

# Voice



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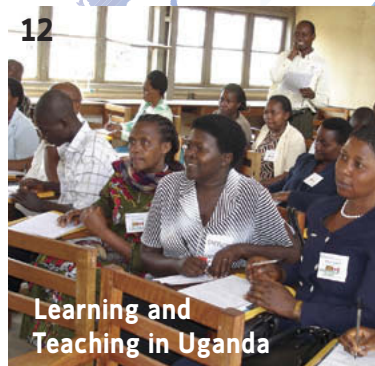
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On our cover: ETFO member and Project Overseas participant, **Leyla Kfoury**.

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## Members Making a Difference

Every day in schools around the province ETFO members make a difference, as teachers, occasional teachers, and education and professional support staff.

Many ETFO members are also active in their communities making a difference by working as volunteers and community leaders. The focus of their commitment may be local, provincial, or national.

This issue highlights the stories of members whose commitment is international: ETFO members who are participants in Project Overseas, a Canadian Teachers' Federation initiative. These members use their expertise to help colleagues in developing nations develop their teaching skills. Those stories begin on page 11.

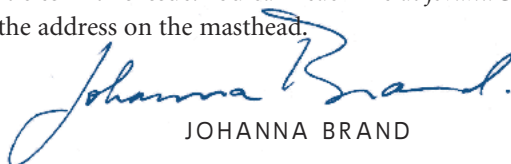
There are many different ways in which ETFO members connect with colleagues and students in other nations.

The ETFO Humanity Fund is another way for members to help internationally. Nine locals are members of the fund, and have negotiated agreements with local school boards so that their members can contribute by payroll deduction. Other locals and individual teachers make contributions to the Humanity Fund by hosting events, making in memoriam and other donations. Information about the Humanity Fund is available at [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca) ► *Advocacy and Action* ► *World Issues* ► *ETFO Humanity Fund*.

Individual teachers have also taken a variety of approaches. For example, Jim Carleton (Winter 2006) and Mali Bickley (April 2008) have both written about their classroom projects that connect students with their counterparts abroad. You can access these past articles on the *Voice* page on our website by going to [etfo-voice.ca](http://etfo-voice.ca). Other teachers have been involved in fundraising, in setting up programs abroad, and in other volunteer efforts. We highlight just some of these teachers and their initiatives on page 16.

Also in this issue, Scott Tate describes how he and his colleagues are using technology to enhance cultural learning for Aboriginal students (page 9). John Hawley describes a professional learning community he initiated at his school and the impact it had (page 26).

As the stories in *Voice* illustrate, ETFO members do remarkable things in their classrooms. We always welcome your feedback. Take a minute to send me an email with your comments about the articles in this issue. You can reach me at [jbrand@etfo.org](mailto:jbrand@etfo.org), or by traditional mail at the address on the masthead.

  
JOHANNA BRAND

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

Now there's an easier way to access *Voice* articles online.

[etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca) will take you directly to the *Voice* archives on the ETFO website.

You will also find 'Guidelines for Writers' and 'Information for Advertisers' there.

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# letters to the editor

## Re: Mozart for the iPod Generation, February 2009

Kudos to Andrea Hertach! Her willingness to share how she is working on an area of curriculum that is not her number one strength is a model for the rest of us. Andrea's reflective practice and collaboration with other colleagues are characteristics we can all emulate as we constantly strive to expand our own professional practice. Thank you for your authentically written piece, Andrea!

Vera C. Teschow,  
Peel District School Board

## Classrooms for FSL teachers

Now that I am retired and doing some occasional teaching, I see things from a different point of view.

First, retired teachers who are working occasionally still like to keep a hand in to feel useful, and see their colleagues once in a while. We all don't have a full pension; many quit, took out their pensions, and stayed home with their children. Now many are caring for their elderly parents and have retired early to get flexible hours to accommodate doctor's appointments and emergencies.

Secondly, I see a disturbing trend in the core French classroom. When I taught, I was fortunate enough to have my own room so that the children could be exposed to word walls and illustrations of vocabulary, and there was space for art work and centres, and to leave their unfinished projects. Now, many core French teachers are doing primary planning as well, and they have to lug science equipment etc. with them, perform experiments, clean up the home teacher's room, and find a spot to store and display student work. When I think back to the fun we had making papier-mâché volcanoes that really worked, dinosaur models from real bleached bones, and splatter-paint winter sports pictures, I feel sad that students are missing out on the fun learning experiences. Please, school boards, give your core French teacher a permanent space where they can foster creativity and make the subject seem like it matters to someone.

Marilyn Bellin, occasional teacher,  
Thunder Bay



## Write to the editor

Let us know your views about the articles we publish.

Simply send your thoughts (300 words maximum) in an email to [jbrand@etfo.org](mailto:jbrand@etfo.org); or go to [etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca) and click on 'Submitting a Letter to the Editor.' You may also send a letter by regular mail to the address on the masthead.

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DAVID CLEGG - President, ETFO

## When Information Is Dangerous

Recently the Ministry of Education launched, with no prior notice, a new website, the School Information Finder. It's a site that pulls together information about schools, their EQAO scores, and selective demographic characteristics of students and their families. An original feature on the site called "My School Bag" invited users to compare schools.

ETFO and other education stakeholders have voiced strong objections to the site. Here's why.

The basic premise of the site is that a school's performance on EQAO province-wide tests is an accurate reflection of how well it educates a child. Nothing could be further from the truth.

From the beginning EQAO tests have promoted the idea that student learning, and by extension the worth of a school, can be measured by a single test administered at a single point in time. Many educators have debunked this notion. Experts in the field of assessment reinforce what teachers themselves know to be true: the best student assessment is that done by a classroom teacher. The best source of information for parents is that classroom teacher.

Nevertheless the government, pandering to a public hooked on standardized tests, continues to spend millions every year (some \$32 million last year) on EQAO tests. The right-wing think tank, the Fraser Institute, then provides its rankings of Ontario schools based on its interpretation of EQAO scores. The EQAO itself says its test results should not be used to in this way. In the past Education Minister Kathleen Wynne has agreed.

Ignoring the advice of its own agency and of educators, and contradicting the cautions the minister herself has given, the government created The School Information Finder website to allow the public to shop for schools on the basis of EQAO test scores and limited socio-economic data.

The demographic information for each school invites social profiling and contradicts the founding principles of the government's own new "Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy". It has the potential to divide communities.

Moreover, providing information in this way devalues all schools and the work of teachers by reducing their importance to mere EQAO scores. It ignores the richness of our programs and the myriad ways teachers engage students.

At a recent meeting of the Minister of Education's Roundtable, Annie Kidder, executive director of the parent group People for Education, took the lead on behalf of a broad-based coalition that ETFO has been working with and asked the Minister to take down the website. Representatives from the Ontario Home School Association and the Catholic Parents Association supported her request. So too did all the teacher federations, the Council of Deans (representing the faculties of education) Catholic and French trustees associations, even the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. Every organization expressed their revulsion for the website and its implications.

The Minister, faced with unanimous opposition, has offered only to disable the "school bag" icon, remove the information for very small schools, and set up a working group to determine what should be added to the site to make it acceptable.

ETFO and other stakeholders believe that the site cannot be "fixed" this way. Nor will adding additional information be helpful, given that the premise of the site and the information currently there is so prejudicial to public education.

ETFO members should be appalled by the ideology that this government has embraced and the vision it suggests for public education and the future of Ontario.

We have taken further steps to make the government aware of our views and those of the stakeholder groups. We will be calling upon members for their support. The ETFO website will offer the most up-to-date information on the struggle I urge you to visit it.



GENE LEWIS - General Secretary, ETFO



## The Next Challenge

**B**y the time this magazine reaches you, most teacher and occasional teacher locals will have negotiated collective agreements with their boards. The deadline for reaching agreements was April 24. (Agreements for members who are educational and professional support personnel were reached in December.)

The next challenge for ETFO members and locals will be to ensure that boards fully honour their obligations under the new collective agreements.

You will recall that the provincial discussion table agreement provides for 80 minutes of supervision time for teachers in every school in every board. (The superior entitlements of those with less than 80 minutes of supervision time will continue.) You will also recall that ETFO members are not subject to the additional supervision requirements placed on elementary teachers in the other federations. For ETFO members the current requirements under Regulation 298 remain in place: teachers must be in the school 15 minutes before class in the morning, and five minutes before afternoon classes begin, but how they use that time is up to them.

In addition, the ETFO agreement provides teachers with an additional 10 minutes of preparation time per week, beginning in September 2009. This will be increased each year, and by the end of the collective agreement, August 31, 2012, teachers will have 240 minutes. When a teacher loses preparation time because of a principal's directive, that time must be repaid.

The provincial agreement also contains limitations on staff meetings: an average of one per month, no more than 75 minutes long. Teachers are expected, not required, to attend.

These and other collective agreement provi-

sions that represent improvements in working conditions will only be realized in practice if members demand that they are adhered to. There will undoubtedly be principals who will seek to get around them. These principals will plead hardship for one reason or another; or they will ask for a one-time-only exemption; or they will prevail on the goodwill of staff, asking teachers not to demand their rights so as to keep relationships harmonious.

Good relationships are key if schools are to be successful. And collective agreement provisions are key if teachers are to improve their working conditions. Good relationships and adhering to the requirements of the collective agreement are not mutually exclusive. There are principals who understand how to ensure that the collective agreement is respected and who have excellent relationships with their staff. They accomplish this by involving staff in problem-solving and decision-making, and by recognizing that a collective agreement is a legally binding document with which they must comply.

Members working with principals who do not take this approach must be prepared to say no, to ensure that they do not unwittingly compromise their own rights. Based on our experience in this bargaining round, you can be sure that boards and their representatives will try to strip from future collective agreements those rights that you ignore.

Saying no is not a sign of disrespect to principals, nor does it demonstrate a lack of professionalism. In fact, it is the principal who puts a teacher in the position of having to say no to a request to ignore the collective agreement who is demonstrating a fundamental lack of respect for the role of elementary teachers.

# ...and still we rise Conference



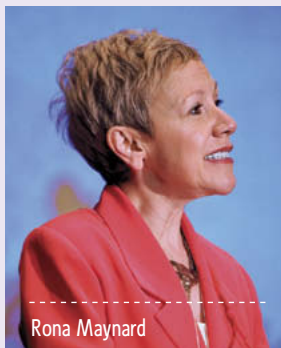
Luba Goy

At ETFO's 2009 **...and still we rise** conference, Margaret Trudeau received a standing ovation from the 500 participants and brought tears to the eyes of many. Trudeau told the story of her life as the wife of a prime minister, mother, and life-long sufferer of bipolar disorder. Trudeau was 22 when she married Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a man 30 years her senior. She was, she said, unprepared for life as the prime minister's wife and described 24 Sussex, the official residence as "the crown jewel of the federal penitentiary system."

Trudeau called bipolar condition a "lifelong sentence... 80 percent depression and 10 percent mania."

"Ten years ago I was a defeated woman. I lost my son (Michel died in an avalanche) and fell into a deep well of despair that was more than grief." Trudeau described her confinement in psychiatric wards and experiences with a variety of treatments. Today she advocates for more openness about mental health issues.

Rona Maynard, author and former editor of *Chatelaine* magazine, reminded participants that it is never too late to change as she shared her personal journey from "intimidated over-reactor" to a "confident, consensus-minded leader." Luba Goy, of the comedy show, *Air*



Rona Maynard



Margaret Trudeau

*Farce*, said one her teachers played a key role in encouraging her to participate in public speaking. Yvonne Oswald, author and communications trainer, emphasized the importance of framing "self-talk" positively.

