

# Voice



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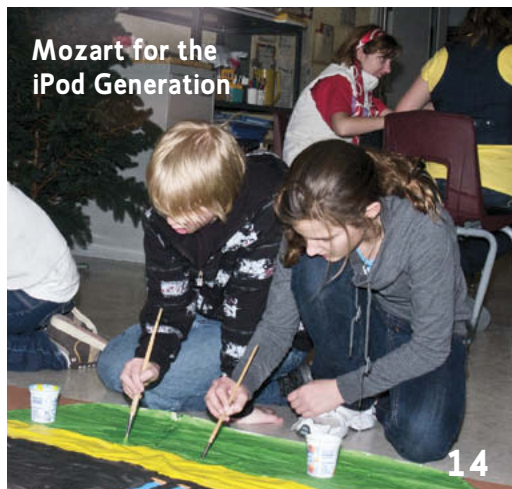
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## A Union of Professionals

There are not a lot of things that can come between an editor and a deadline, but bargaining is definitely one of them. The final provincial offer appeared just in time to delay the print run of this issue of the magazine.

You will undoubtedly have read or heard media reports of the provincial agreement. Many have focused on the salary offer; but few have understood the attack on teacher professionalism contained in earlier offers. What the provincial agreement means for you and your federation is the subject of the president and general secretary's columns (pages 4 and 7). In her column, Christine Brown, protective services coordinator, outlines next steps: the unique bargaining scenario in which ETFO finds itself means that the focus will now be on local bargaining (page 8). Leaders of teacher and occasional teacher locals will be working hard to ensure local collective agreements meet members' needs and to protect and enhance their professionalism.

ETFO is a union of professionals. In addition to bargaining news, this issue also features articles about the extraordinary and trend-setting approaches members are taking in their classrooms and in their professional growth. Andrea Hertach has found a way to cultivate an interest in Mozart in her students (page 14). Kevin Adams has involved his students in ecological pursuits for 15 years (page 27). Dan Grant is a participant in ETFO's unique *Innoteach* program which uses technology to enhance professional learning. He has used digital storytelling techniques in his classroom to connect with sometimes hard-to-reach students (page 19). By contrast, Stanley Hallman-Chong's Summer Academy workshop took participants back to a pre-digital age and served to bring elementary social studies teachers together into a subject association (page 24).

Every issue of *Voice* – but this one in particular – demonstrates that at ETFO professionalism and unionism go hand in hand.

As always, we welcome your feedback and ideas.

  
JOHANNA BRAND

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Member of the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) and Canadian Education Press Association

Indexed in the Canadian Educational Index / Répertoire canadien sur l'éducation

ISSN: 1481-4072

Articles contained herein reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express official policy of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

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Publications Mail Agreement no. 40070000.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:



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Printed by Thistle Printing on 50% recycled stock, 25% post consumer content; 75% Canadian-produced pulp.

# letters to the editor

## Re: Helping all kids succeed

(December 2008)

Presenting educational initiatives to teachers in a forceful or threatening manner can create pressure and fear. One example is in the report on Dr. Ungerleider's presentation to ETFO's poverty symposium. In that article, excellent classroom practices were preceded by statements like, "If public education fails our country will fail... If we don't ensure success for every student, support for public education will erode." Knee-knocking thoughts, indeed.

Yes, teachers must focus on every student's success, but there is a subtle subtext that accompanies these new practices. The way teachers "hear"

## Correction

Victoria Nolan is a member of Canada's paralympic rowing team. Incorrect information appeared in our last issue.



Victoria Nolan with her guide dog Angus.

this message has the potential to be a source of job satisfaction and profound joy, or it can be the burden that breaks a teacher's back.

As another example, when a principal spends staff meetings on student achievement data and the need to improve EQAO results and then presents new initiatives, the team buys into the plan. The goals are honourable, the methods proven. The structure of activities for language lessons, for example, becomes pretty much obligatory and the ways to teach math are presented with the expectation that we follow them. The initiatives are good but the way they are presented, whether in staff meetings, board workshops, or our own publications, can create pressure instead of the creative excitement that should accompany them.

To be a teacher is an enormous and complex undertaking. Teachers who feel safe, instead of threatened, are more creative, efficient and energised.

I hope that administrators are presenting new initiatives in a supportive fashion. Just as we encourage students to feel safe taking risks, so I hope that teachers feel safe,

cared for, and are being helped and forgiven for their growing pains during these times of continuous change.

**Jack Teertstra**

ETFO member  
Ottawa-Carleton

## Re: Poverty and Learning

(June 2008)

The June 2008 *Voice* magazine dealing with Poverty and Learning presented many ideas about poverty and how it relates to students and learning. Daily Bread Food Bank was impressed with the content and we would like to let ETFO members know about our educational program, which supports teachers in communicating these sensitive issues to students and encourages student involvement in the community. *Hungry City: Make Your Mark*, available at [hungrycity.ca](http://hungrycity.ca), includes free interactive workshops, guest speakers, annual student challenges, and downloadable materials.

**Rachel Singer**

Public Education Coordinator  
Daily Bread Food Bank

ETFO AND THE HAMILTON-WENTWORTH TEACHER LOCAL PRESENT

## HEALTHY HEARTS and MINDS 2009!

April 3-4. McMaster University, Hamilton

A regional conference focusing on strategies to support students in the areas of mental health, diverse classrooms, and emotional wellness. Topics include ADHD, Aboriginal learners, English language learners, and the ABC's of mental health.

**Keynote speakers: Dr. Glenn Dipasquale and Dr. Karyn Gordon**

Registration forms and information are available on the ETFO website, [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca)





DAVID CLEGG - President, ETFO

## A Flawed Process for Teacher Bargaining

On February 12, ETFO came to a difficult decision: we accepted a framework agreement for bargaining proposed by the provincial government.

Ultimately, the ETFO executive concluded that the government's proposal was the best we could achieve for our members in this very difficult time, as the Ontario economy continues to deteriorate. We accepted the deal despite the very flawed process that preceded it.

Last spring, we voluntarily and in good faith agreed to take part in discussions with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) that could have led to a provincial agreement. Ministry officials were at the table. We had the minister's assurance that there would be no artificially imposed deadline, no strips to our collective agreements, and no attempt to overturn arbitration decisions.

These assurances were to be broken in the months that followed. In late May, ETFO was unilaterally presented with a document with our name on it. The document, other than the name of the parties, was the same agreement that OECTA and their trustee association had signed. It did not reflect in any meaningful way the priorities of ETFO, contained strips to our existing agreements, and dealt with issues that had never been discussed in detail during any of the preceding meetings. On the first day of school both the Premier and the Minister of Education publicly declared that November 30 was being imposed as the deadline for reaching a provincial discussion table (PDT) agreement and threatened smaller wage increases for federations that did not meet the deadline.

At end of November, the government approached us to resume talks with the OPSBA. The November 30 deadline was extended to December 5.

ETFO worked hard and creatively within the finite resources that the government was prepared to invest. We crafted a proposal that addressed, to the best of our ability, the working conditions priorities of our members, the need to protect the livelihood of members facing job losses due to declining enrolment, and the need to respect the current economic climate that members are facing in the communities in which they live and work. Our proposal would have created 1,500 additional elementary teaching positions across the province to address the teachers' workload issues. It would have meant no ETFO member would have received less in-pocket salary over the four years of the agreement, but that at the end of four years our grid rates would have been less in relation to those of other teachers.

We were prepared to invest in our students, our communities, and our province.

The government did not dispute that our proposal was workable. However, it was rejected by OPSBA. OPSBA, in return, demanded strips to our collective agreements, including language that would have given principals control over teachers' preparation time. In essence, OPSBA held hostage to their management rights demands the salary increases the government was prepared to fund. Your employers did not demand these strips from secondary teachers' collective agreements. In the days that followed December 5, OPSBA misrepresented the costs of our proposal.

ETFO returned to its focus on local bargaining and told local boards that we expected to see full proposals tabled by February 13. I visited almost every local as we began to organize for a difficult round of bargaining that would likely have included the necessity to take strike votes and job action. The minister, meanwhile, threatened back-to-work legislation.

On February 10, Minister Wynne chose to present us with a take-it-or-leave-it proposal with a two-day deadline. Within hours of handing us the document, she made its contents public, an action that I believe created a poisonous environment. OPSBA was quick to sign, of course; in all of the proposals that were exchanged, the trustees, superintendents, principals, and directors who made up the OPSBA team would experience no personal loss.

This final government proposal contained none of the offensive strips of the OPSBA's December proposal. However, it reduced teacher pay increases by 1 percent in each of the first

two years, giving our members less than their colleagues in other federations. The government's offer matched the wage increases that we had proposed in December, but did not use the \$130 million freed up to create 1,500 jobs in elementary schools. In not doing so, the government is not just punishing teachers for not signing early, it is also punishing elementary students.

Funding provided per elementary student is hundreds of dollars a year less than that provided for secondary students. The government admits the gap exists but refuses to close it. On February 12 I publicly called on Premier McGuinty to finally commit his government to eliminating this gap. Without such a commitment, elementary students' learning conditions are inferior and elementary teachers' working conditions are poorer. We remain committed to changing that situation ... to closing the gap!








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GENE LEWIS - General Secretary, ETFO



## Provincial Agreement Now Supports Teacher Professionalism

The provincial agreement that ETFO agreed to on February 12 contains important provisions that enhance our members' professionalism.

Unlike agreements signed by other federations, this provincial agreement does not contain the preamble that ties collective agreement provisions to student success and increasing confidence in public education. ETFO members are committed to student success and to making our schools the best they can be. To attempt to enshrine these principles in collective agreements insults their professionalism and would have weakened their collective agreements.

Further, the agreement recognizes that teachers as professionals have a right to control their own preparation time. All of the preparation time negotiated is within the teacher's control. The December proposal of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) would have given principals the right to control any extra minutes negotiated. Members at local meetings underlined that this was offensive to them. They recognized that it was about principals exerting control over teachers.

The ETFO agreement also contains language that creates additional teacher jobs as a result of increasing preparation time. Boards cannot consider professional activity days as instructional days for the purpose of calculating preparation time. When a teacher misses preparation time as a result of being asked to fill in for an absent colleague, that time must be paid back. Members also receive two professional activity days (by 2010–2011) for assessment and completing report cards.

Supervision time was another contentious area in negotiations. Previous versions of the agreement, accepted by some federations, contained language that would have forced teachers to be in their classrooms supervising students an additional 20 minutes a day. That didn't happen. For ETFO members, the current requirements under Regulation 298 remain in force: teachers must be in the school for 15 minutes before class in the morning and five minutes before class in the afternoon, but how they use those minutes is up to them.

As well, in this new agreement, teachers' supervision time is limited to a maximum of 80 minutes per week in every school in every board. This will greatly reduce supervision time for some of our members. The superior entitlements of those who now have less than 80 minutes supervision duty will continue.

Limits have also been set on staff meetings. The agreement stipulates an average of one staff meeting per month of no more than 75 minutes.


