



**ETF0**

WINTER 2011  
VOL. 14 - NO. 2

# Voice

## ETF0 Collective Bargaining: Control Your Future

Using cell phones in the classroom

Professional Resource Catalogue insert

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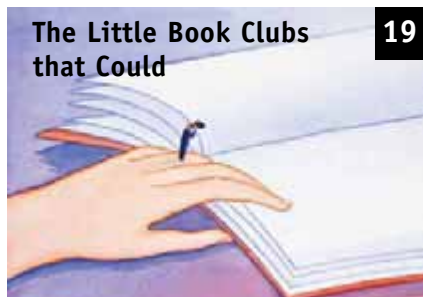
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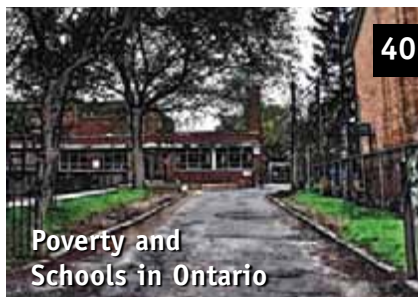
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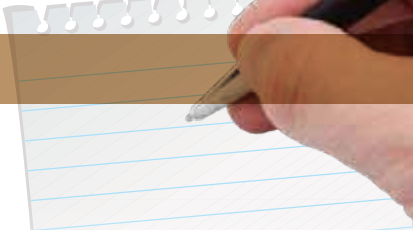
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CURRICULUM INSERT  
The importance of play

ON OUR COVER: MARISSA BAYNE, vice-president of the Hamilton-Wentworth DECE Local. Photo: Anne de Haas.





## I Say Goodbye (Again). You Say Hello.

In the June 2011 issue of *Voice* I said goodbye, anticipating that it would be the last issue I would be editing.

Things were not so straightforward: I found myself continuing on for a few months more than I had anticipated.

But now it is truly time for my last goodbye. ETFO has hired a new editor, and it is my good fortune to be able to introduce her.

Izida Zorde has been an editor, community organizer, and analyst. She holds an MA from OISE in Sociology and Equity Studies in Education. For the past seven years, she has been the editor of *Fuse Magazine*, an internationally-distributed publication on culture and politics.



Izida Zorde

Before that she served as an editor with the *Russia Journal* in Moscow. She has also written for *This Magazine*, *Now Magazine*, and *Walrus*.

Izida has a strong interest in mobilizing communities and brings expertise in engaging readers by creating programming, employing internet and mobile technologies,

and social networking and social media

strategies. She is very excited to be joining the ETFO team and looks forward to developing *Voice* into a truly twenty-first century publication.

I have appreciated the support of members and staff during my time at ETFO, in particular my colleagues in communications and government relations and our administrative assistants. ETFO is truly an organization to be proud of.

I wish you all the best for the upcoming holidays and for all your future endeavours.

*Happy Holidays from all of us at ETFO!*

# ETFOVoice

## ETFO Executive Members

President - **Sam Hammond**, Hamilton-Wentworth  
 First Vice-President - **Susan Swackhammer**, Grand Erie  
 Vice-President - **James McCormack**, Waterloo Region  
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**Adelina Cecchin**, Greater Essex County  
**Ellen Chambers**, Lakehead  
**Doug Cook**, Upper Grand  
**Diane Dewing**, Upper Canada Occasional Teachers  
**Pamela Dogra**, Elementary Teachers of Toronto  
**Nancy Lawler**, Bluewater  
**Monica Rusnak**, Ontario North East  
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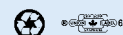
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**Paul Dewar**, the former first vice-president of the Ottawa Carleton Teacher Local, is a candidate for the leadership of the federal NDP. Dewar, 48, was first elected to Parliament in 2006 representing the riding of Ottawa-Centre. In Jack Layton's shadow cabinet, Dewar served as the foreign affairs critic, taking a strong stand on ending the war in Afghanistan. He also gained all-party support for a measure to supply affordable, life-saving generic drugs to the poorest countries. The new NDP leader will be chosen in an all-member vote; its results will be announced March 24 at the leadership convention in Toronto.



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– Cheryl, Education Volunteer, Guyana

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**SAM HAMMOND**  
ETFO President

## Bargaining New Collective Agreements

### **For ETFO the October provincial election**

was a success story: we worked hard to ensure the election of a majority of education-friendly candidates and that goal was accomplished with the election of 53 Liberals and 17 New Democrats.

Our success took all of us working together. The staff and executive in the provincial office, each of you and your local leadership teams, and a strong local-provincial partnership fully dedicated to making a difference for our members. We will need to sustain that collaboration as we now shift our focus to collective bargaining.

In addition to our election activities, throughout the past year we were working on a collective bargaining strategy.

Starting last winter we asked members for their bargaining priorities. Provincial staff collected and analyzed responses to the collective bargaining survey and developed bargaining goals. These were approved by local presidents at the October meeting of Representative Council. You can see them in full in the collective bargaining column on page 7.

We know that of all the teacher federations in the province we have the biggest challenge heading into this round of negotiations.

We fully anticipate that, as was the case in 2004 and 2008, we will once again be approached to engage in a provincial bargaining process. Local presidents have received the principles that will guide our participation and we will make every effort to ensure that any provincial process adheres to them. As well, if a provincial table agreement is reached it will be subject to an all-member vote.

Success in the next round of bargaining will require the government to commit additional financial resources in a difficult economy. In the current economic climate, it will be a challenge to forestall cuts to public education. The ETFO executive has approved a public relations campaign which will aim to build public support for continued investment in education.

We have also begun collective bargaining education. We have developed a comprehensive training program for local leaders and bargainiers to enhance our capacity to bargain strong collective agreements. Member education will focus on underlining the importance of your collective agreements and the importance of solidarity. We hope you will become involved in the bargaining process and support your bargaining team.

In bargaining there are two options. One is to let others take charge. The other – and for us the only option – is to work together to control the future. From this moment forward we must be united in facing the challenges that lie ahead.

We are facing the biggest bargaining challenge that we have ever taken on. Bargaining only succeeds when members are engaged, fully informed, and personally involved in the process.

You are the key to successful negotiations. With your support and solidarity there is nothing that we cannot achieve.



**GENE LEWIS**  
ETFO General Secretary

## Equity and Inclusion: ETFO Making a Difference

**As a teacher federation, ETFO has a lot** in common with other unions and teacher federations. Like them, we take pride in protecting members: bargaining collective agreements, promoting health and safety, promoting and protecting their professional integrity, and providing assistance when they find themselves in difficult circumstances professionally. We are a known leader in providing professional learning, with a wide range of programs and resources that promote teacher leadership and teaching excellence. The resources ETFO has developed for educators in early learning classrooms are unique.

But what sets our federation apart from all others is our commitment to social justice and equity.

This year the ETFO executive approved the following statement and definition of equity:

*It is the goal of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to work with others to create schools, communities, and a society free from all forms of individual and systemic discrimination. To further this goal, ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures which result in equality, promote diversity, and foster respect and dignity for all.*

ETFO has adopted policies on discrimination (1998); antiracism and ethnocultural equity, employment equity, harassment, and religious rights (2000); aboriginal education and native languages (2001); equity and social justice (2003); ETFO representation (2004); and disability issues (2006). (You can find the details of these policy statements in our Reference Book published online at [www.etfo.ca/aboutetfo.referencebook](http://www.etfo.ca/aboutetfo.referencebook).)

ETFO provides a wide range of programs and resources to put its beliefs into effect.

LGBTQ, anti-racist education, human rights, disability issues, and aboriginal education standing committees give members a voice. We make available funding to locals for LGBTQ, equity, and disabilities issues workshops. We fund bursaries and scholarships for members of designated groups and our awards program recognizes the social justice and equity work of members and those in the broader community.

As well, ETFO gives support to a wide range of community, national, and international organizations. Delegates to the 2011 annual meeting voted to provide \$10,000 for relief work in Somalia. They also agreed to provide ongoing financial support for the ETFO Humanity Fund. Our contribution to Project Overseas sends ETFO members to developing nations to assist with teacher education. These are just some examples of the assistance we provide.

We undertake this work because our members believe in the importance of making a difference in the lives of their students, their communities, and the world. The classroom educator who focuses on bringing out the best in every child, the school that welcomes diversity, the ETFO local that supports local organizations fighting poverty, the federation that supports you and your colleagues around the world: it takes all of us working together to make sure that everyone is included and every child achieves success.

Inclusive policies and programs benefit those who might otherwise be marginalized. Moreover, when we are inclusive the unique skills and talents of every person are allowed to flourish. That benefits us all.

# your federation



Collective Bargaining 2012




Control Your Future

## Control Your Future

### ETFO launches its bargaining campaign

ETFO's November 2011 collective bargaining conference brought together 300 local presidents, negotiators, and members of collective bargaining committees. ETFO teacher, occasional teacher, and ESP/PSP collective agreements expire next August. Collective bargaining campaign materials unveiled at the conference include a specially designed app for smartphones. To download it and to find a wealth of collective bargaining information visit [www.controlyourfuture.ca](http://www.controlyourfuture.ca).

Conference participants took part in training sessions outlining their roles and responsibilities, collective bargaining skills, and communications skills and strategies. Mary Bell, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, described anti-union legislation some states have passed and the fight-back campaigns unions have staged. The next issue of *Voice* will have a full report.

President Sam Hammond describes the process that led to the determination of ETFO's bargaining goals on page 4. The bargaining goals are outlined on page 7. Watch for more collective bargaining news in the next issue of *Voice* and in the e-newsletter @ETFO/FEEO. 