The conference theme was "Connecting Caring Citizens in Schools and Communities." Participants heard from a broad range of community leaders and were entertained by Gemini nominated singer-songwriter, Kellylee Evans, and the Collective of Black Artists. Participants also took part in workshops organized around the themes of social justice advocacy, health and well-being, curriculum, and strategies for success. Previously open only to ETFO members, the conference was open to women from across the country for the first time this year. ▀





## ETFO Attends Ontario NDP Leadership Convention

Over the March 6–8 weekend, ETFO representatives attended the Ontario NDP leadership convention that elected the party's first woman leader, Hamilton Centre MPP Andrea Horwath. On the Friday evening Horwath, along with other leadership candidates, visited a successful hospitality suite hosted by the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its four affiliated federations. The suite was the perfect gathering place for the numerous teacher delegates, including an impressive number of ETFO members, who wanted to talk politics and share views about the pending leadership vote.

ETFO's booth at the convention provided delegates with information about the federation's position on a

number of issues, including the funding gap for elementary students, our model for full-day kindergarten, and our members' concerns about the effects of EQAO testing. The booth provided a great opportunity to raise ETFO's profile and to discuss education issues with NDP activists from across the province.

ETFO provides some financial support to members who attend provincial and federal political conventions as delegates. For details about this support, look for the information about convention subsidies in the Political Action section of the ETFO website.

ETFO executive and staff attend the political conventions of all three main political parties as part of the federation's ongoing monitoring of Queen's Park and the political process.

ETFO also attended the **Ontario Progressive Conservative Party convention** in Niagara Falls in February.

ETFO executive members David Clegg, Sam Hammond, Barbara Burkett, and Hilda Watkins joined representatives of OTF and the other affiliates to host a busy hospitality suite at the convention. More than 1,000 delegates are reported to have registered, the highest number in years. Since that meeting PC leader John Tory has resigned after losing his bid for a seat in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. The Tories will select his replacement at a leadership convention in June. ▀



Yvette Blackburn (left) was elected to the provincial executive of the NDP. With her are Sheri Birch Bayley (right) and her daughter Nicole Bayley.



Donna Reid, ETFO Waterloo Honorary Life Member, and Kathy Eisner, Renfrew County Teacher Local.



Barbara Wallace, ETFO Hamilton-Wentworth Occasional Teacher Local, and Edna Toth.



Sara Rans, Thames Valley Teacher Local, and Kurt Uriarte, vice-president, Peel Teacher Local.

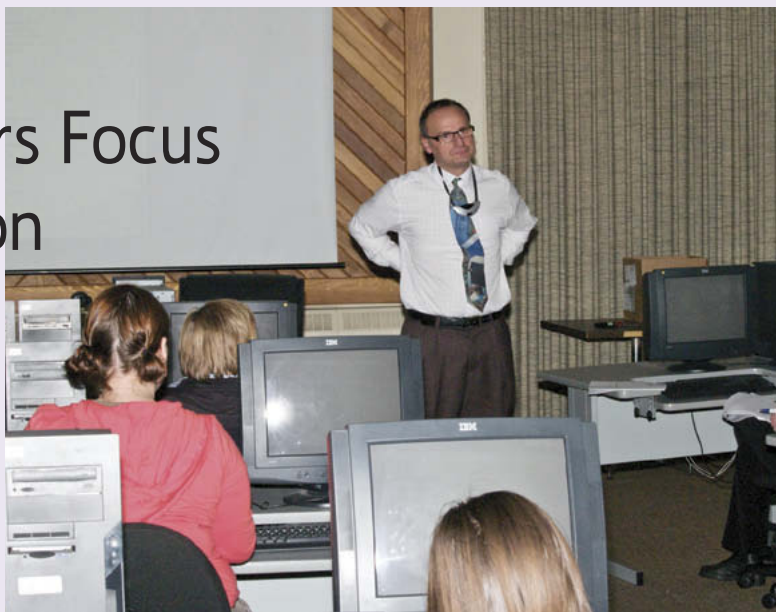
## Occasional Teachers Focus on Special Education

Twenty-five occasional teacher (OT) members are attending a series of day-long sessions throughout the school year focused on students with special needs. With their enhanced skills these OTs will help fill the need for teachers who can step into special education classrooms on short notice.

The program is the result of a partnership between the Hamilton-Wentworth Occasional Teacher Local (HWOTL) and the Special Education/Student Services Department of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

Sessions take place on learning community and professional development days, when all of the board's teachers are involved in professional learning. This allows occasional teachers to attend without having to forego an assignment. In fact, successful completion of all modules of the program results in the member receiving regular pay. Participants in the program appreciate its hands-on focus and the broad range of issues covered. Jane Kuzmichuk notes that the work she did in her Special Education 1 AQ course was "mostly theoretical. Here, half the session is spent working in small groups actually doing tasks."

"The session on differentiated instruction helped me a great deal," says Johnna Haight. "It was not something that was covered in school."



Steve Stasios, special education consultant with the Hamilton-Wentworth DSB, taught a workshop on assistive technology that helps students with special needs.

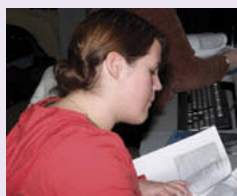
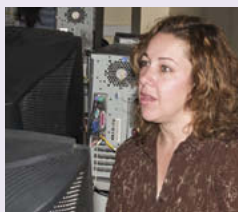
One of the benefits of the program is that presenters are specialists in their particular area, says participant Laura Arnold: "In school, a professor taught the course; but here you have practitioners from individual more specialized areas, autism spectrum and assistive technology, for example."

Participants also have access to these specialists once they take on assignments. "They have provided their contact information if we need their help in the future; they are an ongoing resource," says Arnold.

Stephen South notes that the program "gives us knowledge so that when we walk into the classroom we have tools to assess students and form strategies on how to work with them right from the start. Many of these strategies work with all students. As a result there is less student frustration and thus fewer behaviour issues."

Participants also like having the time to understand the specific terminology of special education and learning how to deal with the paperwork involved. "One of our instructors provided us with a list of acronyms and what they stand for; that alone was incredibly helpful," says Haight.

"Now I feel much more confident when faced with reading an IEP. I also have a better idea of what it means for the student," adds Arnold. ■





# Exploring Traditional Ways Online



BY SCOTT TATE\*

The excitement in Max Evans's class is palpable. It's an unusual experience for the children of the First Nations School (FNS) in Toronto's downtown east end to have a bearskin, with the animal's head still attached, spread out in their room. At first the kids steal glances at the bear. Gradually, they reach out to touch the fur, the claws, and the teeth, exploring an animal that is part myth, part reality to most of them.

The bearskin has made it to the classroom courtesy of Chad Solomon, a First Nations graphic novelist. Solomon is the author, with Christopher Meyers, of *Rabbit and Bear Paws*, a comic series that seeks to bridge the growing gap between urban Aboriginal students and their cultural roots. He is at FNS to help the grade 3/4 students write their own graphic

story, but he is also reaching out to an audience of students at Eastview Junior Public School, several miles away in Scarborough.

In a highly interactive session, Evans, Solomon, and I encourage the kids to create a story using the tools of the graphic artist – speech bubbles, for example. Solomon works on a Smart Board, drawing the story, as he simultaneously initiates the children into the finer points of graphic art. At the same time, he is webcasting to students of Eastview, where instructional leader Cindy Matthews and grade 4 teacher Alana Brunette are providing support.

Research has shown that students need to be well rested and fed to be ready for learning, but they also need to feel safe and respected in



Scott Tate



Chad Solomon



Max Evans

Photos: Vitusha Oberoi

**Scott Tate** is a member of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local. He is Métis and teaches at First Nations School in Toronto. **\*Vitusha Oberoi** provided additional material for this article.



# Exploring Traditional Ways Online



their learning environment. This is particularly true for First Nations students, who are often searching for their identity as urban Aboriginal youths.

In a city as diverse as Toronto, providing urban Aboriginal students with a learning environment that allows them to understand and experience First Nations traditional teachings, cultures, and languages is a challenge. Like other cultural groups, many Aboriginal students are blended into various Toronto schools. However, there is a high First Nations student presence at three schools: First Nations School of Toronto (K-8); Eastview Junior Public School (K-6); and the Native Learning Centre (9-12). Students come to FNS specifically to learn and practise Aboriginal culture, but the 100 Aboriginal students at Eastview are part of a mainstream school that also has 300 non-Aboriginal students.

The interactive session with Chad Solomon was made possible by a technological initiative of the Toronto District School Board, with the support of the Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Smart Technologies, Dell Canada, and IBM Canada. IBM and the TDSB have built a portal that allows the three schools to connect and expand the use of Smart Boards, so that they become a multimedia instructional tool.

The portal provides students and staff at the three schools with an array of social media: email, Chatterbox, instant messaging, blogs, web conferencing, wikis, voice-over-Internet phones, and shared workspace.

The portal has three unique facets:

- **N'odenaawin (My Community)** is an Internet meeting space, in some ways similar to Facebook, which allows students to do academic and social networking. Students have the opportunity to work with special guests, and teachers and students from remote sites. In N'odenaawin students can personalize their space with their own avatars, picture files, and links to their friends' blogs, pictures, and shared assignments.  
The purpose of networking is to create higher student engagement in learning, to encourage learning about the traditions, cultures and languages of First Nations peoples while enhancing their reading, writing and speaking skills through the use of technology.
- **The professional learning community (PLC)** component is like the students' N'odenaawin site. Teachers in First Nations schools often feel isolated. It is difficult to find other teachers with similar situations with whom they can exchange and develop ideas. The PLC enables the teachers in the three schools to connect live by instant messaging, by voice, or by webcam, to exchange information, develop plans, and follow up on their own professional training.  
Some of the teachers involved in this initiative are experiencing their first opportunity to work with another teacher of the same grade. They can do lessons together: communications software allows them to see, hear, and control each other's Smart Boards.
- **A curriculum library** is being compiled that allows teachers to share best practices and ideas on how to integrate technology with traditional ways and curriculum expectations.

What is the potential of this venture? Use your imagination: with the Web the classroom could easily span Toronto, Ontario, Canada ... the globe. 📌

# Project Overseas

## Sharing Leadership Worldwide



SINCE

1962 Canadian teachers have been making a difference in developing countries through Project Overseas, a Canadian Teachers' Federation program. Every year ETFO sponsors 12 members who volunteer their time while the federation pays their expenses.

Canadian participants work with teacher organizations in host countries and with experienced local teachers to present professional learning workshops. Their work gives teachers in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Middle East a chance to learn and grow professionally.

In return participants have the opportunity to meet international colleagues, to learn about another country, to expand their own professional development skills, and to bring back learning to share with students and local colleagues.

If you are interested in finding out about Project Overseas, contact Mary Morison, at provincial office; email to [mmorison@etfo.org](mailto:mmorison@etfo.org). Or visit our website [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca) ► *Advocacy and Action* ► *World Issues* ► *Project Overseas*.



# M



y primary assignment as a Project Overseas participant in Uganda was to facilitate, with my Ugandan co-tutor, a series of workshops in early literacy for Ugandan teachers. I faced two challenges. How could I make the workshops relevant and practical, given the unique difficulties confronting Ugandan teachers? How could I make North American teaching styles and techniques work within their context?

My preparations included background research, consultation with former Project Overseas participants and early literacy specialists, and training provided by CTF. The team going to Uganda did considerable planning by email and teleconference. We also connected with Ugandan co-tutors by email to discuss the needs of participants, workshop ideas, and areas on which to focus.

## Understanding local challenges

Despite all this we were not prepared for the extreme poverty and the difficult situations Ugandans face. Soon after arriving, we discovered an elementary school in a sad state of disrepair. Slogans like “Sex can wait” and “Respect yourself” were painted on narrow pieces of wood nailed to trees. We concluded the school had been abandoned for some time. Imagine

our surprise to find a teacher sitting in a corner of one of the rooms, marking exercise books. We struck up a conversation, and had the first of many lessons on the reality of teaching in rural Uganda. We learned, for instance, that the slogans were part of a campaign mandated by the country’s president and were meant to discourage sexual activity, because there is such a high incidence of HIV-AIDS. Disease, HIV-AIDS, malnutrition, and conflict contribute to making Uganda, with a median age of 14, the country with the world’s youngest population.