Teachers are expected, not required, to attend.

The agreement provides boards with additional funding for professional development. It also makes possible potential improvements in maternity and parental leave benefits, recognizes the importance of health and safety, and stipulates that peer coaching is voluntary. If a teacher chooses to act as a peer coach or mentor, none of the information obtained during that process can be used to evaluate colleagues. Average class sizes in grades 4 to 8 will be somewhat reduced over the life of the agreement.

The terms of the provincial agreement will now have to be negotiated into every local collective agreement. Local issues remain negotiable as well, but it is intended that collective agreements will be reached by March 31, 2009. The degree to which your board responds in a positive way to local issues will be a good measure of the level of respect it holds for elementary teachers.

For many decades, elementary teachers have been treated with less respect than their secondary counterparts, perhaps because they are largely women, perhaps because they have chosen to teach young children. It was clear that the principals, superintendents, and directors who were representing OPSBA at the provincial discussion table talks were determined to roll back elementary teachers' rights and professionalism. As a result, public elementary teachers will end this contract with a salary that is 2 percent below that of every other teacher in Ontario. The principals, superintendents, directors, and trustees who were represented on the OPSBA negotiating team responsible for no agreement being reached in December will experience no similar loss in compensation.

# The Provincial Agreement:



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President David Clegg  
and members of the ETFO  
executive speak to the media  
on February 12.

BY CHRISTINE BROWN

**F**or a dramatic several days in early February, the activities of ETFO, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), and the Minister of Education were the subject of intense media scrutiny. Though that phase of press conferences, media releases, and speculation has now receded, the bargaining road still to travel is long, and by no means smooth. All told, there are approximately 80 local collective agreements for elementary teachers and occasional teachers that must be negotiated.

On February 10, the Minister of Education made a new offer to ETFO and OPSBA in an effort to reach a four-year provincial agreement. On February 12, following a meeting with ETFO, local teacher and occasional teacher presidents and the ETFO executive unanimously agreed to accept the terms of this agreement.

There is a certain amount of confusion around the sequence and substance of the events that have transpired over the past couple of months. It is important to clarify what really happened, since media reports sometimes missed important elements of this very complex story. In early December, the Minister of Education offered a carrot to OPSBA and

to ETFO. The carrot was the prospect of salary increases of 3 percent per year for four years, plus other funding enhancements. This offer, however, was conditional on the two sides, union and management, reaching a framework agreement on various central bargaining issues.

OPSBA, representing the local school boards, came back with a final proposal to take advantage of the minister's funding offer, but only in conjunction with strips to existing collective agreements. Among other things, OPSBA's proposed strips included 100 minutes of additional supervision duty per week for teachers and the loss of teachers' control over part of their preparation time.

Put another way, at no time was there ever an offer of 12 percent in salary over four years. There was only an offer of 12 percent plus strips to existing working conditions and severe intrusions into the professional autonomy of teachers. ETFO rejected this Trojan horse.

By contrast, the subsequent offer that was accepted by the union in February contains a lower salary offer (2 percent in each of the first two years, and 3 percent in each of the last two years), plus the other funding enhancements in the original offer. Crucially, there are

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**Christine Brown** is coordinator of protective services at ETFO.

# Next Steps



Nancy Kilgour, president of the Near North Teacher Local (left), and Marsha Jones, president of the Kawartha Pine Ridge Occasional Teacher Local, were among the local presidents who attended a special meeting to discuss the provincial agreement.

no strips to working conditions. Preparation time is increased by 40 minutes over the life of the agreement, and its use remains a matter of the individual teacher's discretion. The cap on supervision duties that members fought so hard for in the last bargaining round is not only maintained but strengthened. Attendance at staff meetings remains voluntary.

In addition, there will be a small reduction in class size in grades 4 to 8, funding for improvements in insured benefits, additional funding for occasional teacher salaries and working conditions, and other modest increases in funding in areas such as professional learning. In those collective agreements where there were not already limitations on staff meetings (e.g., limits on the length or frequency of such meetings), limitations now apply. Taken as a whole the provincial agreement is by no means what we had hoped for, but in the long run it is a step forward.

And now the really hard work begins. The provincial agreement is merely a framework for local negotiations, and its provisions will not come into effect until they are incorporated into local collective agreements. The provincial agreement came about through a voluntary process, and does not override existing bargaining rights under the Labour Relations Act.

Under the terms of the provincial agreement, the school boards and ETFO have agreed to a "no strikes, no lockouts" provision for the next several weeks. This time period is a win-

dow for negotiations during which the parties will focus on resolving the remaining issues at the bargaining table, which consist of items addressed in the provincial agreement itself and important local issues.

The time frame is short, and the parties face a significant challenge – a greater challenge, by the way, than our OSSTF colleagues, whose negotiators had to deal with far fewer local agreements. Should negotiations during that time period fail to bring about agreements, the union retains its rights to initiate job action once all the necessary steps under provincial labour law have taken place.

We entered these provincial negotiations in good faith, and in that same spirit we will be moving on to the next phase. ETFO bargains for settlements, not for strikes. We hope and expect that good collective agreements can be reached across the province for all teacher and occasional teacher bargaining units.

Here is what you can expect in the coming weeks:

- There will be an intense round of negotiating sessions happening all over the province; a great deal remains to be negotiated locally.
- For now, previously scheduled strike votes are on hold.
- You will continue to be informed through regular bargaining bulletins.
- The ETFO website will be regularly updated with bargaining news.
- The ETFO e-Newsletter will also be a good source of current information; if you are not already a subscriber, check the top right corner of the website's home page for information on subscribing.
- If all goes as anticipated, you will be notified that there is a ratification vote being held in your local sometime this spring. This will take the form of a membership meeting and an opportunity to discuss the contents of the proposed collective agreement.
- You can continue to support the bargaining process and your local bargaining team by staying informed, talking to your school steward and local executive members, and attending general membership meetings.

At the end of the day, our provincial labour laws give you, the member, the last word on the contents of the collective agreement that will govern your compensation, working conditions, and day-to-day workplace rights for the next four years. Whether you are a teacher or an occasional teacher, an experienced staff member or someone new to the profession – you have a stake in these negotiations. Their outcome will affect the fabric of your working life for years to come. 📌



## Members hear details of provincial offer



Photo: John Payne, Waterloo



Photo: Liz Ford, Niagara



Photo: Liz Ford, Niagara

In January and February ETFO President David Clegg met with locals to provide information on bargaining. Attempts to reach a provincial agreement failed in early December because ETFO refused to sign a deal that included contract strips. Members of the Niagara Local (above) heard that the December offer included increased supervision time for teachers, among other things. In mid-February ETFO agreed to a revised proposal that did not contain strips. Details are provided in the president's and general secretary's columns on pages 4 and 5, as well as in the collective bargaining column on page 12.



**Allison Lupton** and her husband, **Geoff Somers**, both ETFO members and accomplished musicians, provided a musical interlude at the **February Representative Council** meeting. In 2008, Lupton and her band were nominated for a Canadian Folk Music Award for their CD "Fly Like Swallows." The pair are members of the Waterloo Teacher Local.

**ETFO's Financial Management Conference for Women** in December attracted 100 participants who heard from financial guru and television host Gail Vaz-Oxlade, and attended workshops on a variety of topics including budgeting, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, and estate planning.



Photo: Yu-Ming Matsuura



## Violence is not part of any job description

On December 6 – the **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women** – the Ontario Federation of Labour launched a campaign to raise awareness about the impact of violence against women both in the workplace and domestically and the need for legislative reforms to support women. For example, the OFL argues that the definition for compassionate leave in the Employment Standards Act should be expanded so that abused women can access the 10 weeks of leave the act provides. This would give them time to address legal issues, find housing and child care, and to heal.

As part of the campaign, postcards were widely distributed. They will be presented to the government to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8. More information is available at [ofl.ca](http://ofl.ca).



Becoming a more skilled workshop presenter was the goal of 25 participants in ETFO's **Presenters' Palette**. The two-day training sessions provided aspiring presenters with an opportunity to improve their skills in planning and preparation, facilitation, and collaborating with colleagues with similar leadership interests.



**Building Capacity, Building Bridges**, a provincial equity conference, provided leadership training for women members interested in learning how to become local resource people and promote social justice, antiracist/antioppression education in their schools and communities. Forty-seven members attended.



Workshop leader Dolana Mogadime spoke with participants attending the second **Professional Learning Community for Women Members**. Through personal reflection, discussion of current research issues, and exploring the stories of immigrant educators, participants enhanced their understanding of equity issues and their skills in delivering an equity-based curriculum. Participants learned from each other by sharing their own immigration experiences and their teaching practices in culturally diverse Ontario schools.





## Members' Commitment Creates Successful Event

BY LESLIE FALLAIZE

Aboriginal Education Day at the Rogers Centre is an annual event that is the culmination of planning and hard work by ETFO's Aboriginal Standing Committee.

This year, as in previous years, committee members presented the Reader's Theatre in the Teaching Tent at the Rogers Centre. They were accompanied by Shkinwe (New Sound), a drumming and singing group that performed a variety of songs. The theme this year was "Character Education and the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers." The script was an adaptation of the story of how the Anishinawbe people came to be given the seven gifts of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth that enable them to walk the road of life in a good way, respectful of self, others, and the earth.

The Aboriginal Festival highlights Aboriginal peoples' perspectives and history in Canada. Education Day is carefully planned to include authentic teachings and presentations that engage participants and maximize their learning in ways that go beyond what can occur in a classroom. Every year thousands of people attend the event, which includes presentations, teachings, demonstrations, vendors, displays, music and dancing, great food, and more. The power and measure of true success for teachers is to see the delight of learning and participation on people's faces, knowing that ideas will be shared with others with enthusiasm. Such were the committee's rewards.

To prepare for the festival, standing committee members selected a theme that strongly links to the Ontario curriculum, decided on a Reader's Theatre script supporting the theme, and wrote curriculum-based Primary, Junior and Intermediate documents, including blackline masters for use in the classroom. The final product is a comprehensive ETFO resource,

in CD form, that educators who attend the Reader's Theatre can take back and share with their school and colleagues. Preparing and distributing the resource is part of the Aboriginal Standing Committee's goal to support the inclusion and integration of Aboriginal perspectives in education.

Finding appropriate resources to teach about Aboriginal peoples in Canada is not an easy task. The ready-to-use ETFO package alleviates some of that burden. Available online at [etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers](http://etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers), it includes Ontario curriculum links, background information, lesson plans, extensions, modifications/accommodations, evaluation methods, and blackline masters. When educators use this resource in a classroom they are meeting curriculum goals as outlined in *The Ontario First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* issued by the Ministry of Education, as well as character education goals outlined by the ministry.

*Chi migwich* (big thanks in Ojibwe) to the people involved in making positive change by integrating Aboriginal perspectives into classroom teachings. *Chi migwich* for your time, effort, and energy in helping others to better understand Aboriginal peoples, perspectives, and history in Canada. ▀

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Leslie Fallaize is chair of ETFO's Aboriginal Standing Committee and a member of the Durham Teacher Local.