# 2012 Collective Bargaining Goals Approved

BY JIM WHITE

**ETFO** collective agreements expire next August. Preparations for the next round of bargaining are now underway. In 2004 and 2008 bargaining took place at both the provincial and local levels. We do not know if there will be a provincial component this time around.

To prepare for negotiations, ETFO develops provincial bargaining goals that apply to all members. Your local develops goals that are specific to the needs of your local and school board.

In his column on page 4, ETFO President Sam Hammond discusses the development and approval process for the provincial goals. They are the result of a rigorous process of consultation and analysis that involved ETFO locals, provincial leadership, and staff. These provincial goals reflect the federation's priorities – they are a target we are working towards. ETFO collective bargaining staff will work closely with your local team to incorporate these goals and your local issues into your preliminary submission. 



JIM WHITE is ETFO's coordinator of Protective Services.

## The bargaining goals for teacher members are

- ▶ elimination of the existing 2 percent salary differential
- ▶ real salary increases
- ▶ maximum class sizes in all grades and programs
- ▶ improved preparation time
- ▶ limits on teacher work load
- ▶ benefit improvements
- ▶ improved pregnancy and parental entitlements
- ▶ language that ensures that vice principals and principals do not engage in bargaining unit work
- ▶ experience credit to include all occasional teacher work.

## The bargaining goals for occasional teacher members are

- ▶ real salary increases
- ▶ paid professional learning
- ▶ capped lists
- ▶ benefit improvements
- ▶ language to provide priority hiring for permanent positions and LTO assignments
- ▶ experience credit to include all occasional teacher work.

## The bargaining goals for ESP/PSP members are

- ▶ real salary increases
- ▶ benefit improvements
- ▶ guaranteed and improved working conditions.

## The bargaining goals for DECE members are

- ▶ real salary increases
- ▶ benefit improvements
- ▶ guaranteed and improved working conditions.

# your federation



ETFO parliamentarian Mary Karchemny (above) chaired the business session of the Representative Council meeting.



**Representative Council** brings together local presidents and activists three times a year. At the October meeting members are elected to Representative Council committees, including the ETFO budget committee.

Elected to the budget committee for 2011–2012 were Karen Fisk, Hastings-Prince Edward; Suzanne Gill, Peel; Eugene James, Elementary Teachers of Toronto; George Taylor, Durham Occasional Teacher Local; and Dave Wildman, Ottawa-Carleton Occasional Teacher Local.

Members elected to serve on the 2011-2012 steering committee are Gundi Barbour, Upper Grand; Anne Saltel, Keewatin-Patricia; Mario Spagnuolo, Greater Essex County; Sylvia van Campen, Upper Canada Occasional Teacher Local; and Gerard O'Neill, Durham.

Members elected to serve on the 2011-2012 selection committee for standing committees are Andrew Aloe, Upper Grand Occasional Teacher Local; Janet Fraser, Ottawa-Carleton; Jan Heinonen, Near North Occasional Teacher Local; Kelly Holley, Algoma; and Ron Rivait, Lambton Kent.

## Leadership

ETFO local leaders and committee chairs attended workshops in late October designed to add to update them on new legislation and to provide skills to assist them in their roles as local executive members and chairs of local committees.

Speakers addressed such topics as social media, polling, professional learning, health and safety, and equity and human rights.

Lawyer Robyn White outlined the implications of anti-violence legislation for local leaders.

## Social Justice Conference for Men

In May, ETFO hosted a two-day Social Justice Conference for Men with 55 participants from all over the province. Funded by the ministry of education, the conference focused on such issues as gender equity, racial bias, power and privilege, LGBTQ, poverty, and finding and becoming allies.

Participants heard about new Web-based e-learning modules that are part of the social media campaign ***It Starts With You, It Stays With Him***, for use with Junior and Intermediate students. These are now available at [itstartswithyou.ca](http://itstartswithyou.ca).

Developed by the White Ribbon Campaign in collaboration with ETFO, one module provides 30 minutes of information about teaching toward gender equality and healthy relationships. Included are lesson plans and documents to support the delivery of schoolwide events or programming around these issues.

Also available is a collection of short films by nine men about their journeys to manhood. The themes covered include fatherhood, fatherlessness, peer pressure, relationships, the use and experience of violence. The accompanying discussion guide makes it easy to use the films in the classroom.

To access these resources use the username ETFO and password *WhiteRibbon*. When you have explored the learning module please fill out a survey to provide feedback.

—Adam Peer,

Executive assistant, Equity and Women's Services

## Managing stress: choose how to react

When it comes to managing stress, it's all in how you choose to react to it, according to work/life balance expert Dr. Glenn DiPasquale.

"While stress may be unavoidable, you can learn strategies to put stress in context and deal with it effectively," DiPasquale told ETFO Leadership Conference delegates.

Along with resisting the tendency to "catastrophize" events, we can choose to be positive and to laugh. "When we feel stress, our body produces cortisol. Laughter not only lowers cortisol and stimulates the immune system, its effects last well into the next day," he says.

Noting that stress-related illnesses are responsible for 90 percent of visits to doctors, DiPasquale emphasized better time management, prioritizing, and learning how to say no, and key lifestyle changes such as regular exercise and quitting smoking.

"A low blood level of nicotine mimics stress," DiPasquale said. "What you're really experiencing is nicotine withdrawal so when you have a cigarette, there is instant release from that state, giving you the false impression that the cigarette has relaxed you."

"As leaders, remember that stress is contagious. You need to get hold of your stress and radiate calmness," DiPasquale reminded his audience.

—Valerie Dugale,

ETFO media relations officer

## ETFO Members Recognized

ETFO members Simon Ives, Tanya Leary, and Lynn Wilkins have received Certificates of Achievement as part of the 2010-2011 Prime Minister's Teaching Awards.

Ives, a kindergarten teacher at Hillcrest P.S., and Wilkins a teacher at Courcellette P.S., are members of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local. Leary, a teacher at Waabgon Gamig First Nation School, is a member of the York Region Teacher Local.

The deadline for the 2011-2012 awards is January 9. For more information visit [www.pma-ppm.gc.ca](http://www.pma-ppm.gc.ca).

## DECE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

**Four ETFO locals representing designated early childhood educators (DECEs) have negotiated first collective agreements. Simcoe County, Rainbow, Halton, and Hamilton-Wentworth DECE members ratified their agreements this fall.**



# *The Cloud in the Classroom*



To have your head in the clouds isn't ideal when driving a car or playing contact sports, but when it comes to the classroom, a "head in the cloud" may be more desirable. In techno-speak, the cloud refers to accessing software and data using the Internet rather than relying on what is installed or stored on a local hard drive or local network. Many boards of education in Ontario have already begun shifting their computer network support systems to cloud-computing networks. Some teachers are also shifting some of their planning and classroom practice to the cloud, which enables students to use their own mobile devices in the classroom.



## The Changing Face of Teaching Practice

RYAN EWASKIW, learning coordinator

The New Media Consortium's 2011 *Horizon Report*, which examines emerging technologies for their potential impact on and use in teaching, focuses on four key trends forecast for the next five years in education.<sup>1</sup>

- The abundance of resources and relationships made easily accessible by the Internet will increasingly challenge us to revisit our roles as educators in sense-making, coaching, and credentialing.
- People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want.
- Because the world of work is increasingly collaborative, we have to rethink the way we structure student projects.
- The technologies we use are increasingly cloud-based and our notion of IT support is decentralized.

I expect most ETFO members can relate to these trends on some level. For example, Web-based report card software allows teachers to complete assessment and evaluation practices at school or at home, using multiple platforms.

### CRITICAL FRIENDS

In my role as a learning technologies coordinator, I regularly reflect on how best to assist classroom teachers. I col-



## The Plugged-In Portable

DAVID CARRUTHERS, classroom teacher

In addition to traditional computers, students in my classroom use mobile devices as learning tools to collaborate, investigate, innovate, and express themselves creatively. While students use these devices almost instinctively, teachers may struggle to understand their relevance to teaching and learning. School boards face infrastructure and budgetary hurdles. Here is how our "Plugged-In Portable" has attempted to overcome these two major obstacles.

### LACK OF COMPUTERS

I have more than a dozen computers in my portable. My situation doesn't represent the typical classroom, but lack of computers doesn't have to be an obstacle if we begin to harness the computing power of student-owned mobile devices such as the iPod Touch and smartphones. The cost of allowing these devices in the classroom is exceptionally low. By surveying our students, my learning coordinator and I found that a large portion of students already own an iPod and regularly bring it to school.

Although many teachers may still be unsure about the use of mobile devices in the learning environment, I have been explicitly teaching and modeling for my students how to use them in a socially responsible, safe, and ethical manner. Therefore, students in my classroom don't use



Ryan Ewaskiw (*foreground*) visiting David Carruthers' class.



laborate regularly with David Carruthers, a grade 6 teacher at Mitchell Hepburn Public School in St. Thomas. He constantly works to develop teaching practices using technology to enable and support student learning, to differentiate instruction, and to support collaborative inquiry models.

During the past four years, David and I have become “critical friends.” I enjoy stopping in to work with David’s class. “What do you have for us this time, Mr. E?” is how his students usually greet me. They expect me to demonstrate something new on each classroom visit.

In most cases, David and I are surfing the same wave; however, once in a while I take a certain pride and pleasure in bringing him something new. We challenge each other with *what if* questions. Generally, I focus on some of the big ideas and theory, while David keeps the conversation grounded in the practicality of the classroom. Ours is a reflective, iterative process.