Visiting schools provided a valuable context to help us understand what teachers deal with every day. Up to 80 students were crowded into one classroom, sitting on benches at narrow tables. Worn blackboards, cracked and difficult to write on, were the main instructional tool. Often the only resources in sight were some faded handmade posters on the walls. On the plus side, the teachers had better classroom management than many Canadian classes I have visited. The students were attentive, respectful, focused, and hard-working. Ugandans place a high value on education. We were constantly amazed at the positive spirit and resilience of the people we met, both in and out of the school setting.



# Learning and Teaching in Uganda

BY PATRICIA MUNRO

Photos: Patricia Munro





### Addressing a wide range of needs

It was soon evident that among the teachers in my early literacy class there was a considerable range in the level of training, experience, and grades taught (Primary 1 to teachers college). My Ugandan co-tutor, Sam Gasta is an educator at one of the teachers colleges and his knowledge was a valuable resource in addressing the participants' needs. Each day he and I spent time debriefing and planning, and we successfully melded his more traditional teaching techniques with my methods, balancing theory with practical, hands-on activities and strategies.

Many strategies we take for granted were new to our Ugandan colleagues; for instance, the many different ways to use a morning message on the board. We incorporated poetry, music – an integral part of their lives – and drama into a variety of teaching strategies. We demonstrated how one book could be used for various teaching points. We capitalized on the teachers' considerable skills and experiences, and they regularly shared what worked for them in their classrooms. Teachers wrote in their reflection journals daily, giving us insight into what resonated with them and what other areas we needed to address.

### Accessing local resources

Gaining access to new information and methods is difficult in Uganda. Halfway through the workshop, we found the official Uganda Primary School Curriculum in a local bookstore. It was a valuable tool to help teachers create programming that uses the thematic approach that the government and the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) are currently promoting across the country. The teachers were eager to learn and share ways of implementing this approach in their classrooms.

Whenever possible we used natural or found local materials. For example, in the mathematics class, stones, bottle caps, and dried beans were used as counters. Base 10 blocks were cut out of discarded cardboard. Teachers in the workshop on co-operative learning structures were excited to see how they could use small-group

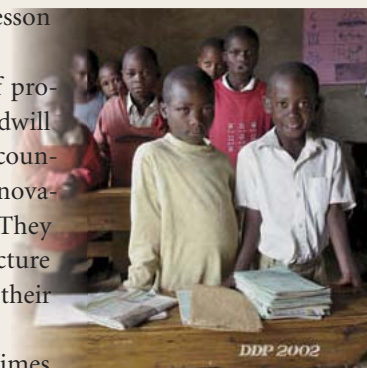
activities to engage children. These activities were reinforced and extended in the different subject area workshops as well. The workshop on AIDS awareness was an eye-opener for everyone: we were shocked at the misconceptions about AIDS, and our team leader and a UNATU executive member arranged for a doctor to provide accurate information.

UNATU is very young, only five years old, and is experiencing a steep learning curve. For instance, on the first day of the workshop that UNATU organized, many teachers were worried that they wouldn't be compensated because details like transportation expenses had not yet been finalized. They were also worried that they would contract malaria in the mosquito-infested dorms. Fortunately, UNATU was able to resolve these issues quickly. It was clear from the discussion at our final debriefing session that the union had learned an important lesson about workshop organization.

Project Overseas is an excellent way of promoting greater understanding and goodwill among teachers. Teachers in developing countries gain knowledge of effective and innovative teaching strategies and methods. They become more aware of the value and structure of their unions. Local unions improve their organizational skills.

Teaching in Uganda was hard work at times, but it was a most gratifying and joyful experience. I am humbled by my Ugandan colleagues' enthusiasm, dedication, and appreciation for what they have. They inspire me to be a better teacher and a better person. I'm continuing my connection with Uganda in various ways, including participation in GuluWalk in Toronto, which helps raise money and awareness for the people in northern Uganda.

I would like to thank ETFO and CTF for enabling my participation. I would also like to thank the Toronto Occasional Teacher Local, the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Status of Women Committee, family, friends, and colleagues who donated money and supplies for me to distribute to schools in Uganda. The donations were greatly appreciated by all the participants. ■



# Projet Outre-mer 2008 : le Burkina Faso



Photos: Christiane Lefebvre Bollinger

7 juillet 2008, départ d'Ottawa pour le Burkina Faso en Afrique de l'Ouest, surnommé le « Pays des hommes intègres ». Nous étions trois femmes et un homme venus de quatre provinces différentes. Nous nous sommes rencontrés pour la première fois au stage d'orientation organisé par la Fédération canadienne des enseignants et des enseignantes (FCE) du 3 au 6 juillet. Nous avons communiqué depuis le mois de février par courriels et par téléconférences. Quel bonheur de pouvoir enfin mettre un visage sur ces voix aux accents différents.

C'est un long voyage qui se termine à Ouagadougou, la capitale du Burkina Faso. Cette ville de plus d'un million d'habitants mérite bien son appellation de « Ouaga deux roues ». En effet, la majorité de ses citoyens circule à vélomoteur. Chaleur, poussière et couleurs sont au rendez-vous. Ce sont les vacances d'été et il y a beaucoup de jeunes enfants dans les rues qui quêtent, qui vendent des paquets de papiers-mouchoirs ou des arachides pour se

faire des sous. Les revendeurs sont partout.

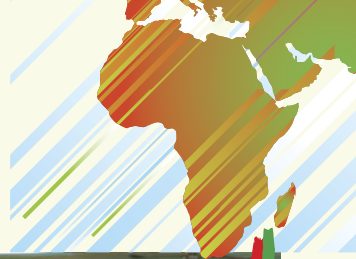
Notre hôtel est confortable et climatisé. Je partage une chambre avec Lee. Les sanitaires sont adéquats. La nourriture est bonne même si nous devons protéger notre petit déjeuner contre les mouches plus qu'envahissantes. Je comprends maintenant pourquoi on mange le soir après le coucher du soleil.

Avec nos collègues burkinabés du SNESS et du SNEAB, les deux organisations syndicales qui sont nos hôtes, nous préparons les deux semaines de formation pour 130 enseignants qui se préparent à un concours important pour leur avenir. Quatre matières sont au programme : français et mathématique pour le primaire, anglais pour le secondaire et pédagogie générale pour tous. Nous travaillerons au Lycée Zinda qui, belle surprise, a de la climatisation dans la grande salle. Mais, Audrey devra travailler dehors avec son groupe de français, car on ne lui a pas trouvé de local. Michel et Lee auront à leur disposition un petit local où il y aura moins de bruit. Je reste dans la grande salle puisque je travaille la pédagogie générale avec le grand groupe, mais je devrai utiliser un

PAR CHRISTIANE LEFEBVRE BOLLINGER







micro qui ne fonctionne pas toujours très bien. Dehors, il fait 32 °C et cela semble encore plus chaud à cause de l'humidité.

Il n'y a pas de tableau. Nous devons donc utiliser du papier brun collé sur un mur ou attaché à un chevalet. Heureusement, nous sommes bien équipés pour faire face à la situation. Nous avons de grandes feuilles lignées et quadrillées laminées et des marqueurs effaçables.

Les photocopies exigent beaucoup de travail de la part des membres de l'exécutif du SNESS. Dans nos temps libres, nous participons tour à tour à colliger et à brocher les documents à être remis aux participants. C'est avec émerveillement que j'écoute messieurs les formateurs (où sont les femmes?) faire leurs exposés. Le langage utilisé, les approches théorique, pédagogique et philosophique me ramènent aux belles années de collège du milieu des années soixante. Je suis charmée. Mais, nous avions préparé tellement d'activités que nous sommes déçus du peu de temps qui nous est alloué pour nos interventions. Nous comprenons cependant que les participants auront à passer un examen très théorique qui comporte souvent une forme de dissertation.

Nous ajustons le tir et nous nous concentrons sur des activités qui pourraient alléger la tâche d'un enseignant ayant une centaine d'élèves dans sa classe, avec très peu de ressources pédagogiques et matérielles. Le mur des mots et la dictée sans faute pour le français, la théorie des nombres en mathématique, des chansons et des jeux en anglais, l'apprentissage coopératif sont des exemples d'activités complémentaires. Il y a aussi des ateliers sur le sida, sur l'égalité des genres et sur la citoyenneté et l'environnement donnés par des Burkinabés. Question de culture...

En marge de notre travail, nos hôtes nous



Christiane Bollinger en compagnie des femmes qui assurent le succès de la formation.

ont escortés lors de la visite du parc de sculptures en granit de Luongo, très impressionnant. Nos formateurs nous ont facilité le magasinage et la visite des marchés. On a beaucoup dansé à la soirée burkinabée. L'année dernière, nos amis burkinabés ont découvert le hockey de rue à la soirée canadienne, car l'une d'entre nous avait apporté des bâtons de hockey. Cette année, nos amis ont pu gagner des prix en répondant à un jeu-questionnaire sur le Canada. Ce soir-là, un gros orage a retenu tout le monde plus tard que prévu. La soirée a donc continué en danses et chansons, un magnifique mélange de deux cultures. Je suis revenue très émue de ce voyage. J'ai vu des gens atteints de paludisme qui demandaient de l'aspirine. Un participant m'a tendu une ordonnance pour des lunettes. Un autre participant qui venait de Gorom-Gorom dans le nord du pays m'a demandé des moustiquaires pour protéger les bébés du paludisme dans l'orphelinat que tient sa mère. Et des orphelins, il y en a beaucoup, témoins impuissants des ravages du sida. Le fardeau d'en prendre soin revient aux filles qui, de ce fait, ne sont pas scolarisées. Bon nombre de familles n'ont pas les moyens financiers d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école et y enverront d'abord les garçons.

Ce voyage est une leçon de vie. On y apprend à accepter les différences et à partager les similitudes. Une des recettes du succès de notre travail réside, je crois, dans notre faculté d'adaptation et d'ouverture à un nouveau milieu de vie et aux contraintes de temps qui souvent réduisent le partage de connaissances.

Il y a plusieurs pays francophones en Afrique de l'Ouest qui bénéficient de l'appui de la FCE. Francophones recherché(e)s! 🇻🇳





# Other Overseas Work

Many ETFO members are involved in projects with an international focus. Some have been featured in past issues of *Voice*: for example, “A School Without Borders” (Winter 2006) and “The Power of Global Collaborative Learning” (April 2008). (Available at [etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca)) Teachers also make a difference by contributing to the ETFO Humanity Fund ([etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca)►*advocacy and action*►*world issues*►*ETFO Humanity Fund*) Some also undertake their own initiatives. Here is a sampling.



## Yvonne Tait

In 2002, Yvonne Tait, a grade 4 teacher at Wexford Public School in Toronto, received a letter from a former student, now an elementary school principal in Mafutseni, Swaziland. He wrote about the need to build an orphanage for hundreds of local children left parentless as a result of AIDS. The tribal chief had donated land, but there was no money to build. Tait hatched the idea of holding a “Lucky Draw” at her school to raise some start-up money. Tait and the Wexford School community have been supporting the Zama Zama (Try, Try Again) Orphanage ever since. The school’s website ([schools.tdsb.on.ca/wexford](http://schools.tdsb.on.ca/wexford)) shows the results of the more than \$20,000 the school has sent: the construction of two large dormitories and a community hall named “Wexford Hall” in recognition of the school’s donations.

Yvonne Tait can be reached at [taitfam@sympatico.ca](mailto:taitfam@sympatico.ca)



## Heather Menezes

Horizons Children’s Centre in Sandema, Ghana provides a home for 23 boys and two girls. The project’s founder, Heather Menezes, was working as a volunteer in Ghana when she became aware of the needs of young homeless children in the community. The centre began in a rented room in a house that provided shelter for 12 children. Today it has its own house and a staff of four who ensure the children have food, clothing, medical care and, in addition to going to school, take part in a variety of after school programs. The website [horizonscentre.org](http://horizonscentre.org) provides further information, or email [info@horizonscentre.org](mailto:info@horizonscentre.org).