## Local President, Playwright, and Producer

Photo: Karen Fisk



Karen Fisk is the full-time president of ETFO's Hastings-Prince Edward Local. Today she's known in her community not just as the head of the 702 member local but also as a playwright and producer.

Fisk wrote and produced *Silent Hugs*, a play about three young people whose parents are in the military. The play was staged at Belleville's Centennial Secondary School on November 29, in recognition of United Nations Day.

"The play is about the cycle of deployment for military families and its impact on kids," Fisk says. "The kids in it learned a lot, especially those not from military families."

Fisk says she was looking for a way to show support for military families in the area. A

visit to CFB Petawawa almost two years ago helped her understand the turmoil that military families and their children experience every time there is a repatriation or a deployment overseas.

"That's when I began talking about doing something here," Fisk says. She and Dr. Aruna Alexander of the United Nations Association talked about bringing in a play. "We decided that there probably wasn't anything and that we should do it ourselves," Fisk recalls. She based the play, her first, loosely on a short story she wrote for a writing class two years ago. Children's director and education advocate, Wendy Proctor, directed and local principal, Gail Brant, was the stage manager.

*Come Play In My World* was another part of the *Silent Hugs* production, which involved some 100 students aged four to 17. The production involved interpretive and cultural dances, folk songs, a Russian folk tale, and a flag-bearing ceremony. They played to a full house of 400 people. In addition, there were displays mounted by community groups, including the Trenton Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) and 8 Wing/CFB Trenton.

One of the positive outcomes of the event has been stronger connections to the community. The director, stage manager, and their assistants were all community volunteers. The MFRC was very grateful for the show of support, Fisk says with satisfaction. ▀



Photo: Luke Hendry, Belleville Intelligencer



Photo: Luke Hendry, Belleville Intelligencer



Karen Fisk, (centre) president of the Hastings-Prince Edward ETFO Local, was among a group of ETFO leaders who visited CFB Petawawa in 2007.



# Mozart for the iPod



BY ANDREA HERTACH

Feet shuffling to the beat, fingers snapping, tunes cranking – our students reluctantly stuff their iPods in their pockets as they enter our classrooms. Music is a passion for them: pop, rock, hip hop, and rap. They love the rhythms. They like the most controversial lyrics because they give voice to how they're feeling about school, bullying, young love, and the establishment. This is powerful stuff, and as teachers we should be tapping into it. Our classrooms need to be a place where this passion, this music, is accepted, discussed, and celebrated.

I've always been a little nervous about teaching music because I'm not completely comfortable with that area of the curriculum. And because I do see the importance of music for my students, I've always worried that I would not be able to offer them what they deserved: a really rich musical experience.

It's a good idea to seek support from other staff members when you'd like to grow in a



Andrea Hertach is a teacher with the York Region District School Board.



# Generation

subject area that is new or unfamiliar. There are many varied skills among staff in any given school. It's also exactly what I model in my classroom: I have often used drama as a way to bring students together by using team-building techniques, so that they can celebrate one another's strengths and support each other's weak spots. I have discovered the most powerful statement about lifelong learning is made by the teacher who, as experimenter, creates a powerful atmosphere in the classroom that says, "It's great to try something new."

I wanted to try something new: something big and bold, something musical. I wanted to develop a greater comfort level for myself in this subject and I wanted to offer my students something meaningful.

I went to see our resident music teacher, Julie Broughton. She comes to me for drama support and I visit her for music guidance. During our second year at Lakeside we produced a dramatic and musical version of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. And, as a result of Julie's well-timed phone call, our students performed at the Stephen Leacock Theatre in Keswick instead of the school gym, delighting families and the community.

This experience gave me the courage to try working with musical work that Julie suggested – Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Keeping in mind how important music is and what I might use to hook grade 5 and 6 students on Mozart, I decided the popularity of the *High School Musical* series would create the connecting bridge.

The class met in a circle. I told them we would be trying something new in music. We spoke a little about why music was important to us. I led them into talking about *High School Musical 1 and 2*. What made these movies and the music such a success? What makes them appealing? How are the films like a story? We talked about plot, characters, and setting. We brainstormed and made some notes about the basic format.

A few students identified other musicals they had seen: *Hairspray*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Anne of Green Gables*.

I told them I was going to introduce them to something even older: *The Magic Flute*, an opera written in the 1700s by a musical genius named Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. We would listen to the CD. It would sound different from the music they were used to, but I asked them to listen with open minds and to try to identify the similarities to *High School Musical*. I thought that if I could help my students hang on to something they were comfortable with they might be willing to stretch and explore something new.

After listening to the CD we jotted down notes on chart paper about the basic plot and the names of characters to refer to later. Working either with a group of friends or on their own, students could choose one of these activities:

1. Dramatize a scene from the opera.
2. Create a mural poster highlighting one of the scenes.
3. Design and create a 3-D model of a scene using modelling clay.
4. Create a PowerPoint presentation of Mozart's life.
5. Write a song based on the opera. (This added option was suggested by a student.)

Students got into five small groups: one each for drama, mural, PowerPoint, and two for modelling clay (they chose different scenes to depict). No one chose to write a song and that was alright. I had added it to the list even though I thought writing a song might be pushing a little too hard. However, I always like to leave options open and it is important to let your students aim high. They always surprise you!





# Mozart for the iPod Generation



I had one student who was “not feeling the music.” He did not want to listen to the CD or participate in the followup activity. He chose to go to the quiet room where the special education teacher was working with small groups of students. I was puzzled. This was an outgoing and adventurous child who played guitar and had performed at fairs in a band with his brother and friends. When my students went to French, I went to see him in the quiet room. He did not seem able to tell me why he didn’t want to participate beyond saying that “Mozart’s not my thing.” I had to proceed carefully. I didn’t want to alienate him, but he had to understand it was his job as a student to make the best of an assignment even if it wasn’t his favourite task. He said he didn’t care and I could go ahead and give him a failing mark for music. I let him go to French.

I tried to encourage him the next day. No luck. The other students continued on in their groups. My reluctant musician went to the quiet room again. I shared the problem with the special education teacher and she put on the CD so he could listen to it.

That night I called his father and asked for his support because I wanted his son to have a good experience and a great term in music. I suggested that perhaps at home that night he could write a song (he was the student who had made this suggestion). He would need to write the song by himself, as he now no longer had a group to work with because all the others had almost completed their group work. I told him I hoped he would be able to help his son find a way to connect enough to produce something, so that he could participate in our large-group sharing. The father was extremely supportive and understanding.

The next day that boy came to school with a little chess game he had created by gluing paper characters to corks. Each of the pieces was a character from the opera and he gave a basic description of the plot. I smiled and said, “This is totally cool.” He smiled back.

It was impressive and rewarding to watch students working in groups, discussing the plot and the characters, sharing their opinions, and really immersing themselves in Mozart’s work. When they each presented to the whole group it was clear they had had a rich experience. And when the reluctant student joined us in the end, I was reminded of the lyrics from *High School Musical*, “We’re all in this together!” 🎵





# Innoteach: Using technology for professional learning



*Innoteach*, as the name suggests, is about technological innovation – in the classroom and in how ETFO offers professional learning programs. We developed the *Innoteach* project to capitalize on the ability of new technologies to span distance and time. The project brought together a group of teachers who created multimedia learning objects that incorporate innovative uses of technology to enhance student learning and illustrate new ways of thinking about teaching and learning.

Central to *Innoteach* is an online community of practice housed on a web portal that allows the sharing of documents and ideas. This virtual community lets teachers interested in innovation connect with colleagues, develop new approaches, share successes and challenges, and “push the envelope” of current educational practice.

Using a process known as a critical friends group, which is a social collaborative model, *Innoteach* engages participants in sharing one or more learning objects (lesson plan, multimedia resource) that they have created, critiquing and refining each other’s work, making revisions based on peer critiques, and participating in a face-to-face and online learning community. Participants examine their learning objects critically to ensure that each one includes compo-

BY JANET MILLAR GRANT AND ANNE RODRIGUE

nents on differentiated learning, and instructional and assessment strategies. They frame their learning objects from a research and best practices perspective. They document their learning using a Wiki, a web portal that allows all participants to access each other’s work.

## ***Innoteach* Projects**

*Innoteach* participants created a variety of learning objects for use in the classroom. Each of these includes a reflective component for teachers and techniques for creating inclusive classrooms. Each learning object helps to address a specific issue or challenge faced by Ontario teachers.

- **Classroom podcasts:** Students communicate their knowledge and understanding of a variety of writing forms by creating a radio show. Students conduct research, develop and publish content, and prepare transitions and audio effects to create one full-length radio show.
- **Nonfiction digital storytelling:** Students create a 60-second public service announcement video about maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This learning object combines grade 5 Ontario curriculum expectation requirements from health, language arts, and art. Adjustments can be made to accommodate other grade-level curriculum expectations.
- **Bringing language to the big screen:** Students use and expand their French speaking skills and perfect their written French as they bring their imagined movie to life on the big screen through the use of movie editing software. A final DVD cover adds a professional touch.





- **N’attendez pas, téléphonez aujourd’hui!** : Students in grade 7 core French create commercials using imperative verbs. They learn how to use imperative verbs to give instructions or convey a sense of urgency, and about the creative process, by participating in the stages of preproduction, production, postproduction, and celebration. Students apply their learning as they write and orally present their commercials to class.
- **Graphic tales of crime in medieval times:** Students bring to life a story they have written using puppetry and technology. At the end of this unit plan students use Comic Life software to create a graphic story about a medieval peasant accused of a crime.

### Learning objects for teachers

*Innoteach* began as a meeting place for a small group of teachers. But starting this spring, their learning object materials will be posted on the ETFO website so that teachers anywhere in the province can view them or download and share them. Learning objects will also be available in both audio and video formats via podcast/RSS feeds for use on computers and on portable devices such as MP3 players and video iPods. A feedback loop will allow teachers to add their comments and ideas, and share ways of adapting the materials for use in other classrooms.

The author of each classroom project posted on the *Innoteach* site will be part of a learning object for teachers. Each participant will be featured in a video or narrated presentation that will also provide supporting documentation such as curriculum expectations, templates, samples, related read-

ings and research. Of particular interest are statements on the impact of innovative practices on student learning.

### A unique opportunity and challenge

Using the format of a professional learning community, the processes of collaborative work, and the opportunities for reflection afforded by online interaction takes teachers into uncharted territory. Asking us to revise lesson plans so as to demonstrate our thinking to others forces us to answer a number of questions. What is the research base surrounding the problem we are attempting to solve and the solution we arrive at? How have we accommodated the needs of individual students? What assessment practices are best aligned to this learning object? How did student learning change as a result of innovative practice? What would we do differently?