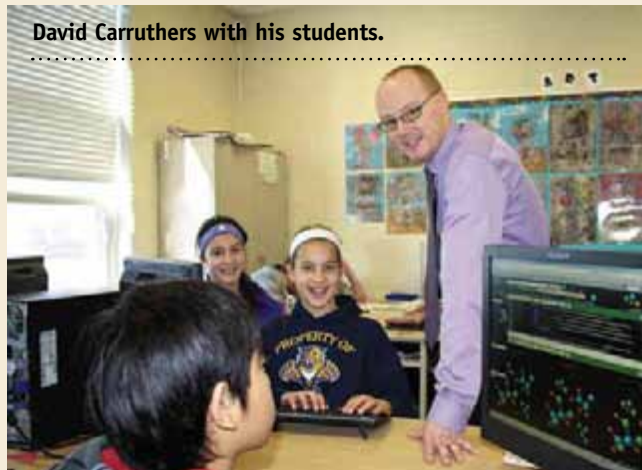
David provides rich learning opportunities in his classroom, and I have witnessed a great deal of student success. When I interviewed a small group of his students, I asked them to reflect on the activities that stood out most in their minds.

A student excitedly exclaimed, “I think the highlight of my year was the Khan Academy because you learn more math skills. And, it was more fun than just sitting in a classroom and listening to a teacher talking about any old thing.”

Another explained: “The Kahn Academy is a Web-based program. You can sign in, and you can do all kinds of stuff. It’s not just math. They have other subjects too . . . and you can move on to become more proficient and stuff like that.”

A final anecdote came from a keen young woman who stated passionately, “I was thinking about the Chris Hadfield interview through Skype. He is a famous Canadian astronaut. He was in Russia when we connected with him on the computer and big screen in our gym.”

David Carruthers with his students.



cellphones to text each other or make calls during lessons.

In making use of mobile devices in the classroom, I am not simply pandering to students’ interests. Technology facilitates learning. Using mobile devices represents a feasible solution to the lack of computers.

If you are unfamiliar with mobile devices, using them to teach might seem a daunting task with a steep learning curve. When we flip the tables and ask our students to teach us, we begin to cultivate an environment that exemplifies positive interdependence. I believe the potential is there if you choose to tap into this learning paradigm.

## MANAGING MULTIPLE OPERATING SYSTEMS IN THE CLOUD

Opening the door to student-owned devices, means facing the challenge of dealing with a number of computing platforms in our classrooms.

Using cloud computing and Web 2.0 applications, we can meet this challenge and provide students with rich opportunities for collaboration on nearly any Web-enabled device. At any given time, my students can be working simultaneously on a document using iPods and computers running multiple operating systems.

The Google suite of applications makes it possible. The only must-have is access to a Web browser. All students have free Google accounts and can access all of Google’s cloud-based applications (e.g., word processing and spreadsheets). They can “check in” with the class while on vacation and submit assignments, or can collaborate on documents in real time with the rest of the class while home ill. My students also use a variety of other Web-based applications, such as Prezi, Bitstrips, and Glogster.

Cloud computing and Web 2.0 are transforming the way students learn and challenging educators to rethink outdated pedagogy. By removing the barriers of having to



## OBSERVATIONS

My experience so far has led me to believe that there are three levels of technology integration present in a well-balanced classroom.

1. A large screen display connected to a powerful desktop or laptop computer is a great tool for activities such as whole-class shared reading and mathematics lessons.
2. Workspaces with a few SOLE centres (a large-screen monitor connected to a computer, laptop, or netbook) are well suited for small collaborative inquiry investigations.<sup>2</sup>
3. Wi-fi connectivity for students' personal mobile devices is the final way to engage students by giving them access to personal learning tools at any time and in any place. ✓

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twitter: @ryanewaskiw

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### Endnotes

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- 2 Mitra, S. (2010). (Presenter). The child-driven education.

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access software applications stored on our school network running one operating system, the option of learning anytime, anywhere is truly at our students' fingertips.

## OBSERVATIONS

My experience in the "Plugged-In Portable" has profoundly changed my role as a classroom teacher. The most striking example of this change occurred early in the school year. Shortly after I introduced students to a new software application, they started to approach each other, rather than me. I witnessed this gradual release of responsibility frequently, as it didn't usually take long for students' knowledge to surpass mine. They became the experts and the teachers, and I became a coach as I roamed the classroom providing suggestions and encouragement, and pushing their thinking. This doesn't diminish my role – it simply recasts what it means to be a teacher in the twenty-first century. By the end of the year, my students were learning as much from me as from each other and the amount of face-to-face and online collaboration, investigation, and innovation was profound. ✓

Blog: <http://thepluggedinportable.edublogs.org/>

Twitter: @pluggedportable

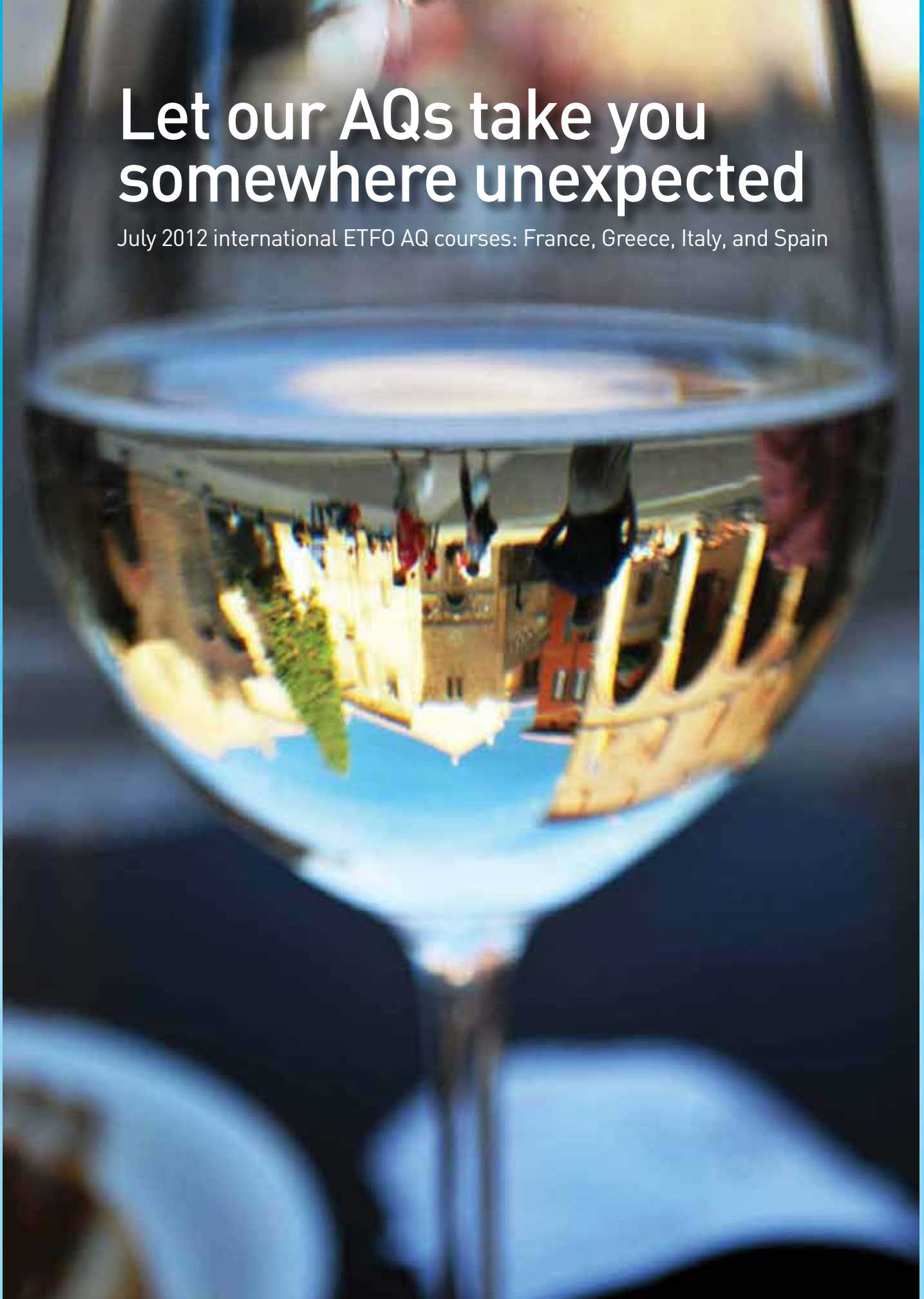
Email: [d.carruthers@tvdsb.on.ca](mailto:d.carruthers@tvdsb.on.ca)

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**RYAN EWASKIW** and **DAVID CARRUTHERS** are members of the Thames Valley Teacher Local.