## Johanna Lanfranco

After my various project overseas assignments, I decided to continue my involvement with development projects by volunteering in Central America with World Accord, a non-denominational NGO, based in Waterloo, Ontario. I was part of a team of 12 volunteers who helped build a home in Guatemala during March break. World Accord is working with the Guatemalan indigenous women’s group Mujeres en Accion (MeA). It is organized and run by Cathikal and Quiche women and most of the project participants are indigenous women of various tribal backgrounds.

In October 2005, Hurricane Stan destroyed the community of Chichoy, northwest of Guatemala City. The people in Chichoy are rebuilding their lives and community. MeA bought a property in the community, allowing 16 families to build new homes. We, the Canadian volunteers, helped rebuild homes and schools. We brought a willingness to work, and in return, received the satisfaction of connecting with people, learning from them and immersing ourselves in new situations and work. ▀

# Curriculum and Social Justice:

## Members of the *Connections* writing team share their thoughts

BY SHERRY RAMRATTAN SMITH

**E**TFO is a union whose members choose to foster a positive social transformation through education, networks, and resources. We are courageous advocates for inclusion, trust, and acceptance of difference(s). We bring hope to this vision through our own journeys of learning and the practical steps we take in our classrooms and communities each day. As we engage in dialogue and conversations that dispel myths and stereotypes, we contribute to establishing genuine pathways toward equality. Curriculum support resources are one way to begin these meaningful conversations that broaden our understanding of the diverse needs of our students.

In *Teaching for Social Justice*, William Ayers states:

*Teaching for social justice is teaching that arouses students, engages them in a quest to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom, and then to drive, to move against those obstacles. And so the fundamental message of the teacher for social justice is: You can change the world.*<sup>1</sup>

*Connections: A Kindergarten to Grade Eight Resource for Everyone Interested in Understanding Gender-Related Issues and Working for Social Justice* was developed to encourage and support these endeavours. The stories and activities in the resource are meant to open discussion and build understanding about a variety of issues that relate to the pursuit of social justice. Focus topics are explored through books and real-life stories.



### “Who is the self who teaches?”<sup>2</sup>

Curriculum writing is often intimately connected to who we are as individuals and to the unique life experiences that shape our critical consciousness.<sup>3</sup> As a teacher/researcher who is also a curriculum writer for social justice resources, I am in a privileged position of calling upon my own experiences with regard to social justice and equity work in schools. This dual positioning supports both the “teacher as learner” role that I hold for myself, as well as the advocacy role that I regularly participate in

as a social justice activist. I am also a union staff employee with responsibilities for continuing professional development programs. I look to the diverse experiences of a writing team to improve the scope and depth of the resources we produce.

Three teachers share their thoughts about coming together to develop *Connections* – their vision, writing experiences, and personal fulfillment.

#### Arlene Campbell

“I recently took a cursory glance at my bookshelves in my home office and observed that women authors from diverse backgrounds comprised 80 percent of my collection. Why was that? I had never questioned this before, but subconsciously and perhaps of late, I gravitated toward independent smaller bookstores that endorsed ‘peripheral’ prose and academic literature. When I was growing up there was little culturally relevant material that enlivened and enlightened my intellect. I always yearned to read something, anything, that had to do with my existence as a black girl.

“When invited to collaborate on *Connections*, I salivated. Here was a prime opportunity to write, influence, and enrich teaching and learning for a diverse student population. It is no coincidence that this project addresses ‘Optimism’ in its final section, for that title clearly aligns with my belief that we, as educators and students, must continue to explore alternative and sometimes difficult pedagogical standpoints.”





**Nilmini Ratwatte**

“My vision for *Connections* was to bring to the resource my experience as a first-generation immigrant, my knowledge from my classroom experience, and my cultural perspective. I wanted to encourage my

colleagues to insert themselves into the curriculum they teach. I wanted to find a way to engage my students to reflect on ways in which gender continues to influence and limit many decisions. Furthermore, I wanted activities that were user-friendly and were connected to curriculum mandates.

“I was surprised and gratified by the creative pieces in the book which provide a way to explore real-life stories. We had the unique opportunity to insert some of our personal stories into the book. Through the writing process I got to know my co-writers and took risks which otherwise I would not have taken. *Connections* gave me the opportunity to intimately share who I was through my writing, which I truly appreciate, because I think doing so resonates with students.”



**Mini Dawar**

“I had been taking on equity projects at my school and in my board, and was presenting ETFO workshops on equity and social justice, and when the opportunity to work on *Connections* came up I very much

wanted to be part of it. Working on this project provided me with an opportunity to deconstruct my biases, reaffirm my beliefs, and share my perspective as an immigrant teacher. This project allowed me to reflect on my journey as an educator, share my cultural heritage, and make space for the powerful, real-life stories of women. Working with other contributors enriched my knowledge and skills as a writer. The process of discussion and writing brought many of my inner thoughts and feelings to light. I learned more about myself and my passion to promote social justice.”

### Topics explored in *Connections*

Grade Level	Focus Topics
Kindergarten	Appreciation of Difference, Families/Inclusion, Gender
Grade One	Ability, Acknowledging Our Feelings, Self-Esteem
Grade Two	Identity, Inner Strength, Addressing Bullying
Grade Three	Family, Challenging Stereotypes, Saying No to Bullying, Overcoming Obstacles
Grade Four	Gender-Related Roles, Coping with Disappointment, Self-Esteem, Challenging Stereotypes
Grade Five	Human Rights, Leadership, Escaping Persecution, Optimism
Grade Six	Friendship, Relationships, Solitude and Environmental Harmony, Understanding Values and Prejudices, Unions and Equity
Grade Seven	Overcoming Adversity, Contributions of Women
Grade Eight	True Worth and Beauty, Overcoming Challenges, Possibilities for Change
Creative Pieces, K to 8	Caring, Unity and Love, Belonging, Challenging Stereotypes, Equity and Social Justice, Politics and Leadership, Understanding Difference

The writers wish to thank our sisters who so willingly shared of themselves in their literature, politics, and other life experiences.

We respectfully remember Alice Hepworth and honour her contributions to *Connections*.

### Notes

1. William Ayers, Jean Ann Hunt, and Therese Quinn, eds. *Teaching for Social Justice: A Democracy and Education Reader*, New York: Teachers College Press and The New Press, 1998, p. xvii.
2. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998, p. 7.
3. E. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination. On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (3rd ed.), New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1994. Also S. Ramrattan Smith, *Pilot Study: Exploring Connections Between Teacher Identity and Curricular Practices in Social Justice Education*, Presentation at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, University of British Columbia, June 1, 2008.



# Lessons for a Social Justice Curriculum

*Connections* was prepared for ETFO by: Arlene Campbell, Mini Dawar, Alice Hepworth, Leona Laird, Linda-Beth Marr, Nilmini Ratwatte, Deb St. Amant, and Sherry Ramrattan Smith.

## GRADE ONE

## Focus: Self-Esteem



Title: ***Girls Hold Up This World***  
 Author: **Jada Pinkett Smith**  
 ISBN: **043987937**

### RELATED RESOURCES

- *The Best Part of Me*, Wendy Ewald
- *All the Colors of the Earth*, Sheila Hamanaka
- *Just Because I Am: A Child's Book of Affirmation*, Lauren Murphy Payne

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Oral Communication: 2.2
- Reading: 1.3, 1.7
- Writing: 1.1
- Media Literacy: 1.2
- The Arts
- Visual Art

### MATERIALS

- permission form for photographs
- camera
- construction paper

## Suggested Activities

### Pre-reading

- Brainstorm: What would it be like to rule the world?
- Read the story. Pause to observe the photographs. Discuss the title of the book *Girls Hold Up This World*.

### Post-reading

- Ask the following questions:  
 Why do you think the author used that title?  
 Have you read similar books about boys? What are some titles?  
 Could you use the title *Boys Hold Up This World* for a similar story? What photographs would you use? Discuss.
- Make a class book called *Girls and Boys Hold Up This World*. With permission from parent/caregiver, use photographs of students doing various activities they like. Put the book in the library so other students can enjoy it.
- Discuss types of strengths (e.g., physical, will power, creativity, musical, artistic, quiet determination).

## Extensions

- Make a class painting of the world being held up by the students. Use the caption: Grade One Holds Up the World.
- Sing and listen to songs about the world (e.g., "We Are the World," "Wonderful World," etc.).

The lesson plans in this section are excerpts from *Connections*. The resource is available from shopETFO. Please visit [shopetfo.etfo.ca](http://shopetfo.etfo.ca).

# Creative Pieces, K to 8

## INTERMEDIATE DIVISION

### Focus: Politics and Leadership

#### Suggested Activities

- A colleague once told Mary Anne Chambers that she would not go far, citing prejudiced reasons for this. List her colleague's biases and/or prejudices. How did Mary Anne react to the comment? List some of the skills and character traits that made it possible for Mary Anne Chambers's to be successful.
- What are some of Mary Anne Chambers's core values and beliefs? How would these core values and beliefs help her to become successful?
- Explain your interpretation of Mary Anne Chamber's comment: "We shouldn't take ourselves too seriously, but we need to take our responsibilities seriously."
- Create a word search or crossword puzzle (reproducibles available) with the following words:

minister	party	elected	honourable
door-to-door	liberal	supporters	commitment
canvass	politics	rallied	schedule
campaign	MPP	office	politician

- Define the following terms
  - marginalized
  - disenfranchised
  - multifaceted
  - conscientious
  - ambitious
  - privilege
- Adapt the interview questions that were asked of Mary Anne Chambers to interview a local politician. Use the responses to write a report about that politician.

#### Interview Questions

1. What age were you when you decided to become involved in politics?
2. What decisive factor(s) made you want to pursue this career?
3. Who influenced your decision to become a politician?
4. What were some challenges you faced and continue to face as a woman in politics?
5. Whom do you mentor? Who mentors you?
6. How do you balance your political life with your personal life?
7. Describe your childhood history and memories.
8. What advice would you give to adolescent females who are interested in politics?

#### RELATED RESOURCES

- *Womankind*, Donna Nebenzahl and Nance Ackerman
- *Great Women Leaders*, Heather Ball

#### CURRICULUM LINKS

##### Grade 7

- Oral Communication: 1.3
- Reading: 1.3, 1.4
- Writing: 1.3

##### Grade 8

- Oral Communication: 1.3
- Reading: 1.3, 1.4
- Writing: 1.3





## Don't allow other people's words to determine your goals.

Mary Anne Chambers, MPP

Mary Anne Chambers is (at the time of this interview) the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and the MPP for Scarborough East. She became involved in politics at age 52. It was a completely unplanned episode in her life, although many people, such as her banking colleagues, had previously suggested it. Upon retirement, she envisioned focusing on volunteer work.

When Minister Chambers joined the banking industry as a computer analyst, one of her colleagues stated, "I can tell you're conscientious, hardworking, and ambitious but you'll not get very far, because you're a woman, Black, Jamaican, not Canadian, married, a mother, and Roman Catholic!" Mary Anne felt that she had two choices: roll over and play dead or ignore her. Her evaluation of this comment was that if you don't have high expectations and subscribe to the idea of drawing walls around yourself, that's exactly how far you'll go. Chambers prefers to dream in possibilities as a "multidimensional female" and does not impose limitations on herself. She beseeches young people to reach for the stars. Her advice is: "Don't allow other people's words to determine your goals."

Mary Anne Chambers was invited by the Liberal Party to join forces with them; however, she needed time to carefully consider this significant career shift. She consulted a few individuals from various walks of life. Although one of her sons expressed reservations, her husband and other son were most encouraging. She fondly recalls how her husband, because he is shy, refused to canvass door-to-door, but nonetheless relented at the "eleventh hour" and admitted enjoying the challenge! Mary Anne was very encouraged by citizen feedback during her campaign. Her defining moment was when she was elected and all her supporters rallied at the office the next morning.