The participants of *Innoteach* thought that collaborative learning and peer review helped them to take an existing innovation and make it even better:

- “It has made me look at my teaching differently, trying to really focus on making each unit of study as complete and detailed as possible.”
- “While it was difficult at times to listen to other people making constructive criticism of my work, it was helpful in terms of teaching me to look at my work differently.”
- “We generally teach in isolation. Especially as a French teacher, I have no grade team members to talk through projects. This allowed others to ‘talk through’ ideas with me.”
- “It opened my eyes to how my ideas can be reformed.” ❖

## Innoteach: Using technology for professional learning

# Stop-Motion Animation

## Digital storytelling in the classroom



BY DAN GRANT

### The challenge

I love movies and I love books. I have always thought that movies were an excellent way to engage students – particularly boys – in literacy. I decided to use digital storytelling tools and techniques to actively engage my students in telling their stories.

As a result of work they did in media literacy classes, my students became excited by stop- or slow-motion animation film. After discussions, the class and I decided that a stop-motion animation project was something that everyone would enjoy and get a lot out of. That this project would be new ground for all of us, me included, motivated and empowered my students.

The students' challenge was to create two stop-motion films, fiction and nonfiction, over the course of the school year. They also were to produce a 60-second public service announcement about the importance of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.

My challenge was to coordinate 28 students working in small groups on different stop-motion projects at the same time and in the same place.



### Setting the stage

#### Curriculum expectations

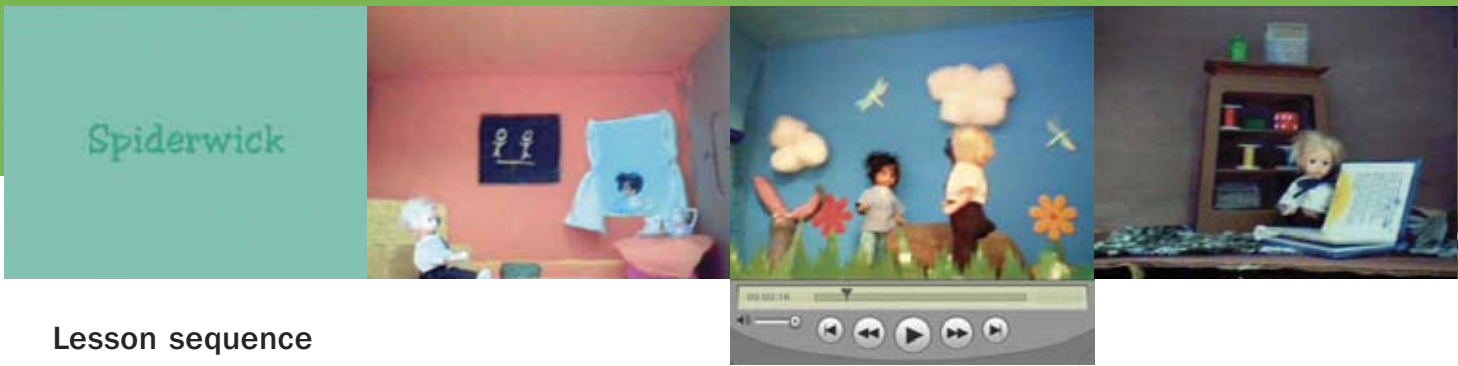
As a homeroom teacher teaching my own core mathematics, literacy, science, and social studies, I am able to develop lessons that combine the various subject areas. This project also cut across different curriculum expectations, and by not restricting my students to isolated periods of instruction I was able to use my classroom time much more effectively. (For specific curriculum expectations, see the sidebar.)

Although created for a grade 5 class, this project could be modified to meet the expectations of other grades. I am currently using this strategy with two Intermediate classes and have received positive feedback on this approach from secondary school consultants.

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**Dan Grant** is a grade 5 teacher with the York Region District School Board. He has shared his digital storytelling activities through ETFO's *Innoteach* project and took part in a Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat webcast on nonfiction writing.





## Lesson sequence

### 1. Developing media literacy skills

Before we began, we spent a fair bit of time examining the language and techniques of film. We also identified the three stages of creating a film: preproduction, production, and postproduction.

Initially, students estimated that 20 percent of their time would be spent in preproduction activities, 60 percent in production, and 20 percent in postproduction. When they were finished, they revised their assessment: preproduction took up 75 percent, production 10 percent, and postproduction 15 percent, which shows that students underwent a substantive change in their understanding of the importance of planning and preparation.

I scaffolded their learning in much the same way that I did when they were learning how to write fiction and nonfiction texts. I had started the year using *6+1 Writing Strategies* and I wanted this learning to be reflected in their project. I made connections between the filming process and literacy throughout the year and found that students were better able to relate to their literacy studies as a result.

Students learned how to analyze the techniques media professionals use to get across their ideas and influence consumers and spectators. When we spent time analyzing print advertisements and television commercials, students became engaged. The commercials for Sony Bravia televisions featuring Plasticine bunnies in New York City and the one with colourful balls were very popular ([adsoftheworld.com/media/tv/sony\\_bravia\\_bunnies](http://adsoftheworld.com/media/tv/sony_bravia_bunnies) and [adsoftheworld.com/media/tv/sony\\_bravia\\_balls](http://adsoftheworld.com/media/tv/sony_bravia_balls)). What is great about these commercials is that Sony provides interviews and a behind-the-scenes look at the ideas behind the commercial and the media messages. This commercial got students excited about doing their own stop-motion piece. I happened to have quite a bit of Plasticine in the classroom, and I allowed the students to explore how to shape and create with it.

To help understand storyboards we looked at filmmakers' storyboard meetings. Movie DVDs often have storyboards as an additional feature and we looked at storyboards from *Spirited Away*, *Shrek*, *The Incredibles*, and *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were Rabbit*.

Students were able to see that professionals had to brainstorm and sell their ideas to their peers. This created an opportunity to discuss the importance of oral communication skills

and how they relate to real-world activities. Next, students watched a Participaction commercial and drew a storyboard based on it. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participaction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participaction))

### 2. Using audio to express mood and emotion

We discussed the effective use of voice, music, sound, and special effects. Students watched movies and television shows to appreciate the importance of sound in establishing mood and atmosphere and took part in skits to demonstrate the use of sound and voice.

To practise digital storytelling skills, students created an audio recording that combined a short piece of narration and music. They received a copy of "The Great Detective Story" by Stephen Leacock and a handout (page 23) describing the creation of an audio recording using Audacity, a free, easy-to-use recording and editing software (available at [audacity.sourceforge.net](http://audacity.sourceforge.net)).

I modelled how to read the story with meaning and effect while recording it in Audacity. The software illustrates the voice track, and students were very interested in seeing what it looked like. I then imported a music track into the narration.

The Freeplay Music website ([freeplaymusic.com](http://freeplaymusic.com)) provides music samples in .mp3 and .aac formats that educators and students can download for free for educational purposes.

Students narrated and recorded their own version of "The Great Detective" choosing appropriate music, a process they really enjoyed.

### 3. Stop-motion animation: preproduction

Students created two stop-motion animation projects during the school year: a nonfiction project that explained the concept of equivalent fractions (a curriculum unit they had recently completed) and a sequel to the *The Spiderwick Chronicles*.

Working in small groups, they brainstormed ideas and created rough scripts and storyboards. They were instructed to include as much information as possible in their first storyboard, including group roles and responsibilities, props, and titles. Students pitched their ideas to me and I provided feedback and suggestions, which they incorporated. Students then pitched their stories to their classmates, who provided



Directors: Elisha & Anfisa



additional feedback that they also incorporated into their final storyboards.

#### 4. Stop-motion animation: production

I wanted to give all of my students a chance to actively participate in the stop-motion filming process. But how would I manage class time and resources? What software and hardware would I need to create films for a web or video iPod?

I discussed these questions with the students, so that they would get a sense that this was no small undertaking. Ultimately I decided on webcams, which connect directly to a computer's USB port, and I bought six of them and 10 microphones on eBay for about \$100. This meant a number of groups could work on their projects at the same time and most importantly at their own pace. The webcams proved to be pretty rugged and worked extremely well.

We chose to use MonkeyJam, a freeware application that allows users to capture images from a webcam, camcorder or scanner and assemble them as separate animation frames. ([www.giantscreamingrobotmonkeys.com/monkeyjam/download.html](http://www.giantscreamingrobotmonkeys.com/monkeyjam/download.html)).

I begged and borrowed computers from around the school, set up the software, and showed students how to use it. I gave them a lot of creative freedom and time to explore their ideas.

#### 5. Stop-motion animation: postproduction

Students exported the completed film files to Microsoft Movie Maker and added titles, music, and special effects. Students already knew how to use Movie Maker and completed this stage in about two to three periods.

## Curriculum Expectations

### Mathematics

- Read, represent, compare, and order whole numbers to 100 000, decimal numbers to hundredths, proper and improper fractions, and mixed numbers
- Demonstrate and explain the concept of equivalent fractions, using concrete materials

### Writing

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

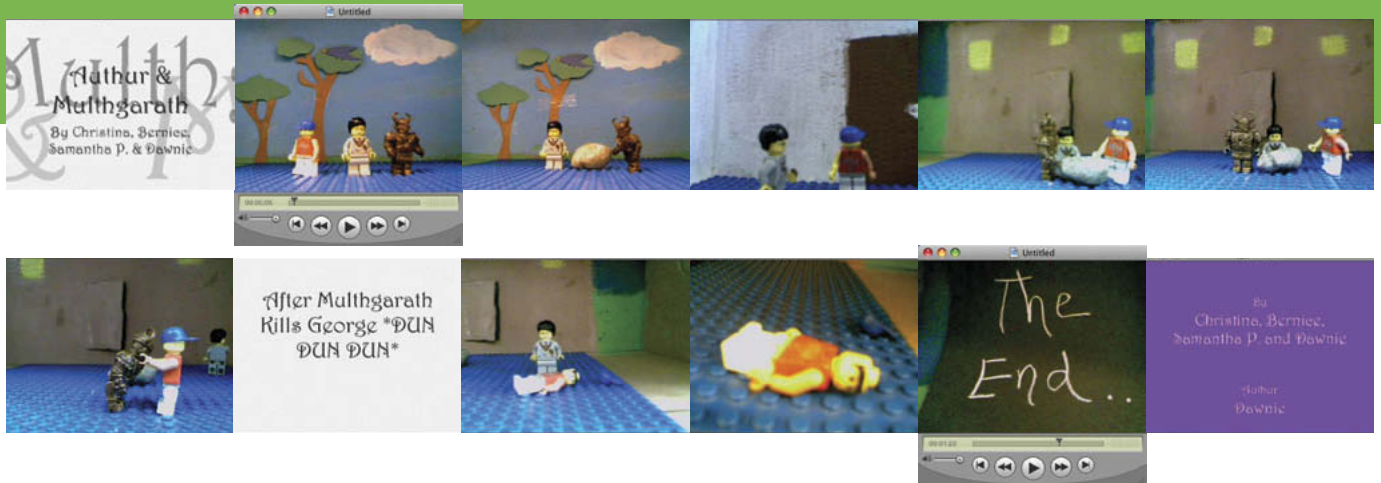
### Media Literacy

- Create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques
- Reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.

