teachers, educational assistants, and parent council.

The reception plan might include providing a special package with information about the Ontario school system, a school handbook, a map of the school and community, and a list of items the student will need for class. (The website [settlement.org/edguide](http://settlement.org/edguide) has print and video

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**Jeffery Robinson** is learning coordinator of ESL/ELD, Native Languages and Diversity with the Thames Valley District School Board.

**Peter Dorfman** is the past provincial coordinator of Settlement Workers in Schools.

resources in 17 languages, to share with parents. They are great for non-newcomers too.) One highly effective strategy is to have a team of student ambassadors who link newcomers with students who can help them with classroom routines, join them at lunch, and play with them at recess.

### **Conduct an initial assessment – in both English and the home language**

During an ELL's first few days in class, get an idea of the new student's language abilities – how well he or she can speak, listen, read, and write not only in English, but in the first language too. Azmina doesn't read and write much English yet, but Donner could learn more about her ability to read in her home language by asking her to bring one of her favourite books to school. She could observe how Azmina handles the book, the general complexity of the text, and how easy it is for her to read. She could also make notes about Azmina's ability to write in that language. Her findings will help the school form a program for Azmina and should be shared with all of the teachers and administrators who will work

with the student and her family. If Azmina reads and writes well in her first language, the skills that she already possesses in that language will help her learn English too.

### **Adapt instruction for ELLs**

All newcomers, even those with limited prior schooling, possess a wealth of world knowledge and need help to communicate what they know. Depending on Azmina's language abilities, Donner may ask her to complete some tasks in her first language during the first week or two so that Azmina can concentrate on getting the gist of her lessons instead of struggling to record her ideas in English. Of course, Donner doesn't understand Azmina's home language, but after Azmina has completed her work, they can work together to translate some of what she has written. Using a bilingual dictionary or another student who speaks the same language will be helpful. This process is important for Azmina to feel successful and demonstrate that she already understands concepts.

Imagine how frustrating it would be to have just arrived in a grade 4 classroom in Canada and to have to describe the hierarchical structure of medieval society entirely in English! Helping Azmina to work out her thoughts in her own language first, then in English, makes good teaching sense. Donner should give Azmina tasks that are just beyond her current skills to help her learn the content of lessons without too much pressure or frustration. In her planning, Donner will need to include a wide variety of strategies that will help Azmina to glean the key ideas from the lessons. After all, Azmina is not only learning English, she is learning the content of the curriculum as well.

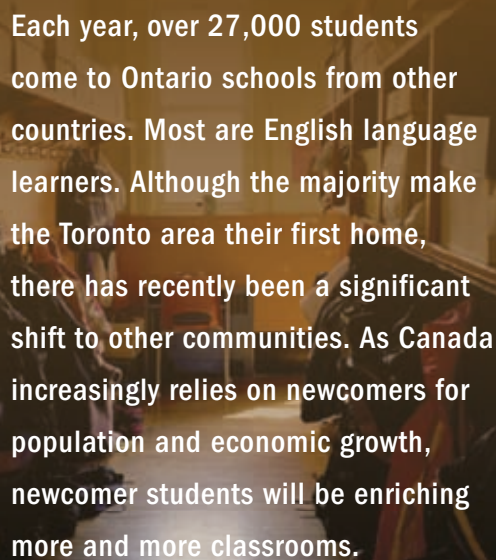
For help with differentiating instruction for ELLs, see the sample units in the ESL and ELD Resource Guide at [edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curriculum/esl18.pdf](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curriculum/esl18.pdf).

The Ontario Ministry of Education has resource documents that help teachers meet the needs of ELLs. *Many Roots Many Voices* is a guide for teachers available at [edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots).

View LNS webcasts about equity and differentiated instruction at [curriculum.org/secretariat/archive.shtml](http://curriculum.org/secretariat/archive.shtml).

### **Monitor the student's progress**

A daily check-in is a good idea. Starting school in a new country is hard for a child. Azmina will pass through a period of excitement about being in a new country and school, but will almost invariably experience some frustration or even depression. This is common, but she should be closely monitored by her teacher and the school community. A daily check-in will let Azmina know Donner cares and will help her feel strong enough to risk those first words and sentences in front of the whole class. Simple conversations about school routines like lunch, clothing, and making friends are a good place to start. Donner also needs to take time to see if the strategies that she has chosen are working in the ways that she had hoped.



Each year, over 27,000 students come to Ontario schools from other countries. Most are English language learners. Although the majority make the Toronto area their first home, there has recently been a significant shift to other communities. As Canada increasingly relies on newcomers for population and economic growth, newcomer students will be enriching more and more classrooms.



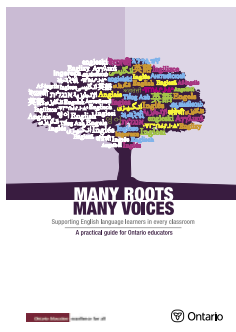
### Communicate with parents

Newcomer parents are often overwhelmed with settling in Canada and the accompanying changes. Fostering a trusting relationship with Azmina's parents is key. It will be helpful for Donner to establish a reliable mechanism for communicating important information via either one of Azmina's relatives or a contact at a local settlement agency. Donner should encourage the parents to speak with her after school or to come with their daughter to the open house/curriculum night early in the school year. She can offer to show them the classroom and talk about how Azmina is doing with learning English and content in the subject areas. If necessary, Donner can arrange for an interpreter to attend meetings with Azmina's parents through the local settlement agency.

### Find out about resources in the community

Newly arrived families may also need help locating community resources. Almost all Ontario communities are served by settlement agencies that provide services to newcomers. They can provide information about language training and employment opportunities, and help families sort through the many issues related to coming to a new country. The settlement agency staff in Donner's school community may be able to help her and her colleagues understand some of the unique issues that Azmina's family faces and suggest some solutions. ▮

To find the settlement agency closest to your community, go to [settlement.org//site/REGIONS](http://settlement.org//site/REGIONS)



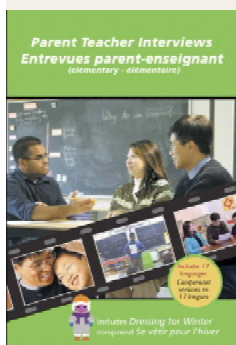
*Many Roots, Many Voices* is a rich source of practices and strategies that can be put to immediate use in the school and the classroom. You will also find an in-depth exploration of the English language learner and an annotated list of resources for further reading.

*Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling – A Practical Guide for*

*Ontario Educators Grades 3 to 12.* This resource attempts to demystify some of the challenges and highlight strategies that educators can use to create possibilities and opportunities for English language learners with limited prior schooling.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* sets out policies and procedures for the development and implementation of programs and supports for English language learners in English language elementary and secondary schools in Ontario, from kindergarten to grade 12.

*Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators* is designed as a resource and tool for teachers, administrators, and other school staff as they support ELLs in achieving the overall expectations of the kindergarten program.



*Parent-Teacher Interviews / Entrevues parent-enseignant.* This short video follows one family's parent-teacher interview with their son's grade 4 teacher. The video helps newcomer parents learn what to expect at a parent-teacher interview and models good teacher practices. It is available on one DVD in 17 languages. This DVD includes the cartoon *Dressing for Winter*.