In terms of challenges for women in politics or

business, Mary Anne Chambers asserts that "we always have to prove ourselves, regardless of what we've achieved beforehand. In mixed-gender settings, if males dominate, there's always some skepticism."

The minister used to devote considerable time to mentor individuals, but due to her hectic schedule, she maintains contact by phone in order to sustain one-on-one relationships. She also conducts informal evening gatherings to promote networking and group mentoring sessions.

Her commitment to her family is steadfast. She speaks lovingly about her mother, whom she visits every weekend. Her family is very supportive and protective and she looks forward to spending quality time with her two granddaughters.

Growing up privileged in Jamaica afforded her a bountiful childhood. Minister Chambers attended private boarding schools. However, her parents also taught her the importance of learning about other people who were marginalized and disenfranchised. As a young adult, she taught an adult literacy summer school program. She maintains that it wasn't so much the attainment of literacy skills that excited her, but how the adult learners could apply their knowledge and thus inform themselves and others. This was her most profound insight. She expresses sensitivity to the plight of people who lack the opportunities to pursue and achieve their dreams.

Her advice to youth is multifaceted: to pursue education and acquire a career; to make a success of yourself in whatever sector you choose; to value real-life experiences; to avoid being a "career politician" and clinging to political life; and to recognize that women bring a multilayered, multitasking perspective to political life.

Her final sage comment is: "We shouldn't take ourselves too seriously, but we need to take our responsibilities seriously."

## GRADE FOUR

# Focus: Coping with Disappointment



Title: ***The Blue Ribbon Day***  
 Author: **Katie Couric**  
 ISBN: **0385501420**

## RELATED RESOURCES

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Judy Viorst

## CURRICULUM LINKS

- Oral Communication: 2.1, 2.6
- Reading: 1.7
- Writing: 1.5

## Suggested Activities

## Pre-reading

- Think of a good friend you have. Use a T-chart to make two lists; one of **commonalities** you share and one of **differences**.
- Read the story.

## Post-reading

- Create a plot line for the story. Identify the main points of the story on the plot line.
- Use the plot line to retell the story to a student in another grade.
- Work in groups of three or four students to develop a list of ways to boost your confidence. For example, *Boost Your Confidence, Ten Strategies to Try*:
  1. Wear your favourite clothes
  2. Look in the mirror and say something wonderful about yourself
  3. Be active – take time to get some exercise
  4. Eat healthy
  5. Learn a new skill, e.g., jump rope
  6. ....
  7. ....
  8. ....
  9. ....
  10. ....
- In pairs, make a two-minute speech about a time when you were confident and proud about an accomplishment. Observe each other. Discuss nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact.

## Extensions

- Make a list of your accomplishments such as foods you can prepare, musical instruments or sports you can play, chores you can do, etc.
- Write a compliment about a friend or family member.



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Eagle Plains Public School

**Nicki Keenlside**

John English Public School

**Jo-Anne Locke**

Conestoga Public School

**Ronald Vine**

Green Acres School

**Charlana Wheaton**

Sunset Heights Public School

## Additional winners:

Tom Adams

St. Francis Catholic School

Karine Belhache

Marie Currie Elementary School

Pam Blondia

Holy Family Catholic School

Jennifer Bos

St. Michael Dresden School

Heather Braybrook

Thorn Lodge Public School

Shelley Cameron

Central Public School

Stephanie Ciavarella

St. Bede Catholic School

Corra Colella

St. Gabriel Catholic School

Jeremy Durgana

Blue Willow Public School

Angela Egyed

St. Gregory Catholic School

Beth Estill

Plum Tree Park Public School

Sandra Gregson

The Waterfront School

Marc Koechl

St. Teresa of Avila

Norine Kowalski

St. Columba School

Peter Luu

Shaw Public School

Monica Afonso-Magolon

Holy Family School

Danielle Maryschak

Tecumseh Public School

Vickie Morgado

St. Alfred Catholic School

Jennifer Nalon

St. Joseph School

John Orme

Alternative Education – Maplewood Site

Andrew Powers

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Vanessa Scali

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

ONTARIO ENGLISH  
**Catholic Teachers**  
ASSOCIATION

# ETFO AQ: A superior learning experience

BY NANCY BALDREE AND JERRY DEQUETTEVILLE

**E**TFO is recognized as the foremost provider of professional learning activities for teachers in Ontario, if not Canada. Our members trust us to deliver a wide range of professional learning activities developed by teachers for teachers. Members consistently tell us these activities are among the federation services they value most highly.

While ETFO is recognized as a provider of exemplary professional learning programs, its Additional Qualification (AQ) courses are less well known. However, more and more members are becoming aware of the advantages of taking an ETFO AQ course: a superior learning experience at a lower cost.

The AQ market has become crowded in recent years with faculties of education, district school boards, and federations increasing their course offerings. While these courses meet the criteria set out by the Ontario College of Teachers, the reality is that there is a great variance among courses. In this crowded market, ETFO makes its AQ offerings a superior learning experience by:

- ensuring that AQ course developers embed ETFO beliefs within the course
- having courses developed by elementary educators who understand the realities of elementary classrooms
- developing course content that is practical, well grounded in effective practice, and respectful of the balance between theory and practice
- respecting the delicate work/life balance of teachers
- reviewing courses regularly and updating them to make certain that activities, resources, and key learnings remain current.

This is the ETFO edge.

Not only do ETFO AQ courses provide for a superior learning experience, they are also 24 percent less expensive than those offered by other providers (currently an ETFO AQ costs \$650, whereas other providers charge an average of \$850). We are committed to providing these courses at a minimal cost; other providers see them as a money-making opportunity.

Given the ETFO edge and the low registration fee, it is no wonder that the number of participants in ETFO AQ courses has increased by 705 percent between 2006 and 2008!

Ontario's highly organized system of AQ courses comprise 125 hours of study (as legislation requires) linked to specific educational needs. The Ontario College of Teachers regulates and accredits all AQ courses. When you successfully complete an ETFO AQ, the college updates your record card. Members may also use ETFO AQ courses to improve their grid placement as identified by QECO.

## The Kindergarten AQ


The ETFO Kindergarten AQ course provides an opportunity for kindergarten teachers to reflect on their understanding of child development and to plan programs based on developmentally appropriate practice. The course is based on ETFO resources, and on Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Youth Services documents. An action research project conducted in the kindergarten classroom provides insight into the application of the theory and its impact on student learning. Courses will be offered in the summer/fall session in the Peel, Durham, Simcoe, Algoma, Lakehead, Greater Essex, Hamilton-Wentworth, Upper Canada, and Upper Grand locals.



### The Special Education AQ

The three-part Special Education AQ course is currently our most popular. The program is unique because it weaves the thread of differentiation throughout course activities and embeds it in the key learnings. The course focuses on the realities of working with students with special needs and provides a complete perspective on special education in Ontario. Candidates apply what they learn

ETFO is building on the success of these professional courses by reviewing its offerings and developing new courses that will meet members' needs. New course offerings are awaiting the approval of and accreditation by the Ontario College of Teachers. All courses will continue to have the ETFO edge that members value. When you're looking for an AQ course, look to ETFO first. Make the ETFO edge work for you.

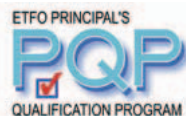
For more information about ETFO professional course offerings, visit [etfo-aq.ca](http://etfo-aq.ca). 

in assignments, reflection, and group work. Summer courses will be offered in the Simcoe, Lambton Kent, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Peel locals.

### Teaching Combined Grades

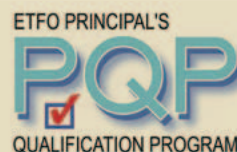
Teaching Combined Grades is a single session AQ course planned for this fall. Written and delivered by teachers of combined grades, this practical course focuses on the how-to of managing combined-grade classrooms, weaving theory and practice to support student learning. Built on the ETFO resource, *A Teacher's Guide to Combined Grades*, the course addresses program planning and delivery, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation, classroom management, and shared support for learners.

### Principal's Qualification Program



ETFO's Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) is a key component of our commitment to improving the quality of educational leadership in Ontario. While it falls under the AQ umbrella, it differs from other ETFO AQ courses, and has a different fee structure. When it was first offered over five years ago, the PQP course's mission statement was *"Preparing future principals to support a community of learners for the improvement of student learning."* Candidate feedback shows that participants continue to find the course outstanding. Enrolment has grown by 83 percent over the past three years.

The ETFO PQP provides a supportive environment that encourages networking and discussion, and provides a framework that helps candidates make connections between the theoretical and practical aspects of educational leadership. Distinct from courses offered by other providers, the ETFO PQP ensures that future school administrators are well aware of ETFO and the collective bargaining and professional rights of teachers. The ETFO PQP is currently offered in partnership with the Halton, Peel, Upper Grand, and York Region district school boards.



### PQP PART 1 JULY 2009

JULY 6 - 10 & JULY 13 - 17  
(Monday to Friday)

#### ORANGEVILLE

Westside Secondary Public School  
300 Alder Street

*Offered in partnership with the Upper Grand District School Board*

#### TORONTO

The Yorkland Hotel  
(Ramada Hotel & Conference Centre)  
185 Yorkland Blvd.  
(at Hwy. 404 and 401)

**For details and application forms  
go to [etfo-aq.ca](http://etfo-aq.ca) or contact  
Joanne Languay at provincial  
office; [jlanguay@etfo.org](mailto:jlanguay@etfo.org)**





# Developing a professional learning community from scratch

BY JOHN HAWLEY

During the summer of 2006, as I was working through an AQ course, there was one question that I endlessly fretted over: how to initiate a professional learning community (PLC).

In the end, my solution was simple: I contacted all of my Junior division colleagues and suggested we should endeavour to work together. The invitation was open, but I was determined that the numbers would not matter, and that we would move forward with a group of two, three, or seven. One teacher, who was more isolated than the rest of us because she worked at two different schools, showed up for our first meeting. I was surprised, but happy to see her. The first words out of her mouth were “Why are we here?”

There were a number of issues that persuaded us to work together. One was that we

worked mostly in isolation. Second, as was soon apparent, we were worried about top-down management, and felt that if we worked together as a team – strength in numbers – it would be hard for a principal to say no. Third, I had found that having students more than one year (called looping) was beneficial in many ways. Teaching the same students a second year means you know most of them and can begin where you left off the previous June. Routines also are simply continued from the previous year. Through observation and discussions with parents, I’ve found that even our best students may need at least two years to get on track toward independence.

But when we do not usually have our students for more than one year, how do we achieve the same results? How do we ensure consistency with note-taking, notebook organization, or assessment? And how do we reach the high expectations we set for our students? The answer is obvious: through collaboration teachers can maintain standards and proce-

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**John Hawley**, a member of the Durham Teacher Local, teaches at Elizabeth B. Phin Public School.

dures from one year to the next. For example, before the end of September, we had presented a list of at-risk students from the Junior division. American author and educator Richard DuFour mentions the “powerful collaboration of school teams.” By working together, we found we could focus more specifically on student achievement.

### Creating a divisional PLC

We started our PLC by examining the needs of our Junior division students. Although mindful of the importance of a school focus, I would suggest divisional teams as a more powerful beginning for a PLC; this arrangement can address common student needs, has an immediate “looping” effect, and involves smaller numbers of staff. Through board and ministry assessment, and through teacher observation and collaboration, we identified a need to improve our students’ writing.

We decided together how to improve our students’ writing skills. Grade 6 teachers took the lead by discussing what they wanted students to learn in prior grades. (Later in the process, grade 3 teachers should be invited into the PLC to hear Junior teachers’ expectations.) We decided to focus on different forms of writing, and to emphasize narrative writing. Each grade would focus on a particular genre; for example, the grade 4s focused on fairy tales, the grade 5s on mysteries, and the grade 6s on adventures. Each teacher had a voice and felt comfortable contributing to the free flow of ideas. In our PLC no single teacher was in charge and we learned from each other.