### Arts – Drama

- Solve problems through drama and dance, working in large and small groups and using various strategies
- Use different forms of available technology to enhance work in drama and dance





## Accommodations and assessment

I created rubrics that I used to guide and assess the students. To meet the differing student needs in my class I made the following accommodations:

- Teacher-selected work groups paired students of differing abilities to facilitate peer support .
- Direct teacher support and instruction was provided as needed.
- Support staff helped with storyboard clarity and timelines.
- Colour-coded expectations were clearly visible in the classroom.
- Project information, instructions, and assignment due dates were posted on the classroom blog.
- Students received differing amounts of time to complete each stage.

### Resources

- Black, Holly and Tony DiTerlizzi. *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Culham, Ruth. *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide*. Scholastic Inc. Available at [shop.scholastic.com](http://shop.scholastic.com)
- Fryer, Wesley A. "Stories to Go" in *TechEdge*, Winter 2007, 24-26.
- Généreux, Annie Prud'homme and William A. Thompson. "Lights, Camera, Reflection! Digital Movies: A Tool for Reflective Learning." *Journal of College Science Teaching*, July 2008, 21-25.
- Herrington, J., and L. Kervin. "Authentic Learning Supported by Technology: Ten Suggestions and Cases of Integration in Classrooms." *Education Media International* 44(3), 217-36.
- Kervin, Kristy. "Explaining the Use of Slow Motion Animation as a Teaching Strategy to Develop Year 4 Students' Understandings of Equivalent Fractions." *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* 7(2), 100-106.

## Outcomes and student reflections

This activity effectively extended student learning. All of the software and hardware was easily accessible to students at home. It was interesting and satisfying to see students bring to class and share their own independent stop-motion films. Students who typically were not fully engaged in classroom activities were among the most enthusiastic participants who went off in their own filming directions.

## Equipment and materials

- Microsoft webcams
- Windows-based HP notebook computers
- microphones
- Microsoft Movie Maker
- Audacity recording software
- MonkeyJam digital pencil test program that is also suitable for creating stop-motion movies
- storyboard planning sheets – see the sidebar
- variety of art materials – Plasticine, construction paper, markers, etc.
- simple animation props – Lego bricks, small dolls, toy cars, stuffed animals



# Student Handout

## Document à remettre aux élèves

### Recording Your Audio Tracks

Audacity software allows you to create audio recordings with multiple soundtracks that could include narration, music, and audio effects. Audacity merges these tracks into a single file that can be played on an MP3 player or on Microsoft Media Player. The free Audacity software and MP3 utility download can be found at [audacity.sourceforge.net](http://audacity.sourceforge.net).

You should create your own audio recording independently. Work with Audacity to record a short piece of text. *It is important to rehearse* reading the text with inflection and meaning before recording it.

Your recording is saved as an .aup file that must be exported as either a .wav or .mp3 file before it can be opened in a media or MP3 player.

The next step is to select a music track from Freeplay Music that reflects the mood and feel of the passage you have chosen. Add special sound effects to your recording to make it even more interesting and engaging.

1. **Rehearse** reading the passage.
2. Record passage using Audacity.
3. Under **File** pull down menu **Save project as...** recording in **My Documents** using a name that is unique, for example, mr grant passage 1. It is *highly recommended* that you save the project onto a memory stick.
4. Locate mood music on Freeplay Music – [freeplaymusic.com](http://freeplaymusic.com).  
**Do not** use copyrighted materials (music or videos from established artists such as Usher or the Jonas Brothers).
5. Select and save a track that roughly equals the length of the narrated passage.
6. Under the **Project** pull-down menu, click on **Import Audio Track** to import it into your narrated passage.
7. Check your sound levels to make sure one part doesn't drown out the other. You can also make changes to the track at this time.
8. Optional: add other audio tracks, such as sound effects.
9. **Save Project.** It wouldn't hurt to save it on a memory stick as well as on the computer.
10. **Export as a .wav file.** This will merge your recording into a single audio track. You could export this as an .mp3 file but it takes an extra step and will require a utility.
11. Your recording is complete. Your file can now be opened using Windows Media Player and can be imported into other programs such as Microsoft Movie Maker or PowerPoint.

### Enregistrement de vos pistes audio

Le logiciel Audacity vous permet de réaliser des enregistrements multipistes pouvant comprendre de la narration, de la musique et des effets sonores. Le logiciel Audacity fusionne ensuite les différentes pistes en une seule pouvant être écoutée à l'aide d'un lecteur MP3 ou du Lecteur Windows Media de Microsoft. Vous pouvez télécharger gratuitement le logiciel Audacity et des utilitaires MP3 depuis le site <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>.

Vous devez entièrement créer votre propre enregistrement sonore par vous-même. À l'aide d'Audacity, enregistrez la narration d'un court texte. *Il est important de vous exercer* à lire le texte avec l'intonation et l'emphase voulues avant de l'enregistrer.

Votre enregistrement est sauvegardé sous forme d'un fichier .aup qui doit être ensuite exporté en tant que fichier .wav ou .mp3 avant de pouvoir être lu par un lecteur MP3 ou multimédia.

La prochaine étape consiste à choisir une pièce musicale de Freeplay Music qui reflète l'atmosphère et l'émotion du texte choisi. Vous pouvez ajouter des effets sonores particuliers pour rendre votre enregistrement plus intéressant et plus vivant.

1. **Exercez-vous** à lire le texte choisi.
2. Enregistrez-le à l'aide du logiciel Audacity.
3. Sous l'onglet **File**, enregistrez votre pièce avec la fonction **Save project as...** dans le répertoire **My Documents** avec un titre particulier, par exemple, « m. granger passage 1 ». *Il est fortement recommandé* de sauvegarder une copie de l'enregistrement sur une clé USB.
4. Recherchez une musique d'ambiance sur le site Web de Freeplay Music – [freeplaymusic.com](http://freeplaymusic.com).  
**N'utilisez pas** de pièces musicales protégées par droit d'auteur (musique ou vidéos d'artistes populaires comme Usher ou les Jonas Brothers).
5. Choisissez une pièce qui a environ la même durée que votre narration et sauvegardez-la.
6. Dans le menu déroulant **Project**, cliquez sur **Import Audio Track** pour la transférer dans votre enregistrement.
7. Vérifiez les niveaux sonores pour éviter qu'une des pistes ne masque l'autre entièrement. À cette étape, vous pouvez aussi modifier la piste.
8. Étape optionnelle : ajoutez d'autres pistes audio, comme des effets sonores.
9. **Sauvegardez votre projet.** Il est conseillé de sauvegarder votre projet à la fois sur l'ordinateur et sur une clé USB.
10. **Exportez votre piste en tant que fichier .wav.** Ceci fusionnera vos différentes pistes sonores en une seule. Il est possible de l'exporter en tant que fichier .mp3 mais cela nécessite une étape supplémentaire et un utilitaire.
11. Votre enregistrement est terminé. Votre enregistrement peut dès maintenant être lu à l'aide du logiciel Lecteur Windows Media et peut être ensuite exporté dans d'autres logiciels comme Movie Maker ou PowerPoint de Microsoft.





# Elementary Teachers Collaborate for Change

This past summer, as it does every year, ETFO provided a wide range of Summer Academy courses for its members. This year, funding from the province once again allowed for a larger than usual number of courses and participants.

ETFO's Summer Academy courses are designed to appeal to members at all stages of their careers. There are courses for specialist teachers – such as arts, music, and drama – and courses for generalists, all of whom want to enhance their classroom practice.

In this article, workshop presenter Stanley Hallman-Chong describes a Summer Academy course with a unique perspective and a unique goal: to bring together a group passionate about teaching social studies and form a subject association for elementary teachers.

The group's achievement is a unique example of the change that can happen when elementary teachers, supported by their federation, join together with a common purpose.

# Focusing on the needs of social studies teachers

BY STANLEY HALLMAN-CHONG

The Summer Academy course *Becoming a Junior Social Studies Leader* was the most exhilarating three days of my career as an instructional leader. It reminded me of what is most meaningful about being in the classroom. As one participant said, “It’s the opportunity to discover with the students and to have them teach me.”

Our group ranged from 20-year veterans to teachers just beginning their careers. They had a wide range of professional knowledge and experience. The occasion offered a wonderful opportunity, “to share the interest and experience of colleagues,” as one teacher put it. Another remarked, “This was the most empowering professional development I had ever had. I not only had my values confirmed, but I learned that teaching is wide open.”

We began with activities devised by education researchers Keith Barton and Linda Levstik of the U.S. and Peter Seixas and Carla Peck from the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta. Working in groups, the participants sequenced pictures of a village as it changed through time. In this manner, we discovered a misconception that children often apply to early civilizations and medieval societies: that history

“always progresses from worse to better.” One group said, “That’s why we have to help children see multiple perspectives, that things did not always get better and that there were groups whose lives got worse as time went on.”

When asked to sort through cards representing key events in Canadian history, the teachers identified certain themes as significant and worth teaching. These included the concept of moral judgment, told through the stories of people wronged by different agencies of the government, and the concept of continuity, investigated through unresolved conflicts. One group articulated the need to understand the concept of agency as applied to marginalized people so that they are not categorized merely as passive victims. A critical understanding of environmental impact was another key concept that people agreed should be integral to social studies.

How apparent are these concepts in the expectations of the Ontario curriculum? One teacher pointed out that they seem obscurely hidden in the specific expectations. Should they not be out front in the overall expectations; that is, should they not be stated as the main goals of the various social studies units?

Throughout the three days, we developed a new concept of evidence. Using primary sources such as documents, music, artefacts, and even skeletal remains, teachers were challenged to reconstruct life in the remote past. At first a few balked and felt uneasy teaching about people of whom so little is known: “What if the students make the wrong inferences? If I



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don't know all of the facts I cannot help them." Eventually, however, many teachers rated the use of primary sources as the most enduring teaching strategy they had learned. One said, "I'm convinced now that even children can be archaeologists."

Participants used every opportunity to confirm Jerome Bruner's maxim that "children can be taught any subject given the appropriate methodology and challenges." Unanimously, they also agreed that the traditional assessments of social studies that often test no more than "the facts" need to be replaced by assessments that develop critical thinking. Open-ended challenges that demand criteria-based judgments should be the foundation of teaching social studies. For example, after learning about different Aboriginal groups, students might be given a "critical challenge." Presented with masks from diverse Aboriginal cultures, they could try to identify the community of origin. They would be assessed according to how well they used their knowledge and how well they corroborated their judgments by using evidence. For example, one group of participants speculated that students might respond to the challenge by saying: "This mask must have been made by the Iroquois, because it is made from corn husks and corn was a staple of their culture."