*New Moves.* This video features 14 students talking about their adjustment to school in Canada and what helped them be successful. It is available on one DVD in 17 languages.

See the list of videos, downloads, and instructions on how to order these and other free resources at [settlement.org/edguide](http://settlement.org/edguide)



# Ensuring the Ontario College of Teachers Works for You



BY JERRY DeQUETTEVILLE

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) is about to embark on an activity that occurs every three years: the election of members of the profession to serve on its governing council. The upcoming election, in March and April of 2009, will be the fifth since the inception of the College. You might think that teachers would stand up and take notice, eager to be a part of the democratic process; yet this is not the case.

When the first OCT election was held in 1997, only 32 percent of teachers voted. Things continued to deteriorate and by the fourth election in 2006 a mere 5.54 percent of the profession voted, indicating a profound loss of confidence in the College's stewardship. It is clear that the College has not engaged members of the teaching profession. Its members have come to regard the OCT as an adversary focused on sanctions.

There is a more significant issue at play, however. In Ontario the teaching profession achieved what might be considered professional status (using the more legal definition of the term) years before the formation of the College. The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario was formed in 1918 and the

Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation followed not long thereafter. These organizations represented teachers as professionals, and it was to these organizations that they turned for advocacy, support, and guidance. When the College was formed in 1997 it was seen by many teachers as unnecessary. Nevertheless, more than 10 years later it is clear that the College is *not* going away.

Compare teachers' experience with that of early childhood educators. This group lobbied for years for the formation of a professional college because they wanted the professional status it would bring them. They cheered when the provincial government created the College of Early Childhood Educators in 2007. There were few in the teaching profession who cheered in 1997 when the Mike Harris government established the OCT. Ontario's teachers were one of the few professional groups in the world to have a professional college imposed upon them. We didn't want a college, didn't understand the need for a college, and for the most part still do not.

Accordingly, many teachers ignore the College. To them the OCT is a magazine that comes a few times a year. It is a mandatory deduction

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Jerry DeQuetteville is the ETFO's staff liaison to the OCT.



from their paycheques in January. It is an annoyance, but one they can disregard – until one of its representatives comes calling. Then it is feared.

The reality is that the OCT exerts considerable control over teachers' professional lives. It makes recommendations to government about legislation that governs teacher qualifications. It accredits the faculties of education, allowing them to offer teacher certification programs. It decides what additional qualification courses should be offered in Ontario and then determines the content of those courses.

The OCT is responsible for certifying all those who want to teach in Ontario. It sets the academic standards and the ethical standards for the profession. It investigates and handles complaints against teachers. The governing council decides what fee Ontario teachers will pay to OCT (recently it increased the fee by 15 percent!).

Because the College has a great deal of impact on teachers and their working lives, ETFO and the other teacher federations will endorse candidates in the upcoming election. We believe that the voices of classroom teachers should be heard and considered when the governing council makes decisions. For much of the College's history these voices have been ignored and discounted.

When making decisions about which candidates to endorse, ETFO will consider the candidates'

- commitment to ensuring that the OCT does not expand beyond its legislated mandate
- commitment to the rights of teachers and teacher organizations
- commitment to maintaining the fee at its current level or lower
- commitment to fairness and equity
- ability to deal with members and issues with compassion and maturity
- ability to weigh options, see the consequences of decisions, and work toward solutions
- willingness to be a strong advocate for teachers
- ability to ask questions and make tough decisions
- commitment to working with other councillors
- ability to meet the time demands
- commitment to devoting the time and energy required
- knowledge about the political environment and how it affects education
- knowledge about the roles of major stakeholders
- experience in local and/or provincial teacher organizations
- intention to be an active teacher for at least three more years.

After weighing this information carefully, ETFO will decide which candidates it will endorse – a difficult but important task. It will communicate this information to the membership.

ETFO recognizes the important role elected councillors will assume and wants a council that will make decisions that are in the best interest of the profession. We want a College that understands and is respectful of the unique mandate of teacher federations. We want a College that appreciates it is funded by the teachers of Ontario and as such acts as an ever watchful steward of the budget.

This is not always the College we have seen during the past 11 years. We hope that this spring Ontario teachers will elect councillors who will work toward making the Ontario College of Teachers a body that truly works for them. ▀

# The Rumour Mill

BY CHRISTINE BROWN

ETFO has been much in the news in the past several months. There have been dire warnings of imminent strikes, looming deadlines, and other seemingly apocalyptic scenarios. But like a giant game of “Rumour,” some of what has been reported and repeated has suffered in the retelling.

**Myth:** *Elementary teachers are poised to go on strike.*

Actually, elementary teachers are engaged in a normal collective bargaining process, one they are legally obliged to participate in. Under Section 17 of the *Labour Relations Act*, the parties to negotiations are bound to “bargain in good faith and make every reasonable effort to make a collective agreement.”

Bargaining is proceeding in occasional teacher, teacher, and educational and professional support personnel (ESP/PSP) bargaining units across the province. All agreements, with the exception of two ESP/PSP agreements, expired on August 31. And even though it is extremely rare for new collective agreements to be signed *before* the expiry date, there has been a flurry of misinformation around this point this fall.

For the record, ETFO bargains for settlements, not for strikes. When and if strikes happen, they do not happen overnight. It is important to let the normal bargaining process unfold.

**Myth:** *The other Ontario teacher federations have signed provincial framework agreements. If the frameworks were good enough for them, they should be good enough for ETFO.*

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the Association des enseignants et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) have long traditions of representing their members well. But their histories, collective agreements, membership composition, and the needs of their members are very different from ETFO's. One framework simply does not fit all. For ETFO, signing a similar agreement would have been detrimental to members' existing rights. In addition, the agreed-to framework agreements do not begin to seriously address the funding shortfall in elementary education. ETFO must chart its own course.

**Myth:** *ETFO came up with the \$711 “gap” number on its own.*

This number comes from the Ministry of Education. Last year ETFO asked the ministry what the funding gap was between elementary and secondary students. The ministry replied that it was \$711, and explained how this number was derived. The ministry's response is in writing. It is on official letterhead. It is signed. It is dated.

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Christine Brown is ETFO's coordinator of Protective Services.



The gap in funding between the elementary and secondary panels has been a well-documented fact for decades. To its credit, the current government has reduced the size of the gap over the past few years.

**Myth:** *The current period of economic uncertainty is the wrong time to increase education funding.*

The downturn in the economy is very real. Recently, the provincial government announced that the economy is expected to grow by just 0.1 percent in 2008. The impacts of this, particularly with respect to job loss, are very significant. What we cannot predict, of course, is how long this situation will last, and how severe it might become.

Consider, however, that in both the long and the short terms, investing in vital areas of the public sector is never a bad fiscal decision. This precept holds true in good times and in bad. Recently, the provincial government reached an agreement with the province's doctors. That deal, which will cost approximately \$1 billion over its four-year term, includes a 12.25 percent salary increase and hundreds of millions in new program funding. It is a good long-term investment – a healthier population means a more productive workforce.