### Finding time to plan together

With our time constraints we had to be mindful of how we planned. Time is an issue for any PLC. My suggestion is to work together to develop ideas and time for planning. For example, we were able to free up teachers to plan when we had all the Junior students in the gym at the same time to write the board’s reading assessment. Teachers were not only given more time to plan, but they were able to work



one on one with students who needed extra support and didn’t often receive it.

We began by reviewing ministry writing exemplars with students. Like-grade classes worked together and held peer and teacher writing conferences once a week. Student writing must be considered formative assessment. Students kept all copies of their work. Continuous descriptive feedback was provided orally and in writing. The added benefit for students was that they had the opportunity to improve not only their writing but their marks as well, in an atmosphere where risk-taking was encouraged. Weeks later we were still working with students on this piece of writing. Teachers wondered if we should give up, but we had to look at where we had started, and consider that we had put in place a long-term plan. In other words, next year’s teachers would build on the instruction students had received the previous year.

### Reaping the benefits

A wonderful part of our PLC was that everyone in our division was on the same page as we assigned similar work, and discussed what worked well and what didn’t. (This is one of the characteristics of a properly functioning PLC, according to *eworkshop.ca*.) We shared ideas for poetry forms and common themes,



PLC members: (from top)  
John Clark, Sarah Creechan,  
and John Hawley

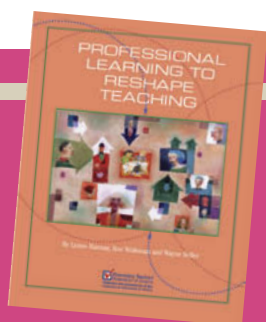


for example, and displayed student work in our hallways.

An added benefit, as we worked together, was the reduced stress that resulted from a collegial atmosphere and better organization and ideas. For example, board assessment (which involves hours of preparation and marking, but the results of which we cannot use as a report card mark) was less of a burden. One of the strengths of the PLC is that it is a flexible, long-term plan that can be improved on from one year to the next. However, teachers realized students do not improve overnight. This is the antithesis of what Diane Sweeney calls “one-shot in-services,” which accomplish very little. By exchanging ideas, we were adding to each other’s professional development, but we were planning for long-term change.

**Professional Learning to Reshape Teaching** is an ETFO publication that will help you understand how to take charge of your own professional learning. It is available from shopETFO, [shopetfo.etfo.ca](http://shopetfo.etfo.ca).

ETFO is also a provider of AQ courses. See the Professional Services column on page 24 for more information, or visit [etfo-aq.ca](http://etfo-aq.ca).



### Keeping the principal in the loop

All of this planning was done on our own initially. We met at my place and on a casual basis at our school. Communication was a concern, as the message was often lost as it went from teachers through our chairperson to the principal and back, leading us to realize that the principal must be invited into the group at some point. As well, we had informed our principal of our intentions during the summer while developing our PLC. This was important: the timetable was developed so that all the Junior teachers (and all our students) were free at the same time for one period a week, allowing us to work together.

An interesting aspect of the collegiality evident in our PLC was that teachers began to share the workload. We planned division-wide excursions to a movie and to a Blue Jays game, but no longer was one teacher organizing most of the extracurricular activities. We also invited a cartoonist in to work with all our classes. As students developed their cartooning skills they were asked to illustrate their written work.

### The wave of the future

Teacher-initiated PLCs should be the wave of the future. We must start by taking responsibility for our own professional learning. When we look at the business world, we see that creative thinking and working with others are skills that are often emphasized. As teachers we can be creative and collaborative. We can learn from each other. Look at yourself and your colleagues. What skills and expertise do you each have that would benefit other teachers and your students? Sharing our skills formed the core of our Junior division professional learning community. Both new and experienced teachers benefited from this approach. To quote *eworkshop.ca*: “Teacher efficacy – the ability to produce an intended/desired result – is increased through opportunities for teacher learning and collaboration and, in turn, student learning improves.”

Our ministry and our boards must encourage school administrators, who, in turn, must encourage and support teacher-initiated professional development in order to improve the focus on student achievement. If, on the other hand, we allow PLCs to be developed for us – if the approach is only top-down – then, by our own doing, PLCs will become another useless and wasted professional development opportunity. ▮

### Sources

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- Conzemius, Anne, and Jan O’Neill. *The Handbook for SMART School Teams*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 2002.
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# Reading the Signs

BY CHRISTINE BROWN

**W**ith the economy contracting, we are likely to see the resurrection of the myth that accessibility is just too costly. In fact, most workplace barriers to full participation could be eliminated with little or no cost attached. In some cases, all that is required are some small but important changes in the ways we interact with one another. A good illustration of this point is the social landscape inhabited by individuals who lip-read.

## Reading more than lips

Lip-reading is also known as speech-reading. In practice, the two are used interchangeably, though to use speech-reading is to acknowledge that there is a lot more to the process than simply focusing on the lips. Any time you are able to see a person with whom you are conversing, you are unconsciously speech-reading – by picking up on facial expressions, intonation and speech cadence, the tilt of the head, hand gestures, and general body language.

Together with the facial motions connected with speech, these are important visual clues in conversation. For individuals with hearing loss, for those who are deaf, or for anyone who for whatever reason requires visual content as

input for auditory processing, the absence of these conversational clues can create significant barriers to understanding. As Canadian artist and activist Gael Hannan has put it, “Speech-reading is about human interaction.”

## Achieving better communication

The odds are good that you interact on a regular basis with someone who lip-reads to one degree or another, though you may not be aware of it, especially in the workplace. If you have a friend or family member who lip-reads, however, you have probably found some combination of the following principles to be useful in achieving better communication:

- It is important to directly face the person you are conversing with, and to resist the temptation to call out from another room.
- Visual clues are easier to see at a distance of one metre than from 10 metres.
- Where possible, try to ensure that you are standing or sitting in good light, and that your face is not in shadow.
- Your face should be visible, not partially covered by your hands, coffee mug, sandwich, or other obstructions.
- When in a group, try to ensure that only one person is speaking at a time.

Following these guaranteed, cost-free, barrier-busting strategies makes good sense in our cost-conscious times. Like any change in entrenched habits, however, they may take some practice. In meetings, for example, it may feel counterintuitive, or even discourteous, to sometimes be facing an individual other than the one you are addressing. But the result may well be that your 10-person meeting will actually include 10 full participants, and not nine. ■

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

# Bargaining is Group

BY CHRISTINE BROWN

**A**s this is being written, only a handful of settlements have been negotiated. All of them are excellent, despite the very major challenge that this year's unusual bargaining scenario presented. It is still early days, however, and in many locals progress is extremely slow.

In collective bargaining, there is no real downtime. The union is always either in negotiations or in some phase of preparing for bargaining. The process of enforcing the collective agreements is also continuous and runs parallel to bargaining, and in another month or so we will enter a particularly critical phase in that process – ensuring that workplace realities are adjusted to conform to the newly-negotiated contract language.

All of this requires a small army of union members who, at various points in the process this year, put their lives on hold to advance the collective good. It is worth having both a retrospective and prospective look at their work.

## **Training ensures members are ready**

Successful negotiations hinge on an informed and engaged membership, including members who are willing to either sit on the negotiating team or be part of the local's collective bargaining committee structure.

Shortly after the ink on the last collective agreement was dry – less than three years ago – ETFO developed an extensive training program. During the 2007-2008 school year, over 400 members of local negotiating teams and local

collective bargaining committees participated. (Many of these individuals also serve as local executive members.) The training included two provincial conferences, six occasional teacher regional meetings, and training sessions in ETFO's 66 locals. These were all in addition to other long-standing programs focused on negotiating, such as the women's collective bargaining training which is offered each year.

Finally, in those locals that have stewards, collective bargaining content was prominent in steward training sessions. That is important for two reasons. It is stewards who do the heavy lifting during bargaining – they field the questions, distribute the information, encourage their overworked colleagues to come out to meetings, and serve as the link to the local executive. As well, typically, they are the pool from which tomorrow's bargainers are drawn.

As we moved into actual negotiations in the fall, this extended group carried out its work – at the bargaining table, in the caucus rooms, and in the staff rooms. The arbitrary deadlines and odd edicts coming out of the Ministry of Education meant even greater disruption than bargaining usually does. Local presidents in particular had to rearrange their personal lives on short notice in order to attend meetings in Toronto.

In bargaining years, interest in the process peaks, which is important for both continuity and renewal. As one indication, an upcoming collective bargaining conference for women members is currently well oversubscribed, with an unprecedented lengthy waiting list. That is a healthy sign for ETFO's future.

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Christine Brown is the Coordinator of Protective services at ETFO.

# Work



ETFO members attended the collective bargaining conference last fall.



## Enforcing agreements takes teamwork

For unions, bargaining builds human capital. And it is this large pool of ETFO human capital – the local executive members, the bargaining team and committee members, and the stewards – who will be at the forefront of enforcing the new collective agreements. As this is being written we do not yet know the full contents of those collective agreements, but we know what a few of the key provisions will be. It has always been the case that the unglamorous task of enforcing collective agreements is more difficult than actually bargaining them. In this round, that maxim is truer than ever.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) came into bargaining with a plan to roll back some of the rights that teachers had achieved in the previous round of bargaining. This was quite evident in some of the contract language – such as the proposal that principals control the use of any additional negotiated preparation time – it tabled during the provincial discussions. The fact that OPSBA did not succeed in these attempts does not mean that individual school boards will give up this and other fights.

When your employer comes after your collective agreement – and the odds are that it will – a great many individuals at the local level will be there to help you defend it. Hundreds of them have spent the past two years poring over contract language and gaining an understanding of its nuances.

There are endless external pressures to increase both the length of your working day and the level of intensity with which you must work. Unfortunately, the provincial government has become wedded to a very narrow and unproven measure of student “success.” The quest for improved EQAO scores has driven the assessment juggernaut that continues to crush teachers and students in its path. These many new initiatives create both a political and a practical problem. At the political level, ETFO is active in the numerous committees, stakeholder meetings, roundtables, and workgroups the Ministry of Education is so fond of convening. At all of these, the union has taken a strong position with respect to the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of various initiatives and the implications for teacher workload.

On a practical level, the best defenses against workload creep are strong collective agreement language and the willingness of locals and of individual members to enforce collective agreement rights. The hard work done at the local level over the past two years means that we are well-positioned as we move into the next phase of bargaining. ■



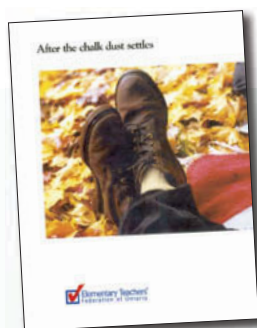
# Stress in the Classroom – A WSIB Claim?

BY PRS STAFF

There is no denying that work-related stress is on the rise among classroom teachers. Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan statistics show that stress and mental health illnesses make up 39 percent of all claims for long-term disability. (This is more than twice the incidence of the second leading cause of disability – diseases of the musculoskeletal system/connective tissue, which make up 17 percent of claims.)<sup>1</sup> Even the most seasoned educators face escalating pressure to do more for their students despite having fewer resources.

Stress can lead to poor physical and mental health, and among its causes are:

- conflict with a school administrator or another colleague
- dealing with difficult students
- burnout and exhaustion from never-ending classroom paperwork and marking
- an unfavourable performance appraisal
- perceived harassment and/or bullying by an administrator or parent
- difficulty balancing professional career with family life.



## After the Chalk Dust Settles

This workbook and journal contain strategies to help teachers cope with change, find a balance between work and home, and achieve overall wellness.

Stress can create a broad range of symptoms from insomnia and depression/anxiety to much more complex medical and psychiatric conditions.

You may believe that because your doctor has put you off work due to work-related stress, you are eligible to file a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claim. Work caused the stress and therefore you must be suffering a workplace illness. Right? Not necessarily.