Throughout the Summer Academy, it became increasingly clear that no one has better insight into the capabilities of students – their emotional readiness and their intellectual potential – than practising teachers. One teacher was particularly moved by a drama and music activity exploring the experience of Richard Pierpoint, the first Black settler of Upper Canada. She noted that "children can handle the most highly charged story if we pay attention to their emotional needs." Others said, "Children deal with the death of loved ones and parental separation. If we are sensitive, we can help them come to an understanding of practically anything."

The Ontario Teachers' Federation has recognized the Ontario Elementary Social Studies Teachers' Association. The group is reviewing Primary and Junior Social Studies Additional Qualifications courses proposed by the Ontario College of Teachers. The association currently has representatives from 14 Ontario school boards. A web page and a curriculum renewal survey is available on the group's blog at [www.oessta.blogspot.com](http://www.oessta.blogspot.com)

Many participants said that their "brains ached from the new ideas" and that their "emotions were shaken by the challenges and introspections" of the three days. They also said that they were more eager to teach social studies now than ever before.

The subject of social studies was originally conceived a century ago as a way to cultivate citizenship through developing national pride. Is this purpose compatible or in conflict with the critical edge of contemporary social justice education?

In the end, we agreed that Ontario's elementary teachers of social studies need to form an association to clarify big ideas and promote new strategies in this area of the curriculum. We resolved to lobby the ministry and other institutions for the official recognition and resources it provides to other subjects.

In the next two years, when the ministry reviews this subject's curriculum, we want the voice and perspective of elementary teachers to be heard. ▣

#### Sources

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- Case, Roland, and Penney Clark. *The Anthology of Social Studies; Volume 1: Issues and Strategies for Elementary Teachers*. Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 2008.
- Seixas, Peter. *Benchmarks of Historical Thinking: A Framework for Assessment in Canada*. Available at [histori.ca/benchmarks](http://histori.ca/benchmarks).



BY KEVIN ADAMS



# Carbon-Offsetting: Ecosystem 2000 to the rescue

Scott Young Public School is a grade 5 to 8 school in Omeme, a community west of Peterborough. The school is the home of an award-winning environmental education program.

Our school is situated on 13 hectares, roughly five of which are occupied by the school itself. The Trillium Lakelands District School Board initially planned to build a high school on the remaining eight hectares, but when circumstances and plans changed, these lands were put to good use: hands-on education.



Our Ecosystem 2000 project was born in 1994. Our target date for positively affecting the local ecosystem was five or six years; therefore, the name was a great fit. The project's main goal is to create habitat and food for a variety of species. As the largest school tree-planting project in Canada, Ecosystem 2000 is extensive and complex. However, students see it more simply: they are working outside not inside, and they are improving the environment, not just studying it.

The last ice age left a large three-hectare drumlin (an elongated whale-shaped hill formed by glacial action) that rests on the trail in our site's northern section. Students and the community use this area throughout the year for dirt biking, four-wheeling, hiking, relaxing, and tobogganing and sledding. The view from the top is spectacular. The Pigeon River weaves through the rolling hills and valleys into the village's small lake, to meet up beyond the horizon with the Trent-Severn Waterway.

The site's educational benefits are enormous. It is used by art classes studying Group of Seven painters; science classes looking for insects; hands-on topography lessons; cross-country and track and field training. But the favourite activity for students is building three-metre-high quinzies (snow shelters) in  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  weather during three days of outdoor classroom learning.

Just beside our school, a neighbouring farmer ploughed under 0.2 hectares of grass in the spring of 1995. That fall Intermediate students planted 1,500 seedlings (a variety of species, from the Ministry of Natural Resources Orono Nursery). Today, these trees are five to six metres tall. Over the years, my homeroom students have thinned out this area,





transplanted hundreds of trees, and trimmed branches so it is easier to walk underneath. This is our shady reading area, a priceless and relaxing environment, especially appreciated when the tree canopy provides full shade from the summer heat and sun.

We have come full circle with this project, as two of the original students involved are now teachers in our school system. They assisted with planting this area as grade 8 students and later were my teaching partners in grade 7 at SYPS.

We have asked our pupils to become stewards of the land. This project is student-based: they get down and dirty. Each of our 240 students was involved with this season's planting; grade 7 and 8 students were teamed with those in the Junior grades. They are walking the talk: thinking globally and acting locally.

Over the course of the past 15 years students have

- planted more than 13,000 seedlings, as well as 750 large trees and 1,200 shrubs, vines, and wildflowers
- created the shady reading area
- constructed and put up bat- and birdhouses
- transplanted and thinned developing trees.

My goals for Ecosystem 2000 in 2008 are the same as they were in 1994: enhancing an existing ecosystem and restoring the aging and declining rural treelines. Over the past 14 years, students have extended the existing treeline a further 20 to 60 metres, creating an enlarged corridor for animals and birds. Students have developed a better understanding of land-use issues and environmental concerns, and are better prepared to

become stewards of their lands and communities. Planting the seeds of knowledge, skill, and empathy within the youth of today is key to future environmental protection .

### Money, Money, Money

Funding is an essential component of our project: we have experienced four large-scale planting years and 10 years in which only my homeroom classes planted trees and seedlings, 100 each year. Funding has now topped \$30,000, and we have secured another \$30,000 over the next three years from several private and government agencies. This spring students will be involved in the largest and most complex activity to date: planting 1,000 large sugar and red maple trees and 1,000 seedlings of a variety of species; erecting osprey nests on land and in the water; creating a butterfly garden; planting three species of milkweed; and enhancing our shady reading area.

From the very beginning, our project has been fortunate to have acquired friends, advisors, and financial backers who have been crucial to its success: Ken Reid Conservation Area, Ministry of Natural Resources, Lindsay and Peterborough offices of the Community Wildlife Improvement Plan, Rockwood Forest Nursery, Pine Needles Nursery, Maple Leaves Forever, Toyota/Evergreen Foundation, TD Bank Friends of the Environment Foundation, Tree Plan Canada, Ottawa's Citizenship and Environmental Fund, Shell Environmental Fund, ETFO provincial office and, most importantly, the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

The CWF has been involved from the very beginning, and many of my ideas were lifted or piggy-backed from their publications or from *Green Teacher* magazine. Last June, the CWF awarded us lifetime funding; as a full partner in our project the CWF will do the paperwork and teachers can focus on student learning.

The students' hard work, enthusiasm and environmental ethic have been recognized and rewarded with three National Wildlife Week Awards, as well as a YTV Environmental Award nomination and a Queen's Jubilee Medal. 🏆

## green spot



**Ready, Set, Green!** is a collection of tips, techniques, and resources compiled by the Ministry of Education for Ontario educators. The guide includes a collection of successful practices, environment project ideas and activities, and ready-made resources you can access to develop lesson plans. The guide is available on the MOE website, [edu.gov.on.ca](http://edu.gov.on.ca).

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant: *Penser vert, agir pour l'avenir!*, 2007.

# It's Your Right

BY CHRISTINE BROWN

**M**embers with disabilities want nothing more than the opportunity to do their jobs – just like any other school board employee. It really is that simple. The law facilitates that very basic human impulse: under Ontario's Human Rights Code, employers must accommodate employees with disabilities, unless doing so would require operational changes so drastic that they would endanger the viability of the enterprise. The Act states that employees with disabilities must be accommodated to the point of "undue hardship."

Many members who live and work with disabilities are unaware of their legal rights to accommodation. They may also be reluctant to come forward and initiate the process to put these accommodations into place. Unfortunately, stigma against individuals with disabilities, however subtle or unintentional, is a reality in our workplaces. The following two scenarios illustrate how the process of initiating accommodations might work.

## Scenario 1

You are a new teacher, and you also happen to have a learning disability. When you were at university, there was an accessibility office which ensured that students with disabilities – physical disabilities, sensory and learning disabilities; disabilities related to mental health; and all other types of disabilities – received the assistance they needed to overcome the barriers they faced in their academic lives. In your case, this meant that the university arranged access to special software, and gave you additional

time to write some of your exams.


You successfully completed your studies and were hired by a school board. In addition to taking on the responsibilities of your new job – and we all understand how steep a learning curve that is – you appear to have landed in an environment in which barriers are everywhere and help is nowhere in sight.

## Scenario 2

You are a teacher with 15 years of teaching experience, and you have recently been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. Business as usual in your job is no longer possible. You want to continue teaching. You know that you are a good teacher who can do an excellent job, but your work environment is nearly impossible to navigate and you face pain and obstacles every day.

The solution is the same in both these cases. You can contact your local ETFO office and ask about the supports available to members with a disability. (Contact information is available on our website [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca). Click on Links in the upper right-hand corner.) Alternatively, you can call the provincial office (416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836) and ask for the Professional Relations Services person on-call.

The PRS staff person will ask you about the difficulties you are facing at work and will explain what information you may need to supply about your disability. You will receive the support you need to help ensure that your rights are being enforced and your needs are being met.

Your rights are real, including your right to keep doing the job you love. 

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



# What becomes *official* knowledge in our schools? Paying attention to what and how we teach

BY SHERRY RAMRATTAN SMITH

**A**s educators we are skilled, reflective professionals. Building knowledge is our business. Ministry of Education mandates provide the structured guidelines we follow, yet several questions come to mind when we think about the official curriculum of our schools and the pursuit of equity and inclusion:

- What is the knowledge we seek to build in our schools and communities?
- How do we select what knowledge is emphasized?
- How do we deliver it?

Educational theorist Michael Apple offers three ways of classifying the kinds of knowledge that we want students to learn. He explores the concept of “knowledge” through three key words: *that*, *how*, and *to*. *Knowledge that* is factual information, such as the capital city of a country. *Knowledge how* focuses on building skills, such as knowing how to use a library or how to inquire into a specific topic, such as a country’s history of unionization. *Knowledge to* is dispositional knowledge, and often includes norms and values that guide our conduct. Examples of *knowledge to* include knowing to be honest, to have pride in one’s racial heritage, to be a life-long learner, or to be intellectually open-minded.

When processes of knowledge-building focus too much on *knowledge that*, what is taught may be reshaped to be safe and less controversial. In short, knowledge takes on a less critical stance, yet we expect critical learners to emerge from our schools.

For over 10 years ETFO members have been coming together to create a variety of curriculum support resources focused on social justice, with the goal of broadening the scope of equity in our schools. Members also produce a wide range of workshops that build skills that promote equity and inclusion. The ideas come from members who pay close attention to the lived experiences of the students they teach and identify key concepts related to equity and social justice. When members come together to write curriculum or create workshops, they work to widen the scope of official knowledge by emphasizing Apple’s classification of *knowledge how* and *knowledge to*.

Two ETFO members offer glimpses into ways in which the official curriculum of our schools is strengthened by including their personal experiential knowledge as well as by incorporating diverse learning experiences that support the official curriculum.

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



### Shernett Martin

"I am a desperate seeker of truth. However, I understand that one person's truth may differ from another's. The more I know about a particular topic, historical event, or issue, even the ones that challenge my views, the more extensive is my understanding as well as my ability to act, speak out, organize, and make a difference. When teachers open the vault of critical teaching and impart to their students permission to explore, investigate, and think critically, we empower students to deepen their learning.