Our collective prosperity also hinges, to a degree unprecedented in our history, on strengthening the knowledge-based economy. Today, an educated, skilled workforce is what gives a nation its competitive edge. As we know, education begins at the beginning, with young students, by building a firm base for their future learning.

ETFO has always understood that achieving substantive change in our collective agreements is a process, not a one-time event. The union has always been willing to work with the government and school boards to find creative ways to eliminate funding inequities *over time* and make elementary education all that it can be.


**Myth:** *It is really just about salary.*

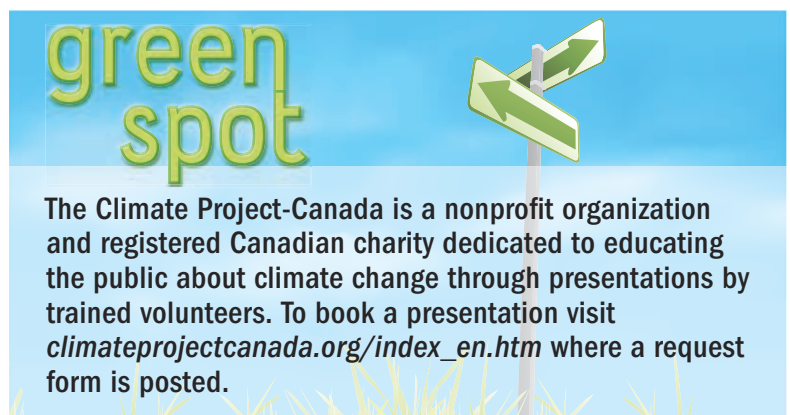
ETFO has tabled a salary increase in this round of bargaining – that is what unions do, and no educator should ever be ashamed of wanting to be paid well. But salary is not the focus in this round of bargaining. Teachers' working conditions have been the centrepiece *from day one*. Those who visit the ETFO website ([etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca)) and who survey the documents and videos that deal with bargaining and the gap will find numerous references to workload, class size, preparation time, teaching time, student assessment, marking, supervision time, and specialist teachers. They will not find much about salary.

**Myth:** *Raising the "gap" issue denigrates secondary teachers.*

The gap in funding between the amount of money allocated to elementary students and that provided for secondary students is real and well documented (see below). It translates into inferior working conditions for elementary teachers and inferior learning conditions for their students.

Secondary teachers do a tremendous job of educating Ontario's young people – they need, and deserve, the best possible working conditions. And so do elementary teachers. The historical roots of the gap are both complex and long-standing. One factor is that the labour of educators who work with young children – who are mostly women – has always been undervalued. This discrimination goes back a century or more. But for elementary teachers to point out this glaringly obvious fact is not to denigrate the work of their secondary colleagues. On the contrary – *all* teachers deserve the resources and working conditions necessary to ensure student success.

No doubt, rumours and misinformation will continue to spread during this round of negotiations. That, too, is a normal part of the process. But, as the bargaining bulletins you have been receiving state frequently, don't listen to rumours. 

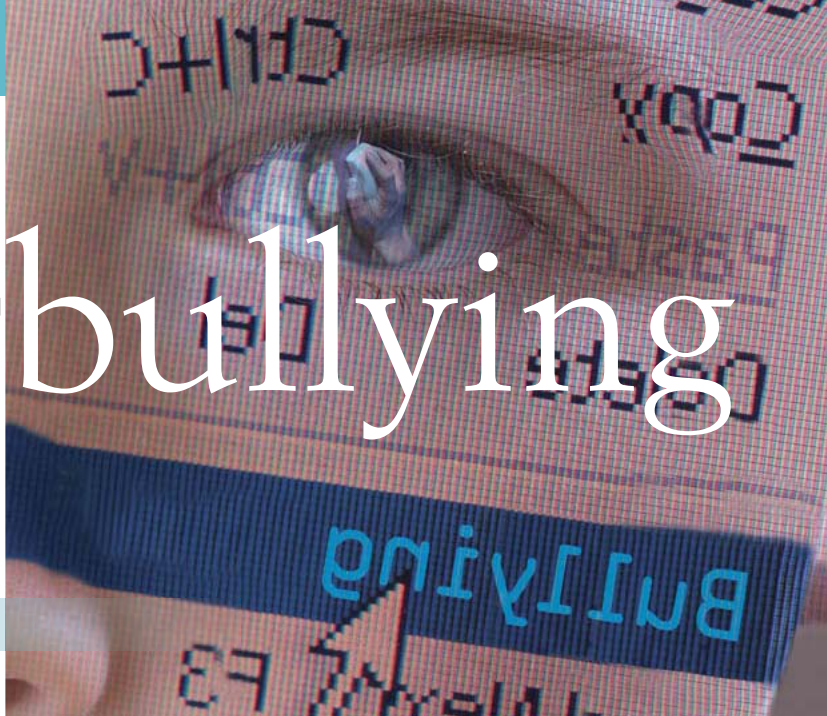


**green spot**

The Climate Project-Canada is a nonprofit organization and registered Canadian charity dedicated to educating the public about climate change through presentations by trained volunteers. To book a presentation visit [climateprojectcanada.org/index\\_en.htm](http://climateprojectcanada.org/index_en.htm) where a request form is posted.

# Cyberbullying

BY PRS STAFF



Despite the growing awareness about its negative effects, cyberbullying continues to be all too common among elementary and secondary school students. Online forums are still rife with the potential for false allegations and degrading comments, and new school-based video clips recorded with cellphones are posted to YouTube every day.

Our members and students themselves are increasingly reporting incidents of negative comments and images on social networking sites such as Facebook.

For instance, the Student Safety Line, set up in January 2008 following the Toronto District School Board's Final Report on School Safety, has reported receiving an average 30 calls a week. Forty percent of the callers were elementary students.<sup>1</sup> Bullying was cited as the second most frequent reason for calling at 12 percent, with harassment cited at 10 percent and physical/verbal confrontation at 15 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this persisting phenomenon, delegates to the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) annual meeting voted unanimously to lobby the federal government to make cyberbullying a criminal offence.<sup>3</sup>

The delegates, who represent 220,000 teachers across Canada, also approved a far-reaching policy that recommends the adoption of provisions in collective agreements and workers' compensation legislation to protect teachers.

## New statistics

The CTF based its actions on the results of its National Issues in Education poll. The survey contacted 2,523 Canadians in February and March and found that:

- 34 percent of respondents knew of students in their community who had been targeted by cyberbullying in the past year.
- 86 percent believed that cyberbullying by students can be prevented effectively if teachers are trained to respond to such incidents.
- 96 percent believed that school boards should develop and enforce policies that hold their students accountable when they are identified as cyberbullies.
- About 70 percent believed school boards should hold students accountable when the cyberbullying originates outside the school; for example, from the student's home.
- 90 percent said that an effective measure to prevent cyberbullying by students is for parents to become more knowledgeable about their children's activities on the Internet and with electronic communication devices and more responsible for monitoring them.
- one in 10 knew someone close to them who had been cyberbullied.
- one in five was aware of teachers who had been cyberbullied.

## Legal landscape

What tools are currently in place to protect teachers from cyberbullying?