The WSIB addresses workplace stress under its Traumatic Mental Stress policy. This policy has very specific criteria that must be met before a stress claim can be considered.

For instance, under the policy for Traumatic Mental Stress,

*A worker is entitled to benefits for traumatic mental stress that is an acute reaction to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event arising out of and in the course of your employment. Sudden and traumatic events include such things as witnessing a fatality or a horrific accident, witnessing or being the object of an armed robbery, witnessing or being the object of a hostage-taking, being the object of physical violence, being the object of death threats, being the object of threats of physical violence where you believe the threats are serious and harmful to you or others, being the object of harassment that includes physical violence or threats of physical violence to yourself or others, being the object of harassment that includes being placed in a life-threatening or potentially life-threatening situation.<sup>2</sup>*

However, there is no entitlement for traumatic mental stress that results from decisions or actions that fall within the employer's management rights. Such actions as termination, demotion, transfer, supervision, discipline, changes to working hours, or changed expectations regarding productivity do not in and of themselves meet the requirements of the Traumatic Mental Stress policy.

Teachers have received benefits for lost time due to mental stress caused by traumatic events such as assaults by students or threats of harm from students or parents. Other workers have received benefits when they suffered an acute reaction after witnessing a traumatic event in the workplace.

Two of the key issues for the WSIB and Workplace Safety and Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT) in considering entitlement for mental stress are whether the triggering event amounts to a sudden and traumatic event and whether the event is related to an exercise of management rights. This debate is commonly triggered in cases where the claimant is seeking an entitlement for stress resulting from alleged harassment, particularly harassment by managers. Such cases are examined on their individual facts.

In the past, the WSIAT has granted entitlement for mental stress in cases where a worker was subject to significant harassment by co-workers or supervisors. In 2007, a worker (to whom we'll give the pseudonym Jamie) suffered a stress-related disability following a return to work. Jamie had been granted entitlement for shoulder and neck problems due to a workplace incident. Upon return, the supervisor created unnecessary stress by personally harassing Jamie with public put-downs and humiliating jokes, abusing authority, imposing a most unusual workload, requiring Jamie to act unethically, and making a veiled threat against Jamie. The WSIAT ruled that this treatment went well beyond the reasonable realm of employment function (WSIAT#664/01). In such circumstances, the WSIAT was able to establish specific criteria that allowed for entitlement:


1. The harassment constituted a "sudden and traumatic event" under the terms of the policy.
2. The stress was the result of overzealous scrutiny or vexatious pursuits by the worker's manager.
3. The manager's conduct was outside her/his employment function; e.g., abuse of authority, making personal attacks.

However, allegations of harassment by supervisors were found not to be "traumatic" in a case where a worker was deemed to have had possible stressful interactions with a supervisor. Unpleasant or hostile interactions with co-workers were also not seen as sufficient in and of themselves to amount to a "traumatic event." In this case, the worker had also asserted entitlement to benefits for the mental stress she experienced when management forced her to change her work methods (even though she had

by then used these methods for a number of years), and for stress arising out of a performance review process. The WSIAT ruled that the employer had the right to require the worker to change the way she performed certain work and to review her performance against these new expectations. The WSIAT would not second-guess the manager's judgment on such issues (WSIAT#3022/07). Similar findings have been made in other claims related to stress arising out of the performance review process. Nevertheless, it is important that each WSIB claim be assessed on its own facts in reference to the policy requirements.

As unpleasant or frustrating as a supervisor's behaviour may be, establishing a stress claim on the basis of harassment is not easy – and may, in fact, be impossible – if the actions are deemed to fall within a reasonable scope of management rights and there is no objective evidence of a traumatic triggering event. Certainly you have a right to file a WSIB claim but gaining entitlement may be challenging. In some cases, issues of harassment may be dealt with more effectively under the collective agreement or the school board's harassment policy.

While the WSIB is unlikely to approve claims for the regular and everyday stresses of the classroom, the stress you or your colleagues experience is no less real. ETFO has produced a variety of articles that you may find useful in dealing with stress in the classroom. For more information on this and related topics go to [etfo.ca/AdviceForMembers](http://etfo.ca/AdviceForMembers) and click on PRS MATTERS Bulletins, or [etfo.ca/AdviceForMembers/Depression](http://etfo.ca/AdviceForMembers/Depression).

You may also contact Professional Relations staff to discuss your concerns. This is a confidential service. 

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#### Notes:

1. From the Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan 2008 Benefits Workshop, September 24-25, 2008, Delta Meadowvale Hotel, Mississauga, Ontario.
2. Traumatic Mental Stress, WSIB Operation Policy #15-03-02 at [wsib.on.ca](http://wsib.on.ca).



BY HILDA WATKINS

# OTF Concerns: Pensions and Standardized Testing

**THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS** has been likened to the Great Depression and has created pressures that most Ontarians have not experienced before. Unfortunately, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) has not been immune to this global economic disaster.

In its April report to members, the OTPP Board revealed that the plan's net assets had dropped to \$87.4 billion in 2008, from \$108.5 billion a year earlier. This is the third time in the plan's 18-year history that it has registered a loss and the first time in nine years that it has underperformed its total fund benchmark.

By law the plan must file a valuation with the provincial regulators every three years. To be considered fully funded, the plan must have sufficient assets to pay pensions to all current and retired members over a 70-year span. Low interest rates, the declining ratio of active members to retired members, and the longevity of retirees affect the cost of pensions. Both the 2005 and the 2008 valuations showed a funding shortfall. To balance the fund the partners – OTF and the government – had the option of increasing contributions, reducing benefits, or using a combination of the two. To eliminate the 2005 shortfall the partners agreed to a contribution increase of 3.1 percent, phased in over three years. To deal with the 2008 shortfall a provision for conditional indexing for service after 2009 was implemented. The partners and the OTPP Board continue to discuss what is the best time to file the next valuation. The assumptions used by the board for the valuation of our pension remain a source of concern.

However, members should rest assured their pensions are secure. Significant portions of the reported losses were unrealized (paper losses). The plan's exceptionally diverse assets position it well to ride out the recession and to provide strong returns once the economy returns to normal.

## Increased requests for assistance

The global recession also had a significant impact on OTF's international assistance program. In 40 years the federation has never experienced such a deluge of requests for assistance as it received this year. OTF dedicates approximately 1.8 percent of net revenue to international assistance. This year it was able to partially fund 141 projects, many submitted by organizations located in India.

## EQAO test results misused?

The provincial government's proclivity for large-scale, standards-based testing continues to be a source of consternation. OTF has advocated for random sample testing as a means to supply the data necessary to guide educational policy decisions, engender public confidence, provide additional resources for specialty teachers, and eliminate the nefarious practice of ranking schools.

OTF was dismayed to learn about the School Information Finder, a Ministry of Education website that enables a comparison of schools based on EQAO scores, student population, and socio-economic factors. In essence, the website allows parents to shop for schools. It does nothing to strengthen the fabric of equity in Ontario's multi-culturally diverse society. Conversely, it could demoralize neighbourhoods, polarize communities, and foster a culture of elitism. At the time of writing, OTF, its affiliated teacher federations, and various stakeholders were addressing this issue with the ministry.

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This is my last Voice article as ETFO's OTF table officer. It has been my pleasure to represent you at OTF.

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





BY EMILY NOBLE

# Nationally Speaking: Building relationships

Teaching is a social activity. Early in our careers teachers learn that the basis for our success is often found in our relationships with others.

- Classroom management and student achievement are directly affected by our relationships with students.
- Positive teacher and parent relationships provide opportunities for meeting student, classroom, and school needs.
- Teachers know that keeping the caretaker and the school secretary on your side makes life within the school much easier.

Much of what we do at the Canadian Teachers' Federation establishes strong, positive relationships that benefit teachers and advance their interests.


Provincial and territorial teacher organizations across this country bring value to education and help make Canada a respected educational leader in the world. CTF creates national solidarity for teachers and strong working relationships in what could easily be a fractured system. That solidarity includes purposeful coordination of concepts and projects that matter to teachers.

CTF works with numerous other organizations and individuals who have an effect on teachers' lives. CTF is seen as a worthwhile contact for others. The resources, connections, and contacts, and the knowledge of the people who make up CTF, are well respected throughout Canada and throughout the world. Every

CTF member organization benefits and shines because of the work CTF does.

Positive relations pay off directly for teachers. For example, when the issue of reciprocal certification came up recently, CTF contacts provided direct, up-to-date information. When such information is supplemented by what is readily available to member organizations, teachers across Canada develop a deep understanding of an issue.

Teachers throughout Canada see themselves, colleagues, and students suffering as targets of cyber bullying. The strong relationships that CTF has with researchers and other organizations have allowed us to take the good work done by provincial and territorial teacher organizations to lead a coordinated challenge to cyber bullying that has the potential to create a national (and international) discourse that uses common language to reach common goals for the good of teachers and students. Many external groups were unaware of teachers' concerns and some believed that teachers have no need to fear cyber bullying, which they saw as purely a student issue.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation is a tireless advocate for teachers' interests. Our respect for classroom teachers and for their organizations demands no less. 

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

Emily Noble is president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

# reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews

## My Canada Series:

### A Bloom of Friendship

ANNE RENAUD

Montreal: Lobster Press, 2005

22 pages \$8.95

Illustrated by Ashley Spires

### Our Song:

### The Story of "O Canada"

PETER KUITENBROUWER

Montreal: Lobster Press, 2004

22 pages \$19.95

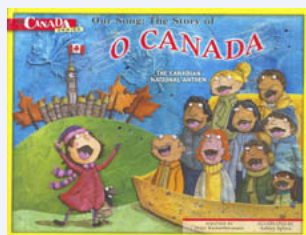
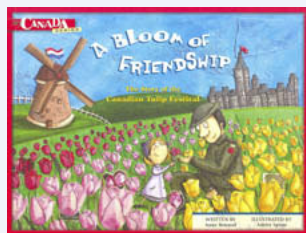
Illustrated by Ashley Spires

Reviewed by **Paula Marengueur**

When partnering with the grade 5 teachers at my school, I noticed we had limited resources about the national anthem. Many students were wandering aimlessly in the land of Google. When they were introduced to *Our Song: The Story of "O Canada,"* they realized that sometimes using old-fashioned books can help out with research much faster and in easier language than Internet resources.

Set in a large font, this book has easy vocabulary and intriguing cartoon illustrations that capture the young reader's attention. *Our Song* is completely accessible to young readers and is directly related to the Ontario curriculum.

The second book in this series, *A Bloom of Friendship: The Story of The Canadian Tulip Festival.* Makes use of the same



appealing format. It is partly set up like a mini-magazine, with some short articles that make it easy for the reluctant reader to find information. This book could be used in conjunction with the grade 6 curriculum about "Canada's Links to the World." It is an easy read for students interested in World War II or it could be used as a teacher resource in discussing celebrations such as the Tulip Festival or Remembrance Day with grade 2 students.

It can be challenging, as a librarian, to find history books that are child-friendly, easy to read, and attractive. The "My Canada Series" definitely meets those needs. The series would be an affordable and welcome addition to any school's library.

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**Paula Marengueur** is a member of the Simcoe County ETFO Local and the teacher librarian at Tecumseth Beeton Public School.

## Exceptional Women Environmentalists

FRANCES ROONEY

Toronto: Second Story Press,

2007

\$10.95 110 pages

Reviewed by **Laurie May**

This book, which profiles 10 women from all over the world, is one of 11 books that make up "The Women's Hall of Fame Series."

Each of these women has done inspirational work.

- Rachel Carson, started the modern environmental movement by warning that "magic chemicals" intended to kill insects were actually killing other living things and disrupting the food chain.
- Jane Goodall founded the Chimpanzee Guardian Project in Tanzania.
- India's Vandana Shiva fought against biopiracy – the theft of the right to grow and use certain plants.
- Dai Qing focused world attention on the Three Gorges Dam in Hubei, China.
- Fatima Jibrell founded Sun Fire Cooking, which provides sun cookers to replace the charcoal kilns that pollute the air and destroy plants in Somalia.
- Sheila Watt Cloutier fought against toxic chemicals and global warming in her Inuit community.
- Sharon Beder of Australia is a pioneer in work on



water quality.