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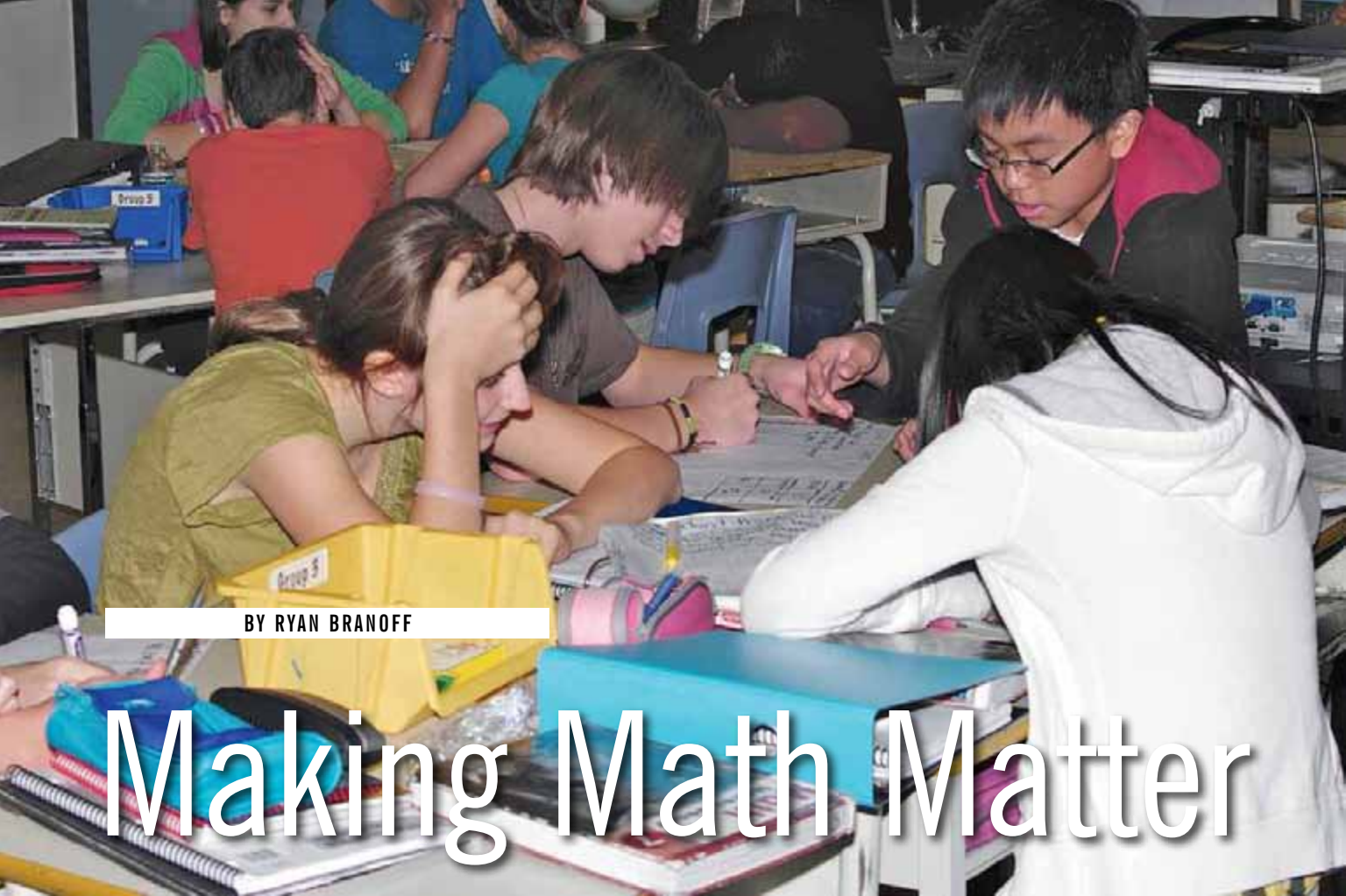
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"I found the course extremely well laid out and totally relevant to my teaching practice. I was very impressed by the practical nature of the assignments ... this is the first course that I have taken in a long time where I actually feel as though I have gained significant professional knowledge."





BY RYAN BRANOFF

# Making Math Matter

**A**s an educator it has been my goal to captivate my students and engage them in their work. However, engagement is not easy to come by when many students are uninterested in the subject matter that I am trying to teach. When I first began teaching I recognized a major issue for my students (and for me!): they didn't like math.

Could I blame them? When I was a student, my attitude toward math was no different. It was the subject I liked least because it was repetitive and we were expected to learn by rote. I found math irrelevant and unimportant. This experience is what motivated me as an educator. I asked myself how I was going to engage and challenge my students critically about math when I hadn't much liked it myself.

I had to consider twenty-first-century learners and their demands for engagement. I knew that giving my students ownership and making math relevant were my best options.

## Enter the three-part lesson

*The Three-Part Lesson in Mathematics: Co-planning, Co-teaching and Supporting Student Learning* (<http://resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/coplanning/>) is a wonderful instructional tool provided by the ministry of education. This resource gave me an opportunity to reformat how I taught math. It allowed my students to take ownership of their learning and allowed me to have a classroom full of critical thinkers and problem

solvers who were interested in math.

The essence of the three-part lesson is to give students open-ended problems with multiple entry points. Students work with partners at their level to problem-solve and develop a result. They are encouraged to justify their thinking by any means necessary and use the methods that best suit their needs. My role as the teacher is to facilitate and guide their thinking without pushing them toward one commonly practised method.

After students have had the opportunity to work through the problem, we discuss as a class the different methods they used, what worked and what didn't. This is a fantastic way to get the dialogue going in a mathematics classroom! I encourage my students to justify their thinking. The discussion also provides them with the chance to ask questions, and develop an understanding of concepts that they didn't quite get. Students who have developed an interesting way of solving the problem take a lot of pride in their work and are willing to act as peer teachers for the rest of the class. The



students who have difficulty coming to an end result are now learning as a result of the interaction with their learning partners and from the class discussion. Students are not worried about taking a risk or getting a “wrong” answer because they know that they will be able to gain an understanding of the concept during the discussion portion of the lesson.

One activity my students did was finding persuasive bias in a variety of magazines, ranging from *Nintendo Power* to *National Geographic*. I asked my grade 7 and 8 students to compare the number of ads and the number of articles in the publication and to represent their collected data in an interesting way. I also asked them to make a generalization or conclusion about their data.

During our discussion, students presented a variety of different graphs from pie charts to bar graphs, whichever method worked best for them. Some also made generalizations about what their data meant. One conclusion they reached was that *Nintendo Power* was a biased publication because even its articles advertised

Nintendo products. The discussion showed many students new data management procedures.

This problem allowed us to talk about different kinds of discrete data graphs, the difference between discrete and continuous data, how to use data collection to identify bias, and how to use data collection to persuade an audience. These tasks also highlighted how mathematics connects to textual and media literacy.

### Differentiated learning

Using the three-part lesson allows me to address the various learning styles, needs, exceptionalities, and multiple intelligences of my students. Because the problems are open-ended, the tasks and lessons are automatically differentiated for any learner, giving students working at different levels an opportunity to be successful and to bring their own background knowledge into the solution. Eliminating the stress of following a specific formula or method takes the limits off of what they are capable of doing.

Being allowed to approach math in a way that is relevant and meaningful creates a risk-free environment that allows mathematics discussions to become richer and deeper. My students have formed a community of thinkers where everyone’s opinion, strategy, and solution is valued. Even solutions that don’t quite work are valued, because every thought contributes to the collective understanding of the concept under investigation.




## Engaging the reluctant learner

My students' attitudes toward math have completely changed as a result of this three-part structure. When I allow my students to work through and investigate what I am trying to teach them, they feel as though they are an essential part of the learning process. Students who have previously shown frustration and difficulty with math are now enjoying it and becoming engaged in what they are learning.

Last year, I had a student who showed minimal interest in learning math. He would often say that he found math boring and repetitive. Throughout the year, I saw this student blossom and find an interest in the subject. He thrived because his classmates and I valued and used his opinions and thoughts. During a lesson on determining the volume of a rectangular prism, this reluctant mathematician developed a creative and unique approach to solving the problem. He equated it to "stacking pancakes": he solved the area (a concept previously taught) and layered the area repeatedly to represent the height of the prism. The rest of the class was fascinated by his thinking and he took great pride in being able to "teach" his peers.

My math program has also had a great impact on those who prefer to think creatively, and on higher-level students. When not limited to the confines of "one right answer," those who are already at a higher level are encouraged to go beyond what is expected. They are able to extend their understanding of math concepts to other areas of the curriculum, such as using data management as a persuasive strategy. This method has particularly benefited those who prefer creative learning as opposed to learning concrete concepts. When math was made relevant and was connected in a cross-curricular way, these creative thinkers developed a greater understanding of why math is important.

When it comes to engaging students in math, the limitations do not lie with the subject matter, but rather with the way it is taught. By moving away from regimented and traditional approaches, teachers can engage students and make math purposeful for them.

Math can be exciting! And I've learned that if I am excited and passionate about what I'm teaching, my students will be as well. 

---

RYAN BRANOFF is a member of the York Region Teacher Local.

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# The Little Book Clubs that Could

BY VIRGINIA MCMILLAN

**A**s the professional learning chair for the Kawartha Pine Ridge Occasional Teacher Local, I am always trying to find new opportunities for our members. The online book club is one of these: last year we had three online book clubs and we will do more this year.

Why do the club online? There are many reasons, including travel time and distances, flexibility, home commitments, and weather. All of these were issues for our members.

Someone has to be in charge of organizing the book club, but in the club everyone is equal. As the organizer I looked after the advertising, obtaining the books, deciding on the day and time, and finding a good location for discussions.

I thought we had a good online location for the club – a free whiteboard – but only two of us could get onto the site at one time. We used another online location and were having a super discussion when we were abruptly kicked off because of a time limit.

Our first book was *Classroom Management that Works* by Robert Marzano. Readings and questions were assigned, we stayed on topic, and we accomplished all we set out to do. Our main challenge was our discussion location, but we all felt the club was successful as we helped each other consider issues and gain new

ideas to put in our arsenal of classroom management strategies.

In January, I advertised once more and three different members decided join me in the club. We chose *The Arts Go to School*, edited by David Booth and Masayuki Hachiya. We made it a five-week club; members were in charge of one art each. The ideas we developed for music, visual arts, dance, drama, and media literacy were great and provided a marvelous boost to our teaching tools.

The biggest difference this time was our chat location: by using the technique of inviting each other to one location, Google chat allowed all four of us to get on at the same time.