Changes to the *Education Act* enacted February 1, 2008 mean that "bullying" can now result in suspension.<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Education's Policy and Program Memorandum No. 144, defines bullying as "typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance."<sup>5</sup>

All Ontario school boards were directed to include this definition in their policies. Of course, a single act can also be very damaging to a teach-

er's career and ought to be captured by any definition of cyberbullying. Consider, for example, a student who digitally assembles and then circulates a doctored and humiliating photograph depicting a teacher. The image, once circulated, can never be erased from cyberspace.

The Ministry of Education has also made efforts to recognize cyberbullying in its policy memorandum, which acknowledges that bullying "may also occur through the use of technology" such as email, cellphones, text messaging, Internet websites, or other technology. Unfortunately though, it is up to individual school boards to specifically incorporate cyberbullying in their anti-harassment policies.

### Cyberconduct according to CTF

The CTF has recently endorsed another definition and position regarding online behaviour. It has defined cyberbullying as "the use of information and communication technologies to bully, embarrass, threaten or harass another. It also includes the use of these technologies to engage in conduct or behaviour that is derogatory, defamatory, degrading, illegal or abusive."<sup>6</sup>

The new CTF policy also sets out appropriate online behaviour. This includes:

- maintaining professional standards when communicating with teachers, students, parents, and administrators
- maintaining the confidentiality of information about students, parents, teachers, or administrators
- respecting the rights of all members of the online community and acting in a manner that facilitates the orderly functioning of that community
- ensuring that appropriate safeguards and protection measures are in place prior to posting personal or professional data.<sup>7</sup>


The guiding principles emphasize the balance between the right to self-expression and the right to be free from harmful conduct: "Individual rights to freedom of information, thought, belief, opinion and expression, should be balanced with the rights and responsibilities of parents, guardians and the education community. These include the right to guide individuals in the responsible use of information and communication technology."<sup>8</sup>

## Tips for members

If you believe that you, yourself, or a colleague has been targeted by any type of cyberbullying, consider the following actions:

- Keep the email addresses and the copies of relevant emails with full headers (date and time received).
- Keep a printout of any website posting.
- If you believe that you can accurately identify the student committing the act of cyberbullying, be vigilant and ensure that your belief is substantiated by documentation and raised with the principal at your school.
- Document the behaviour(s) in detail with dates, times, and potential witnesses.
- Ask for input into any educational materials or notices to students and parents regarding cyberconduct or cyberbullying and expect release time for this work.
- Discuss with your principal an appropriate disciplinary response for the student. Insist on an educational response for the student as well, and perhaps for the broader school community.
- Depending on the severity of the conduct, you may wish to contact the police.
- Consider how you are using technology, chat sites, or email communications with students and colleagues and ensure that your use meets professional standards in every respect.
- For additional advice contact staff in Professional Relations Services at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836.

### See also related articles:

- "Think Before You Click" – October 2007, Volume 10, No. 1
- "Understanding Changes to Safe Schools Legislation" – February 2008, Volume 10, No. 3. 

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- 1 Toronto District School Board, "On the Road to Health: Leadership Action Team Report" (May 20, 2008), pp. 3-4. Available online at [tdsb.on.ca/about\\_us/media\\_room/room.asp?show=allNews&view=detailed&self=12230](http://tdsb.on.ca/about_us/media_room/room.asp?show=allNews&view=detailed&self=12230).
  - 2 Ibid.
  - 3 Canadian Teachers' Federation, Media Release, "Cyberbullying in schools: National poll shows Canadians' growing awareness" (July 11, 2008). Available online at [ctf-fce.ca/e/news/index.asp](http://ctf-fce.ca/e/news/index.asp)
  - 4 *Education Act*, s.306(1).
  - 5 Ontario Ministry of Education, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, Bullying Prevention and Intervention (October 4, 2007). Available online at [edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.pdf](http://edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.pdf).
  - 6 Canadian Teachers' Federation, Cyberconduct and Cyberbullying Policy, 5.10.6.1(b). Available online at [ctf-fce.ca/e/index.asp](http://ctf-fce.ca/e/index.asp).
  - 7 Ibid. at 5.10.6.1(a).
  - 8 Ibid. at 5.10.6.2.3.



# Tunnel Vision or Panoramic View?

BY SHERRY RAMRATTAN SMITH

**F**or some time now, I have been examining my thoughts and actions as I recall my years in the classroom. I use the question, “What stories did I construct about a child or children that imposed limitations or opened up possibilities for their learning and achievement?”

A similar question serves me well in my current role, working for the federation. I now ask myself: “What am I thinking about members to enable their personal growth, professional development, and service, or in what ways are my thoughts and actions constraining their efforts?”

Judgments we make about one another stem from our ideologies, values, and beliefs, and are often fuelled by prejudices acquired through our histories and life experiences. These days we hear a lot about the importance of “critical reflection,” but effective critical reflection requires a process of building new knowledge and taking thoughtful action. Without these two key components we are spinning our wheels. Within our service area, staff work consciously to implement new programs and to build our knowledge so that we can assess the direction and scope of our actions. This is one way that we hold ourselves accountable to the vision and priorities of ETFO.

This column highlights some learning experiences and actions of two ETFO members who have been working to build their knowledge and take thoughtful action. Val Inksetter from the Hamilton-Wentworth Teacher Local and Bryce Honsinger from the Niagara Teacher Local share aspects of their equity and social justice journeys.

## Val Inksetter

“As a newly elected executive member-at-large with the Hamilton-Wentworth Elementary Teacher Local, I am thrilled to have an opportunity to represent colleagues and continue my journey of learning.

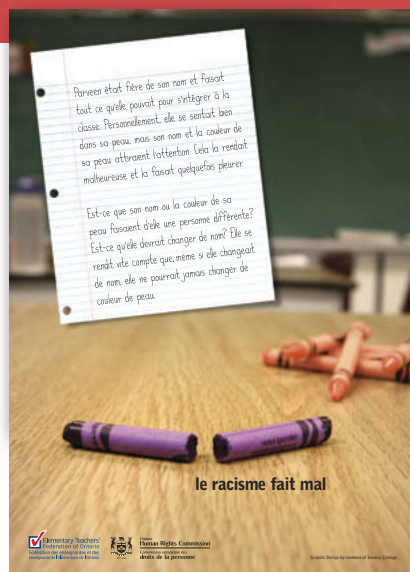
“I am fortunate to have participated in a number of valuable equity and social justice programs over the last years and am realizing the importance of these experiences to me as I begin my role as an executive member. Two ETFO programs, Leaders for Tomorrow and the Professional Learning Community, have enabled personal connections with staff and teaching colleagues. Through these programs I have been able to build and expand a supportive network of critical friends. These people willingly share knowledge and resources to help me as I seek to assist members in my local. Supportive networks work to open up and share strategies for success by dialogue and critique, and offer possibilities for positive changes.

“ETFO also offers an incredible collection of print resources that assist in bridging personal development to teaching responsibilities. Resources such as *Roots of Equality* and *Connections* are teacher-friendly and curriculum-based, and offer practical ways to integrate important topics relevant to the wide scope of everyday experiences our students encounter. They connect theory to practice. I like the model that EWS offers by supplementing resources with workshops that encourage dialogue about race, gender, abilities, and a variety of social justice topics.