- Marina Silva fights to preserve the Brazilian rainforest.
- Ukraine's Olya Melen, an environmental lawyer, worked to save the wetlands of the Danube Delta.
- Severn Cullis-Suzuki (David Suzuki's daughter) focuses on education, conservation, and traditional knowledge.

In addition to finding out about these remarkable women, we learn a good deal about geography, ecology, and biology. More importantly, we develop an increased environmental consciousness and a deep gratitude for our planet Earth. This easy-to-read paperback has many pictures and quotes to supplement the text. The Glossary and Resource section is excellent. Recommended for ages nine to 13, it would be an excellent addition to a Junior/Intermediate classroom library.

-----  
**Laurie May** is a member of the Simcoe County ETFO Local and a grade 1 teacher at Primrose Elementary School in Mulmur.

# reviews • reviews •

## Bread and Roses, Too

KATHERINE PATERSON

Clarion Books

New York, New York: a

Houghton Mifflin Company

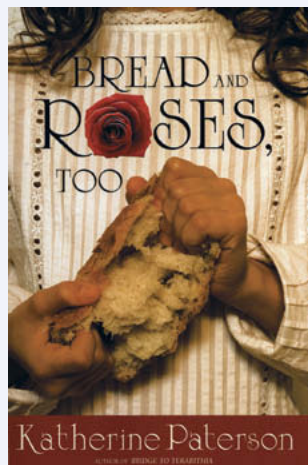
imprint, 2006

272 pages, \$21.95

Reviewed by **Catherine Allen**  
American children's author, Katherine Paterson, is a two-time Newbery Medal winner and recipient of countless other awards. Her fiction for 10- to 14-year-olds enables them to experience life, in all its gritty reality, at a safe remove.

This novel tells the story of Rosa Serutti, an Italian immigrant girl growing up in the early 1900s in a thread-bare tenement in Lawrence, Massachusetts, a mill town. The mill workers, largely immigrants, include Rosa's mother and older sister. In 1912 they stage an illegal strike to protest a cut in their already paltry wages, causing Rosa to fear for their safety.

When the violence escalates, many of the striking mill workers send their children to stay with sympathetic families in New York City and Vermont. Rosa is sent to Vermont, as is the second protagonist in the story, Jake Beale, a boy escaping an abusive home. As the story unfolds, both children undergo transformative life experiences developing into reflective, principled young adults.





In *Bread and Roses, Too*, Paterson, a master of vivid settings and clearly delineated characters, has created a fully-fleshed society, firmly embedded in an authentic historical context. Although the focus is on the American labour movement, this novel has broadly based links with the grade 8 social studies curriculum: one of the objectives of the section, "A Changing Society", is that students acquire an understanding of the history of the labour movement and its impact on working conditions and the role of children in today's society.

As a teacher read-a-loud or as an independent novel study using literature circles, this novel could be a highly effective teaching tool with Intermediate students. It is guaranteed to generate thought-provoking discussion and lively debate.

**Catherine Allen** is a member of the Ottawa-Carleton ETFO Local and a freelance writer/editor.

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# HELP HAITI May & June 2009

Wyclef Jean – musician, Haitian Goodwill Ambassador and founder of Yéle Haiti – with some of the students in Gonaives, Haiti, who are sponsored by the HELP HAITI campaign.

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Haitian children in school



During the months of May and June 2009, students in Ontario are invited to give 25¢ each to help put Haitian children in school.

Haiti is the poorest country in our hemisphere. Its government is not able to pay for education, and the result is that nearly one million children do not attend school. Work is scarce and unemployment high, so many families just cannot afford to pay the necessary fees.

HELP HAITI began in Alberta in 2005 and the program is now expanding to other provinces. If every student gives 25¢, we CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT. It takes 315 students giving 25¢ each to put one pupil in Haiti in school for a year.

Last year students in Alberta paid tuition for 345 children in Haiti. With Ontario students joining in this year, we can send even more children to school.

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## HELP HAITI DEPOSIT FORM / fax (no cover sheet) to 780-669-5866

- ❶ **COLLECT 25¢** from each student in your school any time during the months of May and June, 2009.
- ❷ **COMPLETE** deposit form (right).
- ❸ **DEPOSIT** quarters by taking them to the nearest Scotiabank branch no later than **July 1st**. Take the completed deposit form with you and ask the teller to add initials in the space indicated.
- ❹ **FAX** this deposit form to the number indicated in order to report on what you have done. This last step is VERY IMPORTANT. If you do not send this fax, Yéle Haiti has no way of confirming your donation.

### DETAILS OF SCHOOL:

Name of School:

Street Address:

Town or City:

Prov:

Postal  
Code:

Contact Person:

Tel:

E-mail:

### DETAILS OF DEPOSIT:

Date of Deposit:

Initialed by Teller:

HELP HAITI Account: # 50328 00282 15 / Scotiabank

Number of Students:

X .25 each = deposit of: \$

# trivia

BY PETER HARRISON

## It's a deal!

Jon and Amy's class were playing at being 'early settlers'. Their teacher had given them all some 'money' - banknote-sized pieces of paper each bearing a big red maple leaf, so each note was worth '1 Maple'.

The class set about 'trading' and Jon and Amy, working together, soon had a stock of cows, sheep and goats, and Amy even had her own prized piglet.

The two children decided to take some of their cows 'to market' and received exactly the same number of Maples per cow as the number of cows they sold.

Then, with the proceeds, they purchased as many sheep as they could, at 10 Maples each, and with the few Maples left over, they bought a goat.

Jon then shared out the sheep equally between them both, giving the one sheep left over to Amy while keeping the goat for himself.

"But that's not fair!" said Amy. "You've now got less in value than I have. So I'm going to give you my prized piglet which will just balance us up exactly!"

**How many Maples was the piglet worth?**

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 the Editor, ETFO Voice, at the address on the masthead. Three winners will be drawn from all the correct entries received by May 19, 2009.

### Solution to our last puzzle:

**"And the Months turned into Years ..."**

**YEAR = 8946 & MONTHS = 107352**

**So ON EARTH = '07 94635'**

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

**Jan Hendry**, Rainbow Teacher Local

**Vickie Mazzocchi**, Kawartha Pine Ridge OT

**Susan Monahan**, Toronto OT

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# calendar

**May 14-16, Ottawa**

## **OAME Annual Conference**

**"Balance: Finding the Right MMIX"**

Ontario Association for Mathematics Education

Carleton University, Ottawa

[omae.on.ca](http://omae.on.ca)

**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)

**May 30-Sept. 7, Gatineau, Quebec**

## **Canadian Children's Museum**

**"Building Brainstorm,"**

an interactive exhibition about construction and design.

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

**June 29 – July 3, Pacific Grove, California**

## **2009 National Marine Educators Association (NMEA) Conference**

**"One World Conserving One Ocean"**

[nmeaweb.org](http://nmeaweb.org); or

email [nmea09@mbayaq.org](mailto:nmea09@mbayaq.org)

**July 27-28, Oakville**

**July 30-31, Sarnia**

**Aug 4-5, Wiarton**

## **Monarch Teacher Network-Canada**

**"Teaching and Learning with Monarch Butterflies"**

[monarchcanada.org](http://monarchcanada.org)

**August 20-21, Halifax**

## **The Nova Scotia Education Leadership Consortium's 2009**

Assessment Summit

Registration deadline: May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009

[nselc.ednet.ns.ca](http://nselc.ednet.ns.ca)

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## Post your event here: it's free

If you are a non-profit organization sponsoring an event of interest to educators we will include your listing in the Calendar section free of charge. (Listings are subject to availability of space. Reunions and life-event notices are not accepted. The editor's decision is final.)

Please submit the information on or prior to the 'artwork deadline' on our rate card. The rate card is available at [etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca) ► *Information for Advertisers*. Or contact Adele Bertram, [abertram@etfo.org](mailto:abertram@etfo.org).



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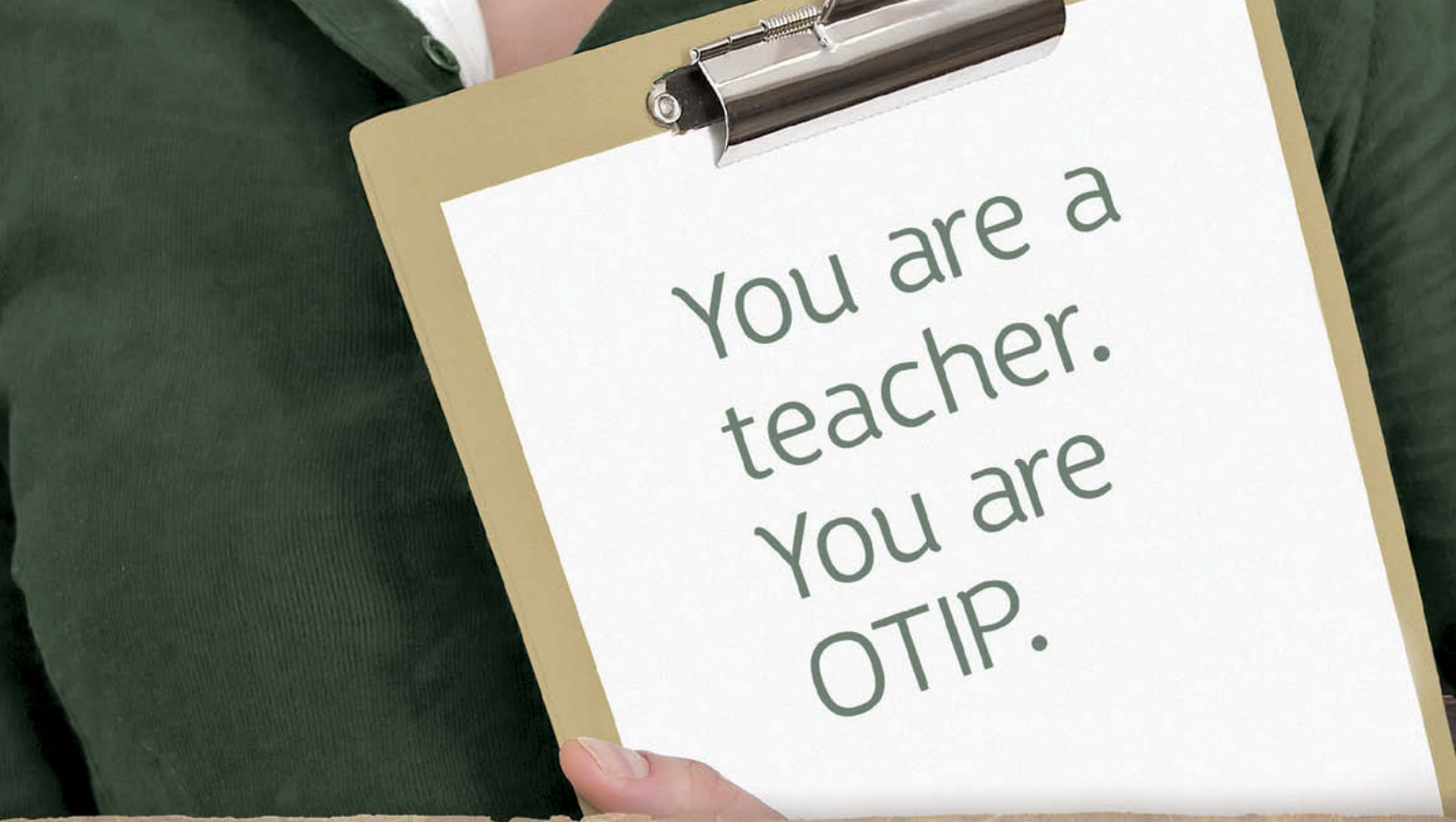
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