For the next club, four people were interested in discussing *Making Math Happen in the Primary Years*, published by ETFO. We all liked the ideas of math journals, trying to incorporate more literature, and promoting more math talk. We really improved our communications by having a Google site where we could share and respond to each other's ideas.

The guidelines from the ETFO book club website were very user friendly and easy to adapt. I strongly recommend online book clubs – we had fun exploring different ideas and making new ideas our own. ✓



VIRGINIA MCMILLAN is a member of the Kawartha Pine Ridge Occasional Teacher Local.



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# Engaging Primary Learners Through Play



This is an excerpt from the new ETFO resource *Primarily Play: Engaging Primary learners through play*. Written by Dr. Janet Millar Grant, an executive staff officer in Professional Services at ETFO, and Susanne Eden, formerly an associate professor of education at York University, it is available from shopETFO; [shopetfo@etfo.org](mailto:shopetfo@etfo.org).

To recognize the vital role of play in learning, teachers need to understand the connection between neuroscience and learning.

Neuroscience has tremendous potential for revolutionizing what goes on in schools. As Dr. Fraser Mustard, an eminent Canadian physician and advocate for play-based early learning, observes, “The merging of the neuroscience story with the developmental story has increased our understanding of how fundamental the first years of a child’s life are in laying the base for the future. We are beginning to understand the linkage between the way the brain develops and the neurological and biological pathways that affect learning, behavior and health throughout life.” Much has been discovered over the years about how the brain learns, and it is truly astonishing that educators, by and large, make so little use of this knowledge.

With knowledge of child development and neuroscience, educators are equipped to provide the very best learning opportunities for children. While teachers of young children have been most open to applying this knowledge, all educators need to put it into practice. At any age, learning is first and foremost the product of self-directed experience. As American psychologist and learning theorist Jerome Bruner once wrote, “We only truly know what we have discovered for ourselves.”

Neuroscience helps us understand learning in the following ways.

- The brain is constantly changing. How the brain is shaped in the early years will have an effect on how well the brain functions in later life. It grows as a result of learning – one synapse at a time.
- Experiences change the shape of the brain. Nourishing our brains through many varied interactions with people and things in our environment builds the foundation for lifelong learning.
- Emotion has a profound effect on learning. When the learner feels safe, comfortable, and happy, learning occurs with ease. Tension, stress, and feelings of inadequacy inhibit learning.
- Motivation is the product of interest and engagement. Even those who have been labelled as having attention deficit disorder can concentrate for long periods of time when the activity is interesting and derived from personal needs.

Neuroscience supports a “constructivist” view of learning: that the learner constructs knowledge from experience, and assimilates new information into his or her existing cognitive map. In accommodating new information, new thoughts connect with existing frameworks to allow for more complex understanding.



## Key points about learning and instruction

### 1. LEARNING IS SOCIAL

For centuries, we have assumed that learning in school must take place without social distractions. Isolating children by such practices as seating them in rows, giving them individual worksheets and assignments, and giving them warnings like “No talking” and “Do your own work” act against learning.

It does not matter whether the subject of the children’s conversation is their classroom activity. The important thing is that the children are in contact with others. A silent classroom lacks something fundamental to learning, especially in the early years. Quiet times have a place, but the hum of creativity and friendship is a sign of a happy learning environment. Educators need to train their ear to the difference between the noise generated by creative play and the noise generated by chaos. Play has a happy, light-hearted tone while chaos is fractious and belligerent.

The social nature of learning means that communication is an essential element of play. Children learn by using language in the context of the situations that they have created. They use the semantics of language to create meaning and the structure of language to communicate their thoughts; they explore the pragmatic uses of language as they interact with others. Oral language is a key component of literacy and has strong links to reading and writing. As children communicate during play, they use the vocabulary associated with the context. Expanding vocabulary is important for understanding the meaning of texts that are read and is critical to communicating ideas in writing.

#### THINK ABOUT IT

*What are the opportunities for children to talk and engage with others in the classroom? How are they using language? What is the focus of children’s talk?*



### 2. THE HUMAN BRAIN IS WIRED TO LEARN

All children are compelled from within to learn. They do not need a series of lessons or happy-face stickers to motivate them to learn how to walk and talk. This miracle of learning is witnessed by every parent, and by every educator, the world over. Yet we fail to understand the internal desire to learn in terms of learning in school. As with all significant learning through life, this urge to learn comes out of a profound need to connect with the social and physical environment in which we find ourselves. In schools, educators too often resort to external rewards and punishments which, over the long-term, erode the power of the intrinsic, self-directed motivation to learn. Is it any wonder that by the time children are in high school, learning has become a matter of “memorizing stuff,” and feeding back to teachers what students think they want to hear? Learning becomes little more than trying to “guess what’s in the teacher’s mind.”

When children are engaged in play, they make decisions, take control, and seek solutions. Given the opportunity to make choices and decisions, children are empowered as learners and develop confidence in their abilities.

#### THINK ABOUT IT

*If children are wired to learn, what are they interested in learning about? What intrigues them? What motivates them?*

### 3. LEARNING IS A HOLISTIC PROCESS

The most beneficial condition for learning occurs when all areas of development – physical, emotional, cognitive, and social – are proceeding as they should.



We are keenly aware of the impact of stress upon our own productivity as adults. We despair of solving a logic puzzle or a computer glitch when we are worried, tense, or exhausted. It is only when we leave a problem until the next day that we find the solution has been staring us in the face all along.

But we totally ignore this understanding in many school situations. How different the scores on a test might be if we recognized that a child has had no food; has been cowering under the bed all night, frightened by verbal or physical violence in the home; or simply does not perform well under pressure. We continue to value a quiet, tidy classroom – but learning is often anything but quiet and tidy.

For children, play is their way of growing: physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively.

Consider the learning that occurs as children build collaboratively with hardwood blocks of different shapes and sizes.

- **Cognitively**, children learn about structures and balance as they create a building, about symmetry as they create a balanced look, about position as they view the structure from various angles. They develop and use social skills as they plan what to do, listen to each other's ideas, negotiate roles, and share materials.
- **Language develops** through social use with others. As they engage with others, or with an adult, children use language to describe what they have done, to explain how it works, to reflect on problems and solutions.
- **Problem-solving** occurs when children try to find the block that will fit the space, when they have to change plans if the building isn't strong enough and collapses.
- **Emotionally**, children develop patience and persistence as they try over and over again to place the last block on the top without having the building topple over. They develop confidence as they gain control over the materials and experience success.
- **Physically**, fine-motor skills continue to develop as children hold objects and insert them into place and try to balance and position blocks.

## THINK ABOUT IT

*How do the materials and activities support children's development in all areas?*

## 4. LEARNING IS NEITHER AN EFFICIENT PROCESS NOR BEST GENERATED THROUGH INSTRUCTION

The trouble with the natural process of learning is that, although predictable, it is not a tidy, systematic endeavour. There is a good deal of redundancy as a learner repeats an activity or explores an idea over and over again before it becomes permanently established. Centuries ago, educators found that rote learning was more efficient. If the learner would simply memorize what the teacher presented, things would progress much faster. A test could be given, and mastery assessed. This sounds compelling but it is not learning. Instead, it is what Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky calls "parrot-like learning that masks a vacuum." The knowledge and/or skill has not been internalized.

## THINK ABOUT IT

*What is valued about learning in the classroom? How are children's needs, interests, and background accounted for in instruction?*

Instruction that relies on a passive, uninvolved learner leads to the pervasive boredom that strikes so many students as they progress into high school. In *Weapons of Mass Instruction*, John Taylor Gatto observes that not only are the kids bored, but the teachers are as well. The idealism and energy that propelled them into a career in education have long since evaporated in the tedium of mandatory curriculum that excites neither teacher nor student.

## THINK ABOUT IT

*How do children have a voice in the classroom? What are the opportunities for making choices and decisions?*





Development of play across the Primary division

Type of Play	Ages 4-6	Ages 5-7	Ages 7-9
<b>Exploration</b>	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <p>Properties and characteristics: conservation of matter, spatial relations, etc.</p> <p>Mainly personal pursuit, interest.</p>	<p><i>What can it do?</i></p> <p>Investigation of concrete objects, as well as situations and events</p>	<p><i>What can I do with it?</i></p> <p>Collaborative discoveries.</p> <p>Sharing ideas</p>
<b>Pretend play</b>	<p>Symbolic representation of one object for another.</p> <p>May co-operate, share space, toys, and theme but all participants may play the same role or do the same action.</p> <p>Rely on personal experience as source for pretending.</p>	<p>Socio-dramatic play soars. Themes include community such as riding a bus, restaurant, etc.</p> <p>The putting on of the play may take over from the actual play itself.</p> <p>Begin to differentiate complementary roles.</p>	<p>Continue to rely on personal experience but beginning to use fantasy and make-believe.</p> <p>Roles work together to tell a story.</p>
<b>Games with rules</b>	<p>Generally, play along side one another without much interest in how others are doing.</p> <p>Tend to make up rules as they go along.</p>	<p>Begin to attend to rules and turn taking.</p>	<p>Competition prevails with stringent attention to rules.</p> <p>Being on the team becomes increasingly more critical.</p>



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# Reaching Out and

## *Understanding what is happening in the Early Learning Kindergarten program*

**P**rofessional Services staff always try to keep a finger on the pulse of our membership.

What do our members need in the area of professional learning? What are their issues and concerns when new programs are implemented? Do new resources need to be developed?

Conducting member research is one way to get feedback. Over the years, ETFO researcher Pat McAdie has asked for your opinion on many issues. ETFO has used this research to lobby the government, provide feedback to the president and the executive, advocate for new programs, and negotiate collective agreements.