“I have personally benefited from training to deliver a number of equity workshops and will encourage our local to host several for members. With new understanding and information regarding equity and social justice, I will strive to encourage diversity amongst executive members, stewards, and committee members in our local. Our city is diverse, our student population is diverse and it is important that our local be a model for acceptance of difference and change. I will work hard to extend my learning into the classroom and help to build the knowledge of my students on these important topics. I am thankful to be part of an organization that holds social justice as an important vision and takes action towards this vision.”



# What influences how we see our students and teach them?



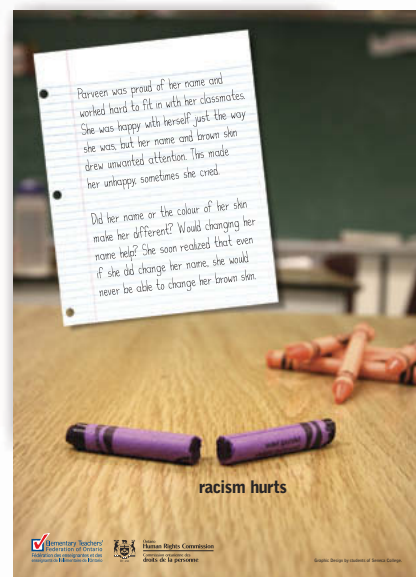
## Bryce Honsinger

“Participation in the *racism hurts* campaign was an enlightening experience that motivated me to critically examine how I could develop effective programming for students that would enable them to develop respect for diversity and difference.

“The world has truly become a global community, and if our students are to become successful in this community they need skills to work with a wide variety of people and develop relationships based upon respect. The *racism hurts* campaign and the activities developed for it provide students with opportunities to celebrate the unique qualities that each individual has, and promote development of a critical understanding of diversity and respect for difference.

“We can teach children to accept other cultures and appreciate the diversity that exists within our nation, but we must also provide our children with information and the tools required to break down stereotypes, prejudice, and barriers to acceptance that exist within our schools, institutions, and homes. Learning about different traditions and cultures is one way to celebrate diversity and promote acceptance of difference, but this must be coupled with a recognition of the fact that racism does exist within society and that it must be dealt with. The program, *racism hurts*, enables students to explore diversity, examine racism within our societies, and learn about the actions they can take to stop it.

“Perhaps Jessica Rimmington, founder of the One World Youth Project, summarized best how educators and students should view the future when she stated, ‘As young people we are not just the future. We are the



present as well. We are the right here and right now! And, if we want to change the world, we have to not only take action ourselves, but also inspire others to do the same.’ Programs like *racism hurts* will not only educate students and staff about the contemporary realities of racism within our societies, but also motivate both students and educators to work together to eliminate racism from our societies.” ■

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**Sherry Ramrattan Smith** is ETFO's coordinator of Equity and Women's Services

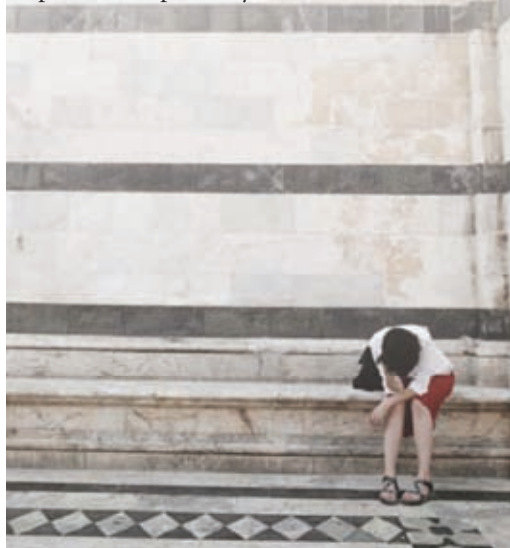
# Harnessing Untapped Potential

BY CHRISTINE BROWN

If you are reading this, you probably have a job. But in Canada, for the 2,457,350 potential labour force participants with disabilities (ages 15 to 64), employment is fraught with barriers and uncertainties.

Over the past nine months, Statistics Canada has been releasing its analyses of the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006 (PALS). This is only the second time this comprehensive survey has been conducted, which means that we now have the beginnings of comparable data over time.

What do the numbers say? Of the pool of potential workers described above, 51 percent were employed, 5 percent were unemployed, and 44 percent were not in the labour force. The corresponding figures for Canadians without disabilities were 75 percent, 5 percent, and 20 percent, respectively.



These are global numbers that do not begin to tell the whole story. We know that people can be “not in the labour force” for many reasons, such as retirement, attending school, family responsibilities. However, a closer look at the PALS data reveals that being *involuntarily* out of the labour force is a significant problem for individuals with disabilities. For example, in the important workforce demographic of men and women aged 45 to 54, roughly nine in 10 individuals without disabilities were labour force participants, compared to roughly six in 10 among individuals with disabilities.

However, the news is not all bad. Between 2001 and 2006, the employment picture for people with disabilities actually improved. Over that period, the gap in the unemployment rate between people with disabilities and people without disabilities narrowed (this figure measures the unemployed as a percentage of all those in the labour force). Thus, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities fell from 13.2 percent to 10.4 percent, while it fell for those without disabilities from 7.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

It would be nice to believe that this small trend means greater employer awareness of barriers, which may well be true. However, Statistics Canada is more cautious, crediting the strong Canadian economy during this period, and further noting that nearly all these gains seem to have come from actual employment growth for people with disabilities, and not from people simply leaving the labour force.

But let us turn for a moment to the key issue of barriers. PALS sheds light on these as well, since the survey also asked about the kinds of workplace accommodations workers with disabilities required. Workplace accommodations can take many forms – modified work stations, special equipment or technical aids, etc. Yet the most common accommodation cited, one reported by 20 percent of employed persons with disabilities, was “modified hours or days.” Interestingly, this was also the most commonly cited accommodation measure among respondents with disabilities who were either unemployed or not in the labour force.

As we look at the rigidity of our workplaces, and at the woefully underutilized pool of labour and talent represented by Canadians with disabilities, these data give us much to ponder. ▮

Christine Brown, ETFO's coordinator of Protective Services, has a special interest in disabilities issues.

Source: Statistics Canada: *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Labour Force Experience of People with Disabilities in Canada*, July 2008.





BY HILDA WATKINS

# OTPP Introduces Conditional Indexing

**IN YEARS TO COME**, pension aficionados will identify significant changes in the history of Ontario teachers' pension plans. Undoubtedly, their reflections will include the establishment of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) as a fund jointly sponsored by the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Ontario government in 1990 and the 2008 pension settlement that eroded the pension promise.

In its 2007 Annual Report to Members, the OTPP reported:

- \$108.5 billion in net assets
- investment income of \$4.7 billion
- a rate of return in excess of the fund's composite benchmarks.

Despite this stellar performance, the January 2008 funding valuation showed a preliminary estimated shortfall of \$12.7 billion.

The *Pension Benefits Act* requires the OTPP to file a valuation with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario every three years. To balance the plan, the partners (OTF and the government) can increase contributions, reduce future benefits, or use a combination of the two.