"I am a community worker who became a teacher. The work I was doing with young people in the community led me to the classroom where, I felt, I could be a greater agent of change. I take into the classroom my years of community service and my views about equity, and social justice. These views shape not only my classroom instruction, but my teaching practice and relationships with my students and colleagues. It is these views that I hope are preparing my students to question the *hows* and the *whys*, and to in turn seek their own truth and become unabashed in sharing their knowledge."

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#### Source

Apple, Michael, with Susan Jungck. "Whose Curriculum Is This Anyway?" *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age*. New York: Routledge, 1993, 118-42.



### Larry Beardy

"I have worked with teachers and students from kindergarten to university level. How I teach, how I model, and how I encourage others to learn and teach follows a basic principle. I say, 'Listen to yourself, your teachings, experiences, knowledge and gifts from within that are real and true.' What I mean is that the passion and expertise for building knowledge lie within each of us.

"Knowledge comes from our ability to listen and learn in every sense and goes beyond words, visuals, audio, and actions. My greatest strengths as a person, teacher, and team player have been the gifts and skills I was given by others around me, including my elders, friends, colleagues, family, and community. I try to find ways to share my gifts with my students. I teach them about the gift of listening and the usefulness of storytelling as a powerful and traditional way of teaching and learning. I share the importance of the arts in engaging in challenging issues related to social justice. I share the relevance of using my Native language in situating my cultural identity. Travel and prior experiences have also contributed to the knowledge I bring to situations. Personal connections we make with our students can enrich our lives and help us to teach in more meaningful ways. In summary, teaching is learning, learning is building knowledge, and knowledge grows through living." ❏



# Professional Relations Services— Help When You Need It

BY PRS STAFF



Your local ETFO office and the provincial office are available to provide help when you need it.

Call 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836 and ask for the PRS officer on call.

Contact information for your local office is available on our website, [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca). Click on “Links” in the upper right-hand corner.

**E**ducating children is a complex task carried out in a highly regulated and litigious climate. As an ETFO member you should know that experienced knowledgeable staff are available to help you when you are having difficulties.

Professional relation services (PRS) staff help smooth the way by intervening when needed, by advocating for you, and by providing education and advice. PRS staff can advise you about your options, responsibilities, and rights in relation to a wide variety of workplace issues. PRS staff provide education programs and resources to help prevent such problems from arising in the first place.

## Member protection

Here are some of the areas in which PRS staff provide member support:

- teacher performance appraisals (TPAs)
- criminal allegations related to employment responsibilities
- difficulties with students, other staff, parents, and school administrators
- questions of ethics and professionalism
- Ontario College of Teachers complaints
- Employment Insurance
- maternity and parental leaves
- discrimination and harassment (on the basis of race, sexual orientation, disability, etc.)
- long-term disability (LTD)
- resignations and terminations
- return to work/accommodation issues
- stress and sick leave
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) matters
- health and safety issues

## Criminal allegations

Criminal allegations are the most serious professional issue members face. It is important to know what to do, and what not to do, if you are contacted by the police or Children's Aid Society (CAS) regarding an allegation against you.

1. Do not participate in or consent to an interview.
2. Make no statement to anyone regarding the allegation/charges.
3. State: "I am willing to cooperate but I am unable to comment until I contact my federation and legal counsel."
4. Call ETFO Professional Relations Services staff at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836 and state that your call is *urgent*.

## After-hours emergency assistance

### What is an emergency?

- Police or CAS are on the scene.
- You are facing criminal charges for an alleged criminal offence directly related to the performance of your professional duties.
- You are at risk of being arrested or incarcerated.

### What should you do?

Call provincial office. A recorded message will tell you how to get through to an operator. The operator will ask you a few quick questions and, if appropriate, will contact a criminal lawyer and connect you immediately.

## Member education

Educating members and helping to prevent professional difficulties is a major ETFO goal. PRS staff have developed a broad range of resources to help you understand your rights and responsibilities.

### PRS Matters

*PRS Matters* deals with topics that affect members: professionalism, professional boundaries, EQAO testing, conflict resolution, teacher performance appraisal, bullying and cyber bullying, reporting workplace accidents, voluntary extracurricular activities, electronic communications. *PRS*

*Matters* is mailed to all local presidents and school stewards. You can also access it by going to *etfo.ca* and clicking on "Advice for Members."

### Voice

Every issue of this magazine has a column devoted to professional relations issues. ETFO members receive a copy at their home address.

### Additional resources

*After the Chalk Dust Settles* – discusses wellness and professionalism

*It Can Happen to You* – a video about dealing with allegations of misconduct

*Parent-Teacher Relationships: Putting the Pieces Together*

*Pregnancy & Parental Leave: A Guide to Rights & Responsibilities*

These items are available from shopETFO at *shopetfo.etfo.ca*.

*A Member's Guide to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board* can be downloaded from *etfo.ca*>*Advice for Members*.

### Workshops and conferences

PRS staff offer local workshops throughout the year. These focus on a variety of issues, such as: managing difficult workplace situations, pregnancy and parental leaves, managing workload and stress, dealing with allegations of assault, parent-teacher relationships, professional boundaries, safe schools legislation, performance appraisal, professionalism, harassment and discrimination.

Contact your local ETFO office to find out what is planned in your area. You can find the contact information for your ETFO local by going to *etfo.ca* and clicking on "Links" in the upper right-hand corner. ❖

Information about provincial conferences is posted on *etfo.ca*.



# Look Deeper at Global Issues

## Global Education Resources

- **Free Guest Speakers**  
discuss Ghana, Vietnam, Ethiopia, the World Food Crisis and Global Environmental Changes
- **Lessons & Videos**  
curriculum-linked (K-12)
- **Special Events**  
including [giftsthatmatter.ca](http://giftsthatmatter.ca)

[www.chf-partners.ca](http://www.chf-partners.ca)



Founded in 1961, CHF is a non-profit organization dedicated to enabling poor rural communities in developing countries to attain sustainable livelihoods.

Contact our Global Education Coordinator at 1 (866) 242-4243 ext. 229 or [GlobalEd@chf-partners.ca](mailto:GlobalEd@chf-partners.ca)

## A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO ALL *Grade One Teachers*



Earlier this school year, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, in partnership with Honeywell, distributed its Billy Brings his Buddies safety kits, free of charge, to every school in Canada. This initiative provided grade one teachers with a Buddy System lesson plan, allowing them to teach a critical safety lesson to this young age group and meet curriculum outcomes.

If you received a copy of this kit, we would like your assessment of the effectiveness of the Billy Brings his Buddies child safety strategy in your classroom.

*Your input is vital to the ongoing success of this program.*

Was the kit user-friendly? Was it an effective teaching tool? Are there recommendations to change or improve the safety kit? If you chose not to use it, why was that? Whatever feedback you can provide, we would welcome it. Please visit: [www.billybuddy.ca](http://www.billybuddy.ca) and click on the contact button on the left hand side to submit your comments.

As the Canadian Centre for Child Protection moves forward with its mission to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to the Canadian public, your input on this initiative is an invaluable part of ensuring continued excellence in our programs.

*Thank you in advance for your cooperation!*

If you didn't receive a copy of the safety kit, we would be pleased to send one out to you free of charge. Or, you can access the lesson online by visiting [www.billybuddy.ca](http://www.billybuddy.ca).





BY HILDA WATKINS

# A New Vision for Provincewide Testing

**FOR THE PAST YEAR** the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) has worked on a new vision for student assessment in Ontario – one that examines other means of measuring student achievement and demonstrating accountability to the public. The principal thrust of the new vision is to move to some form of random sample testing. Random sampling could be done as a pilot and would involve only a selected number of students or schools participating in provincial tests. It would reduce the constant pressure on every school to prepare for the tests and would avoid the nefarious practice of ranking schools.

Currently, Ontario students participate in several national and international assessments in reading, mathematics, and science. These tests assess a random sample of students in each jurisdiction. The most recent results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) demonstrate that Ontario students are among the top performing in the world. Interestingly, our students' achievement was highest in science, an area that has not been a subject of provincial testing and the pressures it generates. These results engender public confidence in Ontario schools and their capacity to provide a world-class education.

Large-scale testing compromises sound pedagogy. Formative assessment is the most beneficial for students because it monitors individual student performance and provides immediate feedback.

Standards-based testing measures the students' status on curriculum expectations of which there are far too many – several hundred per grade in language and mathematics. Although EQAO tests only contain a small subset of these expectations, teachers do not know which ones will be assessed in any one year. Accordingly, they are forced to cover all expectations in breadth but do not have time to teach them in depth.

EQAO testing can also compromise the richness of students' educational experiences. Testing and test preparation take away important instructional time. Furthermore, EQAO results arrive at the school after the child has moved on to another grade, so they do not provide meaningful or timely feedback on how students can improve.

EQAO tests measure a very narrow span of a child's potential. Their focus diminishes respect and support for the many other areas in which

students can excel, such as technology, the arts, and physical education. Every teacher understands the importance of a child's self-esteem. Unfortunately, many students experience setbacks due to anxiety and loss of self-confidence when faced with the prospect of not meeting arbitrarily set achievement levels. (Originally EQAO tests had an achievement standard of level two. The previous Conservative government changed the standard to level three. Interestingly, international testing agencies have always set the standard at level two.)

Teachers are well aware that the province requires data to make educational policy decisions and to guide educational initiatives. The information gained from a random sample of students would be as relevant as the results of testing all students. The net effect would be considerably less stress for students, parents, teachers, and educational workers. There would also be significant savings, funds that could be reinvested to provide services for students with special needs, and English language learners, and to reduce class size in Junior and Intermediate grades.

After eleven years of experiencing EQAO testing, it's time to review the organization's mandate and look for a new vision of student assessment that includes a role for provincial data but which relies more on the ongoing formal assessment and reporting provided by classroom teachers. ▮

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





BY EMILY NOBLE

# 2009 Global Action Week

## Join millions around the world for The Big Read

The Global Campaign for Education is calling for an exciting action on April 22, **The Big Read**, which we hope will unite millions as did **The World's Biggest Lesson** last year.

Last year, our **World's Biggest Lesson** was a resounding success with more than 11,600 Canadians joining 8.8 million campaigners across the world. The Lesson is now officially recorded in the *Guinness Book of Records*.



Literacy for All 1 in 6 adults can't read this GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION

As a member of the Canadian Global Campaign for Education, the Canadian Teachers' Federation is proud to have played a pivotal role in

the success of this worldwide initiative. On a personal note, I thoroughly enjoyed teaching the lesson at Carleton Heights Public School in Ottawa, along with Paul Dewar, a federal MP who is a former teacher and ETFO member.

The Biggest Lesson was the signature event of Global Action Week, which is organized annually to raise awareness that 75 million children are currently denied a quality education, and 774 million adults remain illiterate.

Despite some progress since last year's campaign, these realities persist:

- One in four women is unable to read and write.
- An uneducated woman is 50 percent more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS.
- An illiterate woman earns much less than one who can read and write.