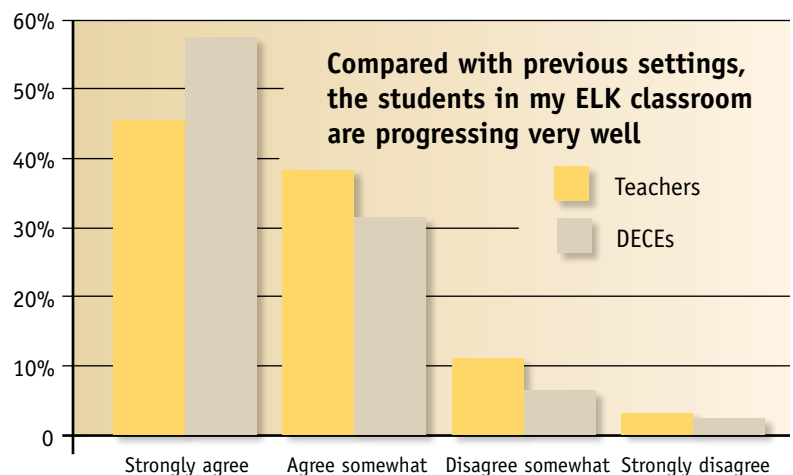
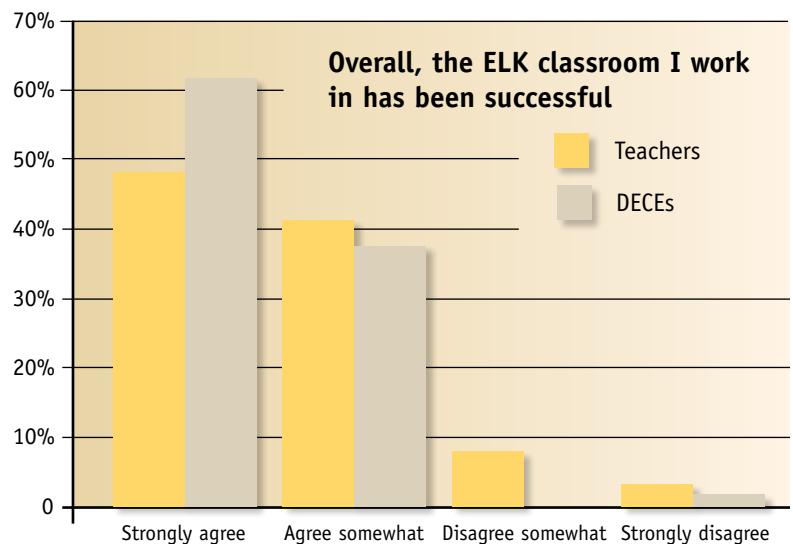
### ETFO surveys its members

Last April, 481 ETFO members working in the Early Learning Kindergarten (ELK) program responded to a survey about their experiences during the program's first year. The respondents included 327 teachers from all but two boards, and 128 designated early childhood educators (DECEs) from all of the locals that ETFO represents. Here is an overview of what we learned.

### A successful first year

The full-day Early Learning–Kindergarten program is delivered by a teacher and a DECE working together using a play-based curriculum. This is a new approach for Ontario kindergarten programs.

The survey showed that both teachers and DECEs felt the program was successful in its first year. The vast majority agreed that students were progressing well.



# Listening

## Play-based learning

Play as a teaching strategy is regaining importance, and most teachers and DECEs agreed that they have a good understanding of this methodology and are able to implement it. However, access to resources was an issue for a significant number.

Total agree (strongly or somewhat) regarding play-based learning		
	Teachers	DECEs
I have a good understanding of play-based learning.	95%	98%
I am able to implement play-based learning in my classroom.	88%	88%
I have been provided with the classroom resources necessary to implement play-based learning.	57%	69%

## Support for the ELK program

A number of questions asked whether others in the school and community supported the program. Generally, teachers and DECEs had a very similar perspective on the level of support from parents, other teaching staff, school administrators, and boards. The overwhelming majority said these groups support the program. Some survey respondents believed that for non-ELK teachers and administrators understanding the program was sometimes a challenge.

## Planning time

Finding joint planning time was an issue for many: 68 percent of teachers and 48 percent of DECEs stated that they did not have any regularly scheduled, coordinated, or common planning time. Fewer than one in five said they had such time scheduled every week or had common planning time with their partner prior to the start of the school year.

## Roles and responsibilities

A significant minority of teachers (37 percent) and DECEs (43 percent) felt that they had not received clear direction from their school board about the ELK program and their role. Both teachers and DECEs felt they needed more clarity about their roles in the classroom. They also felt they needed time and support to understand working as a team. Despite this, most agreed that they worked well with their partners.

## Class size and facilities

Throughout the survey, there were many comments about large class sizes – classes of 28, 30, or more. A majority (58 percent) said their classroom was too small. For some, a previous



Tamara DuFour, president of the Hamilton-Wentworth DECE Local, and teacher Sandra Mrzic.





**Marissa Bayne, DECE, and teacher Erin Preston**

kindergarten classroom was not large enough for the additional students; others were using a classroom that was not designed for kindergarten. Lack of storage space and inadequate washroom facilities were also concerns.

## **What would you like to change? What would you keep the same?**

Most commonly, members wanted smaller classes. Many mentioned a cap on class size, often referring to the cap on other primary classes. Other preferred changes included more resources and facilities, more training and professional development, more common planning time, and clearer role definitions.

Many DECEs would like to improve their rights, referring to such changes as improved planning time and recognition of their qualifications by parents and other staff.

Many teachers highlighted the positive nature of working with an DECE. Both teachers and DECEs valued the full-day program and the play-based curriculum.

## **Looking ahead**

This research provided ETFO with some wonderful data on what happened to our members in the ELK classrooms. But, as we move into the second year of implementation, we want to find out more. Do the findings still hold true? Have attitudes to the ELK program changed?

In order to explore this topic further, ETFO executive staff Dr. Janet Millar-Grant and Dr. Anne Rodrigue will conduct three focus group sessions with ELK teachers and DECEs. Focus groups let researchers observe interactions on a specific topic and help us understand the perceptions and nuances attached to these issues from the perspectives of classroom educators.

These sessions will provide us with a deeper understanding of the issues that we need to discuss with ministry of education officials or to address at the bargaining table. We also hope to learn what specific professional development opportunities and resources would be most beneficial to our members.

Many members quickly responded to an invitation to attend focus group sessions when it was posted on the ETFO website. Obviously, our members want to talk with us about their day-to-day experiences in the ELK classroom. We selected participants on the basis of geography, local representation, and demographics. The focus groups will be held January 21 and the results of the research will be the subject of a future article in *Voice*. 📌

**DR. ANNE RODRIGUE**, coordinator of ETFO Professional Services, researcher **PAT MCADIE**, and editor **JOHANNA BRAND** contributed to this article.



# Full-day Kindergarten:

## Early childhood educators reflect on their first year in the classroom

BY MATTHEW ROMAIN AND INESSA PETERSEN

Designated early childhood educators (DECEs) are the newest addition to the ETFO family. In 2009 when the Ontario government announced its intention to implement the full-day kindergarten program, ETFO moved to become the bargaining agent for DECEs. Today ETFO represents DECEs in 10 Ontario public and separate school boards. The number of DECE members will increase over the next two years: introduced in 600 schools in 2010, full-day kindergarten will be offered in all Ontario elementary schools by 2014.

In the new program, certified teachers and DECEs work side by side to implement a play-based curriculum. We asked some DECE members to share their thoughts about being a part of the inaugural Early Learning Kindergarten (ELK) program.

### The value of full-day kindergarten

DECEs believe that every child should have the opportunity to experience the play-based learning of full-day kindergarten:



*"It allows children to be in an environment with many opportunities; a chance for children to experience and be exposed to things they may not otherwise have the chance to. Children build on their social/emotional skills and learn to self-regulate in a group setting."* — **Rayna Barrese**, president, Durham DECE Local



*"Some children do not attend any sort of formal education environment prior to kindergarten, and the full-day kindergarten structure allows a duo of highly trained professionals to help not only the child, but each other with easing children into a lifelong learning routine."* — **Amy Rasmussen**, president, Halton DECE Local.

*"It is valuable for children. The reason includes improvements in reading, writing, creativity, social development, work habits, motor skills. It also makes the transition to grade 1 easier."* — **Diego Olmedo**, vice-president, Toronto DECE Local.

### The growth of our children

DECEs explained how excited they were to witness their students' development:

*"We continually saw an increase in the children's eagerness to come to school, as well as their enjoyment while learning through play. Children were developing a love for learning and were motivated to learn. Their sense of accomplishment never ceased to amaze us when they would realize they could recognize a word in a book. Instead of being sat at tables and issued sheets to learn from, they were given time to play and learn in a concrete, not abstract way. So when they realized they were learning through those experiences, that was the biggest accomplishment for us."* — **Mandi Judd**, president, Simcoe County DECE Local.

*"Children who otherwise were very intimidated and unsure are confident and look forward to coming to school each day. Children are very inquisitive and being in a full-day kindergarten program they have the chance to fully engage and explore extensively."* — **Rayna Barrese**



MATTHEW ROMAIN and INESSA PETERSEN are ETFO executive assistants in Protective Services.

# Full-day Kindergarten



## New challenges

The introduction of full-day kindergarten has not been without challenges for both the teacher and the DECE—from teaching with another professional educator for the first time to following a brand-new curriculum in a new program.