Eliminating the 2008 shortfall using contribution rates alone would have required a contribution rate of slightly over 16 percent of gross salary. (The net effect would be less as pension contributions are tax deductible.) Members may recall the 2006–07 OTF pension education program that characterized pension contributions not as lost income but as funds matched by the government and invested for your future.

In September OTF endorsed the following proposal for addressing the 2008 funding deficit:

- As of January 1, 2009, pension contributions will increase as previously scheduled by 0.8 percent. Accordingly, members will contribute 10.4 percent of that portion of salary up to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) limit and 12 percent on the portion of salary above the CPP limit.
- Pension credits earned in 2009 will continue to be 100 percent indexed; that is, benefits will be increased according to the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- For service earned after 2009, 50 percent of the cost of living increase is guaranteed. The remainder of the cost of living increase depends on the plan's financial health: pensioners may receive all, a portion, or none of the remaining 50 percent.

Although it is the intent of the Plan that future benefits will be fully indexed, this cannot be promised.

ETFO was the only Ontario teacher federation opposed to the pension proposal. ETFO believes the settlement to be shortsighted and flawed, in that:


- It ends the promise to provide fully indexed pensions to all retired teachers.
- It creates two classes of retirees, those with fully indexed pensions and those with partially indexed pensions. Such disparity is reminiscent of the unjust treatment of teachers on the grid during the Social Contract years.
- It creates a conflict between active teachers and retirees.

Clearly our pension plan faces challenges. The historically low real return bond rate (RRB) has put considerable pressure on plan liabilities. This pressure has been exacerbated by changing demographics and improved mortality rates. There is an ever growing number of retirees as compared with the number of active teachers, and they are living longer. Nevertheless, the assumptions used by the OTPP for the valuation of our pension remain a source of concern for ETFO.

Pension matters tend to be complex, and you should remember that:

- your pension will not decrease during your retirement
- you should not alter retirement plans based on this information.

The OTPP 2008 valuation found in the multimedia webcasts section of the ETFO website provides additional information. Go to [etfo.ca/Multimedia/webcasts](http://etfo.ca/Multimedia/webcasts).

The pension officer at ETFO or the OTF director of pension and economic affairs can provide information pertinent to your situation. 

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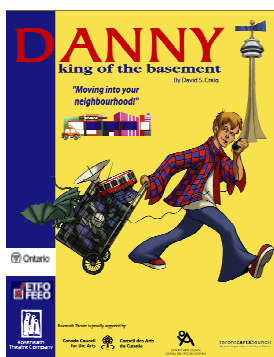
Hilda Watkins is an ETFO vice-president and is ETFO's OTF table officer.



BY EMILY NOBLE

# Representing Teachers' Concerns

**AS YOUR** national president, one of my roles is to speak out on issues that directly and indirectly affect educators. Here are some of them.



## Addressing poverty

One of the most devastating issues educators have to contend with is poverty. They see the face of poverty in their schools and classrooms every day. ETFO is doing a great job of heightening awareness of the issue by promoting and sponsoring a tour of the play *Danny, King of the Basement* across the province. The play shows the impact of poverty on students in a very moving way.

But poverty is not just an Ontario issue. The play needs to be seen by students across the country. And we need to put poverty on the real agenda of federal and provincial members of Parliament. When the play comes to your school, why don't you invite your MPP or federal MP to see it too.

## Protecting the environment


ETFO and CTF have teamed up to spread the word about the CBC's environmental initiative One Million Acts of Green (OMAG). If you haven't already done so, get your school and community involved. What a wonderful opportunity to showcase the positive actions in schools that make a difference for our planet. For more information, visit the CTF Green Street website, [green-street.ca](http://green-street.ca), and see how you can become involved.

## Highlighting women's issues

What are you doing on Wednesday, February 11? Why not come to Toronto to attend the CTF/ETFO Women's Symposium! Meet women and equity supporters from all across Canada and discuss the role and future of unionism for women of all ages. More information will be posted on the CTF and ETFO websites in the coming weeks. Stay tuned.

## Supporting teachers the world over

Congratulations ETFO on your support for CTF and Project Overseas. Last summer, 12 ETFO members were among the 50 Canadian teachers who represented Canada in the annual Project Overseas program. They worked with colleagues in developing nations and gained experience about teacher unions in other countries. For information about Project Overseas, go to [etfo.ca/advocacy and action/world issues/Project Overseas](http://etfo.ca/advocacy_and_action/world_issues/Project%20Overseas).

I am also deeply honoured to represent Canadian teachers on the Education International executive board as one of four teacher leaders from the North American and Caribbean region. EI has 29 affiliates in 20 countries and territories in this region. Teachers from Africa, India, and Canada, however different their professional environments, face common issues that create a bond of understanding and mutual respect. To learn more, visit the Education International website, [ei-ie.org](http://ei-ie.org). 

All the best in this festive season. I wish you peace and goodwill throughout 2009!

*Vision*, CTF's FREE e-newsletter, is available to both teacher members and non-members. The newsletter comes out regularly during the school year and provides a quick read on issues related to teaching and education across Canada. To subscribe go to [ctf-fce.ca/e/publications/subscription](http://ctf-fce.ca/e/publications/subscription).

Emily Noble is president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

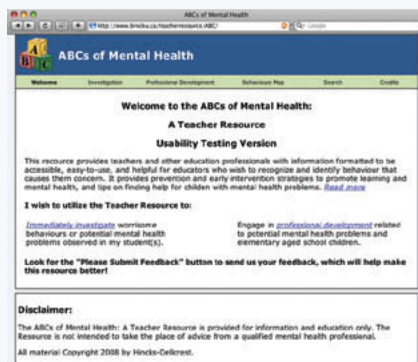
## Answering Your Questions About Student Mental Health

By Nancy Baldree

Increasingly, the mental health of children in their care is a cause for concern for teachers. Now they have access to a Web resource that can help them understand a student's problems and find effective ways to help that student in the classroom.

Mental health professionals at the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre developed "The ABCs of Mental Health – A Resource for Teachers" in response to teachers' requests for mental health information. Found at [brocku.ca/teacherresource/ABC](http://brocku.ca/teacherresource/ABC), it provides teachers of elementary students with:

- practical suggestions for the prevention of mental health problems
- information about the common behavioural and mental health problems
- early intervention strategies that promote learning, to use in the classroom
- appropriate responses to children with more serious mental health problems, and to their families.



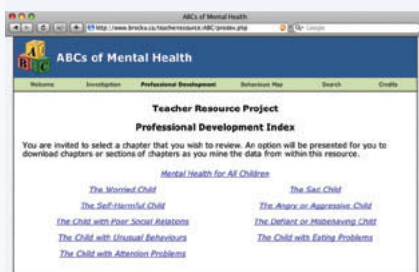
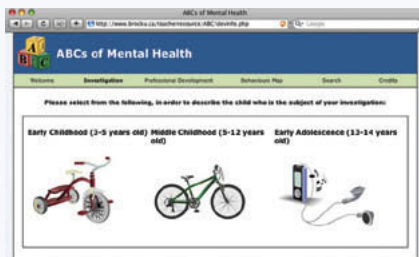
### How the information is organized

There are a lot of explanations for children's behaviours and numerous possible interventions. Many of the behaviours that trouble teachers may in fact be nothing to worry about, while others are signals that something could be wrong.