So important is literacy that research has shown that in some countries children born to literate mothers are 50 per cent more likely to

survive past the age of five. Furthermore adult literacy is key to achieving universal primary education as literate adults rarely raise illiterate children.

## The Big Read: Collective action

Join us in this year's Global Action Week April 20–26. The theme is “Youth and Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning.”

I personally invite you to join in **The Big Read** with other teachers in Canada. You can read stories from **The Big Read** book, add your own stories, and sign your name at the back of the book to ask the Canadian government to do more to ensure that everyone around the world is able to read and write. Your class can then forward these signatures to the Canadian Global Campaign for Education, which will in turn forward them to the Canadian government.

To download the electronic version of **The Big Read** book along with curriculum, supporting resources, posters, and stickers, visit the Canadian Global Campaign for Education web site [campaignforeducationcanada.org](http://campaignforeducationcanada.org).

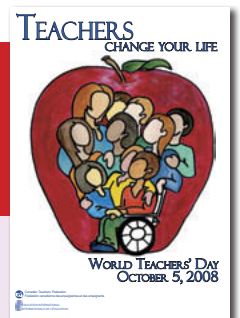
Join us in reminding the federal government of its commitment to work toward Education for All goals by 2015. As teachers, you can help us make this year's Global Action Week the best ever. **!**

**Peace:  
Teach it.  
Live it.**

Is this year's theme  
for the **World Teachers'  
Day poster contest**.

**Deadline for entries is May 1.**  
(teachers only; no student entries)

For more information  
go to [ctf-fce.ca](http://ctf-fce.ca).



Emily Noble is president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

# reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews

## Hiding Edith: A True Story

KATHY KACER

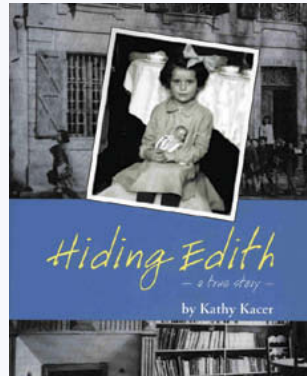
Toronto: Second Story Press  
151 pages, \$13.95

### Reviewed by Greg Harris

In *Hiding Edith*, a biography of Edith Schwalb, Kathy Kacer expands upon her brilliant use of the Holocaust theme, found in works such as *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser* and *Clara's War*.

*Hiding Edith* primarily and vividly focuses on Edith's life from the time she was six years old in 1938 through 1945. Edith's Austrian-Jewish family kept one step ahead of the Nazi regime until her mother decided to send Edith and her younger brother, Gaston, to safety. The children had to hide their faith to avoid being discovered as Jews. Edith and her brother eventually lived in a boarding school in Moissac, France. All of the town's residents knew that the school was hiding and protecting Jewish children.

Kacer treats younger readers (grades 6 to 8) humanely by keeping the gore out of the descriptions and photographs. Still, she provides accurate descriptions and photographs of a fearful time and tells the gripping story of a young girl who felt abandoned by her mother, whose family life was destroyed, and who was forced to live with the real fear that things could get worse.



Kacer gracefully concludes her book by providing an epilogue and author's notes that include updates about Edith and Gaston and their adult lives in Toronto.

*Hiding Edith* is an excellent selection for the elementary school library in the biography or Holocaust (940) sections. Kacer creates a brief set of imaginary conversations and interactions between Edith and another character, Eric, and *Hiding Edith* would be a dynamic selection for literature circle readings and conversations. *Hiding Edith* would be an excellent read-aloud at the Intermediate level.

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**Greg Harris** is a teacher-librarian with the Simcoe County District School Board.

## Remarkable Women Writers

The Women's Hall of Fame Series

HEATHER BALL

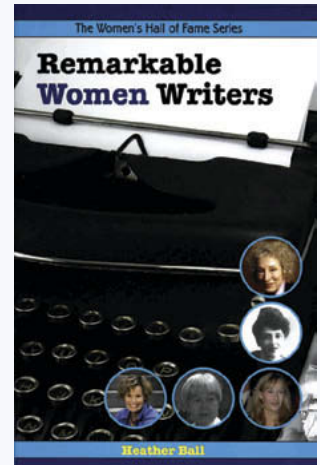
Toronto: Second Story Press,  
2006  
\$10.95; 100 pages

### Reviewed by Debra Menary

Heather Ball has created a resource that is both informative and readable. Along with its wide cross-section of writers, the book provides an equally broad range of answers to the questions of why these women became writers, and why they experienced such resounding success.

Ball discusses the challenges throughout history of being a female writer, and these obstacles are highlighted in the case of British novelist George Eliot, the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, who felt she could not publish as a woman. Her example is an inspiration, even in our more progressive times.

Students and teachers of history, social studies, language arts, and social sciences will find this book appealing. Each chapter is concise, yet they all provide enough background to place each writer clearly in her own time and place. Readers learn much about the social influences that affect writers of any era or social echelon.



Heather Ball gives us a well-rounded perspective of each writer's life. In certain instances, such as J.K. Rowling and Judy Blume, younger readers will recognize the writers and possibly relate more easily to them than they do to less well-known or current writers. However, the message of perseverance and holding fast to one's dreams in the face of adversity is strong in the biographies of all 10 women writers.

Teachers and students of the middle grades and beyond will be spending their time well when they read and share these life stories.

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**Debra Menary** is a teacher-librarian with the Simcoe County District School Board.



# reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews

## The Longlight Legacy

Three novels by  
DENNIS FOON

### The Dirt Eaters

(2003, 320 pages, \$12.95)

### Freewalker

(2004, 400 pages, \$12.95)

### The Keeper's Shadow

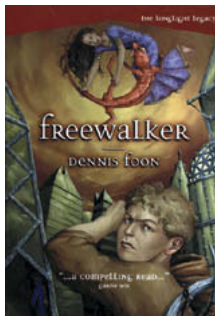
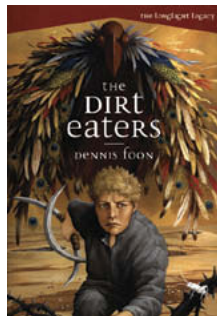
(2006, 432 pages, \$14.95)

Toronto: Annick Press

#### Reviewed by Brad Hughes

Recommended for readers  
ages 12 to 14.

I thoroughly enjoyed this thrilling fantasy trilogy. Volume one, *The Dirt Eaters*, introduces 15-year-old Roan of Longlight, who survives a brutal attack on his village in



a post-apocalyptic world. We also meet Saint, the leader of a band of warrior-priests; Lumpy, a boy scarred by Mor-Ticks; and Alandra, a healer with visionary powers who guides Roan in the Dreamfield.

In volume two, *Freewalker*, Roan, Lumpy, Alandra, and a group of rescued children, the

Novakin, establish a community called Newlight. When the children fall into a mysterious coma, Roan must journey to the City to find a cure. He discovers that the sinister Keepers and their ruler, Darius, have installed his sister, Stowe, as the icon of the City.

In Foon's final installment, *The Keeper's Shadow*, Roan and his comrades prepare for the inevitable battle against the Keepers of the City. The fate of the Novakin, Stowe, and the inhabitants of this devastated world depend on Roan's determination to unite diverse peoples against a common enemy.

Raised in Detroit, Dennis Foon has lived in British Columbia since 1973. He is an award-winning playwright

and writer for television and film. In this trilogy he weaves fantasy, science fiction, mythology, and spirituality into a memorable tapestry. His style is rich yet succinct, the characters compelling, and the plot fast-paced but thoughtfully developed.

There are many (sometimes sophisticated) themes for teachers and students to explore: leadership, friendship, violence and nonviolence, the cult of personality, environmental issues, medical ethics, dreams and visions, family ties, free will versus destiny, imagining the future. The series invites wonderful connections between the text and the self, other texts and media in the same genre, the world around us, and the world to come.

Teacher's guides for *The Longlight Legacy* are available at [annickpress.com](http://annickpress.com). The author's web site is [dennisfoon.com](http://dennisfoon.com).

Brad Hughes teaches Intermediate Core French at Laurelwood Public School in Waterloo.

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# trivia

BY PETER HARRISON

## “And the Months turned into Years ...

I have been playing with some numbers and letters, where I consistently replace each digit in a particular number with a specific letter.

So, for example, the number 75563 might be encoded as WEEKS and 8903 might become DAYS using one particular code.

In a different code, I have written down two numbers as MONTHS and YEAR.

To my surprise, I have calculated that over the period of YEAR years there are exactly MONTHS months!

### What ON EARTH is the question?

Please send in your decoded numbers for ON EARTH.

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 March 31, 2009.

### Solution to our last puzzle:

## Worth remembering

Harry's account number is

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

Winners are chosen by lottery from all the correct answers received. They are:  
**Ashley Macijewych**, Upper Grand  
**Shawn Crowell**, Thames Valley  
**Patrick Moyer**, Waterloo

*Congratulations!*

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– Amanda-Mae Cooper  
MEd student



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# calendar

**March 26-28, DENVER**

## **43rd Annual TESOL Convention**

Denver, Colorado  
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.  
[tesol.org](http://tesol.org)

**April 2-4, TORONTO**

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

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

**April 24-26, BRANTFORD**

## **OFHSA Annual General Meeting and Conference**

Ontario Federation of Home & School Associations  
Best Western Brant Park Inn and Conference Centre  
[ofhsa.on.ca](http://ofhsa.on.ca)

**April 26-28, TORONTO**

## **OCEA Spring Conference 2009**

**“Reflecting on Practice: Designing for Success”**  
Ontario Co-operative Education Association  
The Westin Harbour Castle. [oceam.on.ca](http://oceam.on.ca)

**April 27 - May 1, CANADA-WIDE**

## **The Spirit of Mandela Week**

Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund  
For more information, contact the NMCF (Canada): [mandela-children.ca](http://mandela-children.ca)  
1-866-763-1453.

**April 30, CANADA-WIDE**

## **The Governor General’s Awards for Teaching History**

Teachers, students, or parents can nominate the work of individual teachers or groups of teachers.  
Go to [historysociety.ca/gga.asp](http://historysociety.ca/gga.asp); email [prixggawards@historysociety.ca](mailto:prixggawards@historysociety.ca); or call 1-800-861-1008

**May 2, TORONTO**

## **2009 Annual ONBIDA Conference**

**Dimensions of Dyslexia**  
The International Dyslexia Association  
Ont. Branch; [conference@idaontario.com](mailto:conference@idaontario.com)

**May 7-9, OSHAWA**

## **OSEE 2009**

**“It’s Elementary – Shaping Our World”**  
Ontario Society for Environmental Education  
University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Oshawa; [osee.org](http://osee.org)

**May 21-23, ALLISTON**

## **OCTE Conference 2009**

**“Unpacking the New Curriculum”**  
Ontario Council for Technology Education  
Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston.  
[octe.on.ca](http://octe.on.ca)

# classifieds

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