*“A new program, new curriculum, and new working areas were all stepping stones that needed to be navigated with care.”* — **Jenn Wallage**, president, Waterloo DECE Local



*“For us, there were challenges due to physical space for every aspect of the program from storage of toys, space in the coatroom, space for children to play.”* — **Mandi Judd**

*“Challenges are met differently by everyone: the unknown of what was expected and where the program was going to go; bringing two educators (teacher/early childhood educator) together who come from very different backgrounds/experience in hope of building a strong successful relationship.”* — **Rayna Barrese**

## Benefits for our youngest learners

DECEs were encouraged to see that parents embraced program and were delighted by the significant growth they observed in their children:



*“At first, parents did not know much about the program and what to expect. By the second term of parent interviews, parents were expressing how their child was excelling in reading, writing, and social development.”* — **Diego Olmedo**

*“Parents have been very pleased with how well we know each individual child, and the progress the children have been making while attending the program.”* — **Mandi Judd**

*“Parents were very excited and thankful that the program was offered. It allowed children in lower-income areas to have the benefits of a great program. Parents were very appreciative and some were surprised how much knowledge their child gained and how excited they were to go to school.”* — **Rayna Barrese**

## The teacher/DECE partnership – playing is learning

The partnership between the teacher and DECE brings a wonderful blend of experience to the early learning classroom. The strengths of the partnership are obvious to participants. Children are benefiting by being the recipients of well-rounded education as they begin their lifelong educational journey.

*“Full-day kindergarten allows children the opportunity to be in a structured setting while experiencing play-based learning and the consistency of having their teacher and DECE for both JK and SK. A successful relationship between staff builds a successful building block for children.”* — **Rayna Barrese**

*“Teachers have a vast knowledge of the Ontario curriculum for kindergarten and received the training necessary to teach what a child needs to learn in kindergarten. The DECE has specific knowledge of early childhood development, teaching methods, and activities suited to engaging the whole child, and a focus on play as a vehicle to teach the larger concepts.”* — **Amy Rasmussen**

*“With two qualified professionals in the classroom for the full school day, more students will get one-on-one attention and opportunities to learn together in small groups.”* — **Diego Olmedo**

## Year 2 and beyond

DECEs are committed to building on their experiences from the past year:

*“In year 2, we look forward to the opportunity to continue and expand what we learned from the program last year. We are looking forward to providing new experiences for the children through play.”* — **Mandi Judd**

*“DECEs and teachers are looking forward to the excitement of teaching many of their JKs in SK. [It will give us] a chance to build on the children’s knowledge and expand on their interests. After building a successful partnership between the teacher and DECE in the first year, many great things will be seen in the second year.”* — **Rayna Barrese**



BY VALENCE YOUNG



# Put the Acts into Action

**W**orkplace violence is a major hazard in our schools. It gets in the way of teaching, learning, and well-being; dealing with it is stressful and traumatic. ETFO members are getting hurt on the job, sometimes sustaining serious injuries (including broken bones) that require medical care and may take months to heal. School boards lack the financial and human resources to provide consistent and sustained supports. Community resources and mental health services for students with violent behaviours are often limited.

Recent changes to both the *Education Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* have introduced new and challenging requirements for school safety. It has been difficult for school boards, administrators, and educators to figure out how to meet their obligations for reporting and responding to serious violent incidents. The result is that risks of workplace violence are not being dealt with soon enough.

Here is a summary of the reporting and response requirements in three provincial documents. The documents – a law, a reporting form, and a policy – were written to make schools safer. Let's take a look at how each of them can be put to good use.

## The law

The ***Occupational Health and Safety Act*** provides a broad definition of workplace violence that leaves room for early recognition and intervention:

*"workplace violence" means*

- (a) *the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker*
- (b) *an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker*

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VALENCE YOUNG is an ETFO executive staff member responsible for occupational health and safety.

*(c) a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.*

Under the *OHSA*, a school board must provide workplace violence programs. These could be developed for an entire school or a single classroom, for a school trip, or for a new student. The program must include measures and procedures to control the risks of workplace violence identified in a risk assessment. It must contain procedures for getting help quickly, and for reporting incidents to the principal. The school board and the principal must investigate and deal with these incidents.

A workplace violence incident is a health and safety hazard that must be reported to the principal. If you are blocked in your efforts to report it, then contact your steward and your ETFO local for support.

### The reporting form

The ministry of education's **Safe Schools Incident Reporting form** (SSIR form) is a simple template that identifies 13 serious student incidents, including bullying, uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm, and using a weapon. Most of these are also workplace violence incidents. Under the *Education Act*, the principal must consider suspension or expulsion for these incidents.

When a serious student incident also includes workplace violence, then both the workplace violence report and the SSIR form must be completed. The principal's response to each report is different. Under *OHSA*, the principal responds by investigating and dealing with the incident so that the educator can be safe. Under the *Education Act*, a principal responds by focusing on the student, with actions based on progressive discipline that may include suspension or expulsion. If you submit a SSIR form, your principal must provide you with a written acknowledgement of receipt. This is an important record and should be stored carefully.

When there has been a serious violent inci-


dent resulting in suspension or expulsion, the SSIR form and its documentation are placed in the aggressor's Ontario Student Record. These provide vital information about whether a student poses a risk of workplace violence.

### The policy

**PPM 120** is a ministry of education policy/program memorandum written for school boards and principals. Revised in 2011, its primary purpose is to collect data about seven types of serious violent incidents in Ontario schools. These include possessing a weapon, physical assault causing injury that requires medical attention, sexual assault, robbery, using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm, extortion, and hate or bias-motivated occurrences. School boards must include incidents committed by both students and non-students during school-run programs and on school premises.

However, PPM 120 leaves out a number of serious violent incidents that could just as easily be part of the school day. For example, it does not include bullying, vandalism causing extensive damage, gang-related occurrences, relationship-based violence, threats of serious physical injury (including threats made through social media), or criminal harassment.

There is a concern that the requirements of PPM 120 may draw attention to the management of a few serious violent incidents and ignore others that are equally serious. ETFO is currently discussing the limitations of PPM 120 with the ministry of education, other teacher federations, and school boards.

There you have it: three provincial documents designed to make our schools safer. Every time you report a concern about school safety you put a provincial law into action. A request for a risk assessment engages the need for a workplace violence program. When you recognize a threat of serious physical harm and get help, you assert your right to work safely. And when you need support to deal with workplace violence, your ETFO local and ETFO provincial are ready to assist. 

# *Visions:*

## Developing new ETFO leaders

BY KELLY HAYES

**ETFO** statistics for the 2011-2012 school year show that 20 percent of our members are in their first five years. While not all are youth, these members are still “new” – new to ETFO. (In fact, about 50 percent of members have belonged for less than 10 years.)

This also means that 80 percent of our membership is beyond five years. Long-time members make up much of our union leadership – our local and provincial executive members, committee members, and stewards. Year after year though, these members retire or move on in other ways, and filling those leadership positions becomes very important.

ETFO recognizes that strong union renewal is a necessary component to building a healthy collective future. Many efforts have been made to welcome new members into our union and our programs, including the new members’ standing committee, the *Visions* conference, local training programs, and designated positions on local executives. ETFO resources for new members include *The Heart and Art of Teaching and Learning* and the related website [heartandart.ca](http://heartandart.ca), the new member web page [etfo.ca/beingamember/newmembers](http://etfo.ca/beingamember/newmembers), and a dedicated column in this magazine.

The large majority of these new members are women. (Just over 80 percent of all ETFO members are women.) This makes gender an ever-present dimension of union revitalization.

The active inclusion of women and other equality-seeking groups has been proven over several decades to be a cornerstone of union renewal. Building women’s spaces and education

into unions has been instrumental over time in ensuring women’s voices are heard. This is evident when we look at the positive impact that women’s committees, programs, and designated positions have had not only on ETFO, but on the labour movement as a whole.

Organized women’s constituencies help keep the pressure on both women and men to lead in a way that addresses the particular concerns of union members in the workplace, as well as in the union. Organized women’s constituencies can also provide an on-going base of support that is inclusive of other equality-seeking groups, which inevitably will include large numbers of women. In “Union Women Leadership: What’s the Difference?” Morna Ballantyne writes: “... building and developing women’s leadership should be embraced as a way forward for unions that want to grow in size and strength, and build power through membership involvement and the active inclusion of women and other equality-seeking groups.” (available at [unionleadership.ca/diversity/gender.html](http://unionleadership.ca/diversity/gender.html)).

ETFO’s new *Visions* program for women members in their first five years takes the concepts of inclusion and renewal and offers them as an ongoing program.

For the past several years *Visions* has been a stand-alone women’s conference that included workshops on a variety of topics. This year, ETFO is piloting a new *Visions* program that takes place over five months. It brings new members together for face-to-face meetings and engages participants in ongoing local project work. This could mean participating in local committee work, shadowing a workplace steward, or getting involved with the local labour council.

During the face-to-face meetings participants will have the opportunity to learn more about how ETFO works, to meet local and provincial union leaders, to understand the many opportunities for involvement in ETFO, and to discuss our connection to global movements.

The *Visions* program is one way of giving the newest members of our federation an opportunity to develop leadership skills. It gives them an opportunity to get to know the federation and figure out how they can contribute and make their voices heard.

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**KELLY HAYES** is the coordinator of Equity and Women’s Services at ETFO.