The website is organized so that teachers can easily find information and suggestions regarding the particular behaviours that may be of concern. There are sections about:

- The Worried Child
- The Sad Child
- The Self-Harmful Child
- The Angry or Aggressive Child
- The Child with Poor Social Relations
- The Defiant or Misbehaving Child
- The Child with Attention Problems
- The Child with Unusual Behaviours
- The Child with Eating Problems

Each section addresses actions, beliefs about possible causes, and a course to follow to address the problem.



Certain actions might be normal at one stage of development, but could indicate a moderate or serious mental health problem at another stage; therefore, the information in the resource relates to *Early Childhood*, from about age three to age five; *Middle Childhood*, from about age six to age 12; and *Early Adolescence*, from about age 13 to age 14.

The information is further subdivided according to the severity of the behaviour. Thus

- *Green Light* actions fall within normal expectations.
- *Yellow Light* actions are outside normal expectations, cause teachers concern, and warrant further consideration.
- *Red Light* actions are serious enough to warrant referral to a mental health specialist.

When you enter the site, you have a choice:

- If you click on "immediately investigate," you are prompted to select an age group, then the topic for investigation.
- If you click on "engage in professional development," you have access to information on a chosen topic.

Because this is a new resource, the creators are seeking feedback about how to make the site as user-friendly as possible and have included a "submit feedback" button.

While sections of the resource are text heavy, and scrolling through the various sections takes some getting used to, "The ABC's of Mental Health: A Resource for Teachers" is a welcome addition to the teacher's toolkit of professional resources.

Nancy Baldree is an ETFO executive assistant.



# reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews

## Bayview High Series – Hidden Talent, The Paper, Taking the Lead, High Stakes

### VARIOUS AUTHORS

Toronto: Scholastic Canada,  
2008

128 pages

All 15 titles in the series:

\$104.00

4-pack novel sets: \$27.50 ea.

Order online at

[Scholasticcanada.ca](http://Scholasticcanada.ca)

### Reviewed by Deb Darling

*Hidden Talent, High Stakes, the Paper, and Taking the Lead* are four new novels in Scholastic's Bayview High Series written for reluctant readers in grades 7 to 9. There are 15 titles in all, dealing with the world "beyond the classrooms and assignments" at Bayview High.

Each book introduces a sympathetic new character whose conflicts and problems capture our interest immediately. From here, the plot advances at a gallop through chance meetings, character interactions, and narrative action. Current lingo peppers the dialogue in each chapter and, while not in the league of *Huck Finn* or *The Secret Garden*, it rings true enough and helps to reveal character and to move the plot along. Conflicts the characters face within themselves and with their world that at first seem insoluble are resolved in a mostly plausible fashion.

Most importantly, the pro-



tagonists in each of the new Bayview High novels – Vish, Ivan, Gus, and Autumn – discover unknown strength within themselves and learn the value of friendship in overcoming the all too familiar and complex problems facing youth today: online gambling, cyberbullying, peer pressure, alcoholism, divorce, and racism, to name a few.

While these novels are to the classics what soaps are to art films, they do not pretend to be other than what they are: clear-cut, relevant, and compelling storytelling that is sure to interest your reluctant Intermediate readers.

Teaching support is available with this series in the form of chapter summaries and comprehension activities. Each novel has a glossary at the back of the book.

Deb Darling is an occasional teacher with the Simcoe County District School Board.

## Wombat Smith "Beijing Breakaway!"

### ANNE SAUTEL

Illustrated by Scott Stewart

Montreal: Lobster Press, 2007

96 pages

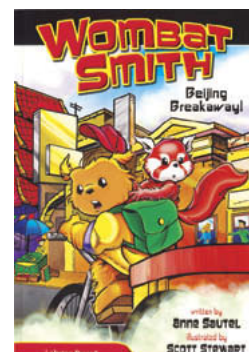
\$8.95

### Reviewed by Megan

#### Nowiski

When I received this novel for review I was initially a little wary: the cover has an anime wombat playing soccer and riding a bike through a city street. I was unsure how this book could possibly fit into the Ontario curriculum or be considered a quality addition to my classroom library.

It turns out the old saying is true: "You should not judge a book by its cover." This is the second novel in the Wombat Smith series. The series is about a young wombat who has been adopted by a loving human family. He is treated like a family member and plays sports and goes to school just like a human child. In this book, Wombat travels to Beijing and learns many lessons along the way.



Reading this book, I learned about Chinese culture and even managed to pick up a few simple words in Mandarin. I found the novel particularly suitable for guided reading or literature circles. Beyond the author's lessons about China and excellent use of vocabulary, the novel presents many character education opportunities. It teaches about friendship and how to strive to achieve goals, as an individual as well as in a group.

*Wombat Smith "Beijing Breakaway!"* is certainly a book I look forward to presenting to my students and using to teach good character. This novel is most suitable for a grade 2 or 3 class.

Megan Nowiski is a teacher with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

The **JK/SK Teacher Community** is a team site open to all Kindergarten teachers.

Go to [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca) > Team Sites. "Kindergarten makeover, ETFO edition" is a webcast that features play-based learning. It is available at [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca) > Multimedia > Webcasts

# trivia

BY PETER HARRISON

## Worth remembering

Harry was having a bad day! His new bank account number was proving particularly difficult to remember. He knew that it had all the digits from 0 to 9 in some order, so he tried four times to write it down, but each attempt failed:

4 9 1 7 6 0 2 3 8 5  
3 1 5 9 8 7 6 4 0 2  
5 1 9 6 7 4 2 3 0 8  
1 3 7 9 8 6 4 5 2 0

On the fifth attempt, he got it right! And then he noticed something surprising: in each of the four unsuccessful attempts, exactly four of the digits were in their correct places and if anyone had known this, they could have worked out his account number for themselves!

**What is Harry's account number?**

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 19, 2009.

**Solution to our last puzzle:**

### Crossed Lines

**There were 12 black dots**

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

We only have one winner:

**Jane Alcott**, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

*Congratulations!*



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– Sara Escott  
MEd Student

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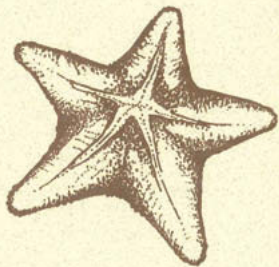
OISE is an international leader in the research, teaching and study of issues that matter in education. For the past century, our institution has truly transformed education in Ontario through the teaching of teachers, research, graduate studies, and through our leadership in educational policy and its impact on practice around the world. Our commitment is to ensure the extraordinary synergy between theory and practice continues to grow.

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## LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SAY THANKS?

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For info.



To renew.

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# calendar

**January 29-31, LONDON**

## **OASPHE Winter Conference**

Ontario Association for the Supervision of  
Physical and Health Education  
Spencer Leadership Centre, London  
[oasphe.ca](http://oasphe.ca)

**February 19-21, TORONTO**

## **OAME 2009 Leadership Conference**

Developing Perspectives on Learning and  
Teaching Mathematics  
Ontario Association for Mathematics  
Education  
Holiday Inn Select  
[oame.on.ca](http://oame.on.ca)

## **ETFO Professional Learning**

### **Kindergarten AQ**

An ETFO developed AQ course for Junior  
and Senior Kindergarten teachers.  
Contact Joan Littleford, [jlittleford@etfo.org](mailto:jlittleford@etfo.org)

**March - April, TORONTO**

### **Professional Learning Community Women's Program: Session Three**

A unique ETFO program that focuses on  
communication and provides practical  
strategies participants can use right away.  
Registration deadline: February 2.  
Registration forms are available at:  
[etfo.ca/CalAttach/PLC\\_Session3.pdf](http://etfo.ca/CalAttach/PLC_Session3.pdf)  
Contact Sherry Ramrattan Smith,  
[srsmith@etfo.org](mailto:srsmith@etfo.org)

**Apr 30 - May 1 OTTAWA**

### **VISIONS**

An ETFO conference for women in their  
first five years of teaching, to encourage  
leadership in equity work.  
Contact Jacqueline Karsemeyer,  
[jkarsemeyer@etfo.org](mailto:jkarsemeyer@etfo.org)

**February 21-25, ARIZONA**

## **IRA's 54th Annual Convention**

Beyond the Horizon  
International Reading Association  
[reading.org](http://reading.org)

**February 26-27, TORONTO**

## **Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Regional Conference**

Diverse Paths to Literacy  
Sheraton Parkway Hotel  
[readingrecovery.org](http://readingrecovery.org)

**March 26-28, TORONTO**

## **2009 Spring Conference / Congrès du printemps 2009**

"Live Well, Laugh Often, Teach Brilliantly/  
Vis, ris, enseigne avec passion"  
Ontario Modern Language Teachers'  
Association  
Doubletree International Plaza Hotel  
[omlta.org](http://omlta.org)



## **Kindergarten Matters!**

**ETFO's DVD highlights  
the importance of  
play-based learning in  
a full-day program.**

# classifieds

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**INTERNATIONAL TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH SEARCH ASSOCIATES** 13<sup>th</sup> Annual International Recruiting Fair, Friday, Jan. 30-Sunday, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> at the Delta Chelsea Hotel, Toronto. First international recruitment fair in Canada. Hundreds of job openings in all teaching areas will be available for the upcoming school year. Fifty (50) recruiters representing over 80 schools in over 30 countries will be in attendance. This fair is by invitation only so apply early. Go to [www.searchassociates.com](http://www.searchassociates.com), 2009 Fair Schedule or contact Ray Sparks at [raysparks@eastlink.ca](mailto:raysparks@eastlink.ca) for additional information

**RETIRING?** Teach In China 2009 Xiamen WECL English College. Salary, 6 weeks paid vacation, air, housing. Inquiries [ron\\_xmcollege@hotmail.com](mailto:ron_xmcollege@hotmail.com). Ron Lyons 905-358-7488  
Website: <http://www.xmceslchina.ca>

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a copy in the January  
steward mailing.**

**Watch for it!**

## PART I - WINTER 2009

*In partnership with Peel District School Board*

**Pheasant Run Public School**

4140 Pheasant Run, Mississauga

SATURDAYS: Jan. 31, Feb. 21, Mar. 7

THURSDAYS: Jan. 29 - Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26

Mar. 5, 12, 26 - Apr. 2, 9

## PART II - SPRING 2009

*In partnership with Upper Grand District School Board*

**Westside Secondary School**

300 Alder St., Orangeville

FRIDAY EVENINGS & SATURDAYS:

March 27-28 - April 3-4, April 17-18

May 1-2, May 22-23 - June 5-6

*In partnership with Halton District School Board*

**Alexander's Public School**

2223 Sutton Drive, Burlington

SATURDAYS: March 28, April 25, May 23

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS: March 25

April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 - May 6, 13, 20, 27

*In partnership with York Region District School Board*

**YRDSB Centre for Leadership and Learning**

300 Harry Walker Parkway South, Newmarket

SATURDAYS: March 28, April 25, May 23

TUESDAY EVENINGS: March 24, 31

April 7, 15 (Wednesday), 22 (Wednesday), 28

May 5, 12, 19, 26

For details and application forms for Part I and Part II go to [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca) - *Professional Development - AQ Courses*; or contact **Joanne Languay** at 416-962-3836/toll-free 888-838-3836, ext. 2271; [jlanguay@etfo.org](mailto:jlanguay@etfo.org)


## Associate Teaching: Information for ETFO Members

Have you been asked to host a student teacher in your classroom? The Ontario Teachers' Federation has a policy on associate teaching. It outlines the features that provide for well-supported associate teachers who can deliver successful practice teaching experiences to teacher candidates.

OTF policy indicates that members who serve as associate teachers should give priority to teacher candidates enrolled in faculties of education at publicly-funded, Ontario universities.

You may accept student teachers from private and offshore institutions, but OTF policy is that you should give priority to the candidates from our own publicly-funded programs.

**Questions?** To learn more contact OTF at 416-966-3424, or 1-800-268-7061 (toll-free); or visit its website at [otffeo.on.ca](http://otffeo.on.ca) >About OTF>We the Teachers>Policy Resolutions. Section V111 Teacher Education; Subsection E Practicum #2.



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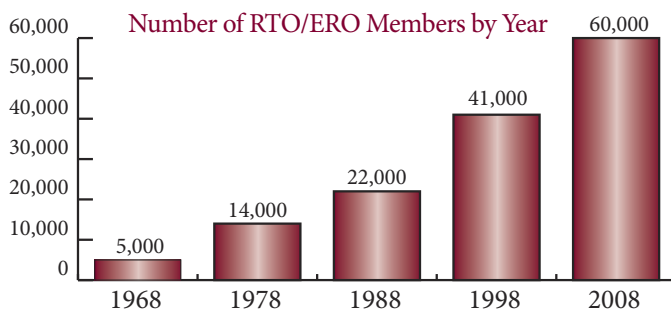


For the past 40 years, The Retired Teachers of Ontario/les enseignantes et enseignants retraités de l'Ontario (RTO/ERO) has provided quality programs and services for retired members of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and other retired educators including principals and vice-principals and educational support staff. These include:

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- ✓ Unwavering Pension Support
- ✓ Successful Political Advocacy
- ✓ Award-Winning Publications
- ✓ Quality Bilingual Services
- ✓ Specialized Travel Programs
- ✓ Entertaining Social & Recreational Activities at Local District Level

Since 1968, RTO/ERO has become the official voice and lead organization for retired teachers in the province of Ontario. It has amassed the largest retiree educator health and insurance plan in Canada and the favoured choice of retired Ontario teachers with 40,000 participants.

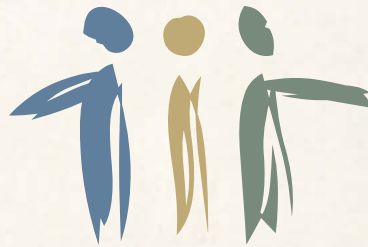
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