# Social Justice Begins with Me

BY ADAM PEER

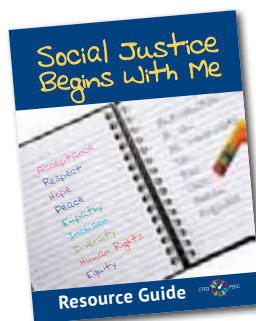
*Social Justice Begins with Me* (formerly *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good*) is a new literature-based curriculum resource released at ETFO's fall leadership conference.<sup>1</sup>

The release occurred at a crucial time: this fall incidents of bullying and youth suicides have received high-profile media attention. This resource will help educators deliver messages of inclusion, diversity, and create safe and welcoming environments. It allows educators to implement the ministry's Equity and Inclusion Strategy, described in ministry documents as "an overarching policy that supports a positive school environment where diversity is respected; systemic barriers and biases are identified and removed so that whatever their personal circumstances, all students can achieve at their highest potential."<sup>2</sup>

The children's literature that forms the basis for *Social Justice Begins with Me* provides an ideal entry point for developing inclusive classrooms. The resource also promotes the teaching of critical thinking and advocacy skills. As well, it allows students to see themselves and their stories reflected in the curriculum.

Five separate documents make up the kit: one each for Primary, Junior, and Intermediate grades; a Teacher Resource Guide; and a copy of the ETFO resource, *More Than a Play*. The lessons for each division are organized into 10 monthly themes that are linked to the Ontario curriculum expectations. The inclusion of *More Than a Play* helps accomplish the goal of depicting the diverse realities of Ontario students.

ADAM PEER is an executive assistant in Equity and Women's Services at ETFO.



The Teacher Resource contains planners, reproducibles, assessment strategies and tools, reflective questions for equity seeking teachers, strategies for supportive administrators, and hyperlinks to websites (in the CD version). It also has lists of books, Aboriginal cultural organizations, museums, and year-round resources and activities, as well as a section on school and community engagement.

*Social Justice Begins with Me* is currently available for sale through shopETF0; [shopETF0@etfo.org](mailto:shopETF0@etfo.org). The \$45 CD includes hyperlinks to websites. The \$65 suitcase contains a print version of each document.

## Notes

- 1 Sherry Ramrattan Smith, retired ETF0 executive assistant, initiated this project. It was written by ETF0 members Jill Aoki-Barrett, Niagara; Emily Hastings-Speck, Peel; Jason Schwartz, Thames Valley; and Darla Solomon, Rainy River.
- 2 Ontario Ministry of Education. Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, p. 58. Available at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/EquityInclusive.pdf>



## Learning happens in everything we do.

Whether you team up to sort laundry, write a grocery list, or discover a new route to school, you are learning together. How will you learn with your family? Take the learning journey at [FamilyLiteracyDay.ca](http://FamilyLiteracyDay.ca) and download your Journey to Learning Passport.





# Teacher Performance Appraisal for New Teachers: A supportive process that encourages professional growth

BY JOANNE LANGUAGE AND SUSAN THEDE

**Y**ou are hired and you celebrate. Then you enter the classroom to confront the challenges and excitement of teaching. After you feel you have established a routine, it is time to prepare for your teacher performance appraisal (TPA).

Along with the other elements of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), new teachers must achieve two satisfactory performance appraisals within the first 24 months of teaching, to successfully complete the program.

The foundation of the TPA is professional dialogue based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration, and a positive relationship. It is meant to be a supportive process that encourages professional learning and growth. Here are the steps in the process.

## 1. Pre-observation meeting

At this meeting you will want to be prepared to discuss

- competencies to be addressed and examples of how you will demonstrate each
- your successes and strengths, as well as anything you would specifically like feedback on
- characteristics of your students/class
- lesson to be observed (including modifications required)
- curriculum expectations
- assessment
- resources used.

Consider bringing samples of student work, portfolios, and artifacts to demonstrate evidence of your practice and strengths.

## 2. Classroom observation(s)

These should occur on the date and time agreed upon in advance. Check your pre-observation notes to review the competencies being focused on. Prepare your class so they are aware that there will be an observer in the class. This is not the time to try a new instructional strategy, or ignore a behaviour issue that arises. Jot down some notes following the observation. Ask for feedback as soon as possible afterward.

## 3. Post-observation meeting

At this meeting the evaluator will

- discuss the classroom observation including the competencies previously identified
- provide feedback and make recommendations.

Be prepared to ask questions so you fully understand the feedback, and to provide input on recommendations made – after all, it is your professional growth. This is your opportunity to identify any concerns you have about the process.

## 4. Summative report

There should be no surprises in the content of the report or the rating or recommendations. Your signature acknowledges receipt of the report. Members can contact ETFO at any time throughout the process. **If you receive an unsatisfactory rating, it is very important to contact the federation as soon as possible for support and advice.**

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SUSAN THEDE and JOANNE LANGUAGE are ETFO executive assistants



## Reflections from a new teacher on the TPA process

"When I first found out about NTIP and the TPA, I immediately became anxious and dreaded the whole evaluation. Lessons hardly ever go exactly as you've written them on paper, and I could think of a million things that could go wrong while my principal was observing me.

"My mentor helped me by discussing which lessons I should choose. For my first observation my principal was going to observe my grade 2 lesson on probability, which included a lot of manipulatives and hands-on tasks – so a lot of opportunity for chaos. I continued to feel anxious until after I had my first meeting with my principal.

"During that meeting my principal made sure I understood that this was an observation, rather than an evaluation, and it was not meant to point out my every flaw and mistake. The goal was to show off my strengths as a teacher and perhaps discover some beneficial areas for professional development. After speaking with her I instantly felt more relaxed.

"At the start of my first observation lesson, I felt a little nervous about having my principal in the back of my room, sitting in a Primary student's chair, with a clipboard. As she patiently sat through my entire lesson with a smile on her face, I could feel her support and I knew that she was only hoping for the best. Within minutes, I became so absorbed in my lesson and the excitement of my students that I completely forgot she was there. My lesson went really well and I got excellent feedback from my principal.

"Looking back I can say that I found my TPA to be extremely helpful and an integral part of my learning process as a beginning teacher. Do not fear your TPA; instead, think of it as a chance to have someone reaffirm that you are making a difference in the lives of your students."

— **Michelle Beaumont**, member, Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has produced two manuals regarding NTIP:

- *The New Teacher Induction Program: Induction Elements*
- *Teacher Performance Appraisal: Technical Requirements Manual*

You can find them at [edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/induction.html](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/induction.html).

# etfvoice.ca

## A new look and new features

**etfvoice.ca**, the **Voice** website, now provides all of the magazine's content in an accessible format. When the magazine is mailed out the digital publication will be available on **etfvoice.ca**.

You can choose to receive electronic delivery only. Go to **etfvoice.ca** and click on the 'Subscription' link. Follow the instructions. We will notify you by email when the magazine becomes available online.





# Special Needs Students: Resources for the occasional teacher

BY SYLVIA VAN CAMPEN

**A**n unfamiliar school, unfamiliar classroom, unfamiliar routines, and unfamiliar students can contribute to a sense of uncertainty when I accept a call as a daily occasional teacher. Add to the mix the challenge of not knowing which students have special needs or are on an IEP and how to best teach them, and my confidence may begin to waver. So where do I begin when I step into a new classroom?

An individual education plan (IEP) is a written plan of action for a student who needs accommodations, modifications, or an alternative program. It contains a wide range of information such as a summary of the student's strengths and needs, accommodations, and program, plus information on resources, teaching strategies, and personnel.

As an occasional teacher, I am part of the team working with all students in the classroom and should know which students are on an IEP. Often the teacher I am replacing leaves a list of which students I need to learn more about. Sometimes their accommodations, modifications, and/or alternative programs are explained. Sometimes they are not and I need to do a bit of research on my own. I always spend a few minutes before school checking this information.

What if there is no note or I don't understand what I read? There are many other helpful resources available at the school.

An excellent starting place is the office. I take a moment to touch base and ask the administration if there is anything I need to be aware of in the class. Each school also has a special education resource teacher who is part of the team working with special needs students. Ask for information that might be useful about the



class or a specific student. The special education resource teacher can also share knowledge about specific teaching strategies. Support staff may also be working with the identified students in the classroom, and they know which routines are effective. A neighbouring teacher can also be helpful. Last but not least: don't forget to speak to the students themselves! Depending on the their ages and needs, I find students with special needs can often teach me how I might best teach them.

Most importantly, I try to stay current in my understanding of students with special education needs. I read, research online, ask questions, carry a few good books in my OT bag for reference, and observe what works best. ✓

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## Resources

The *ETFO Special Education Handbook* describes strategies and teaching techniques by area of student need.

Available from shopETFO, [shapefto@etfo.org](mailto:shapefto@etfo.org).

The ETFO Occasional Teacher website: <http://etfo-ot.net/>

Weber, K. & Bennett, S. (2008). *Special Education in Ontario Schools*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Markham, ON: International Press Publications, [ippbooks.com](http://ippbooks.com).

*The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner: Special Education Companion* is divided by exceptionality. Available at [ocup.org/resources/documents/companions/speced2002.pdf](http://ocup.org/resources/documents/companions/speced2002.pdf).

"Teachers' Gateway to Special Education," Ontario Teachers' Federation website, [otfleo.on.ca/english/pro\\_specialed.php](http://otfleo.on.ca/english/pro_specialed.php).

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SYLVIA VAN CAMPEN is the first vice-president of the Upper Canada Occasional Teacher Local.



BY RIAN MCLAUGHLIN

# Celebrate!

**E**very year OTF, in partnership with OTIP (the Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan), recognizes the outstanding work of educators across Ontario. The OTIP Teaching Awards were established in 1991 and are held in conjunction with World Teachers' Day, Oct. 5. Three annual awards are offered for teachers in Ontario's publicly funded schools: one for elementary, one for secondary, and one for a beginning teacher. TFO (now known as the Ontario French Language Educational Communications Authority) joined the program to provide specific awards for francophone teachers. A number of ETFO members are among those who have been honoured by this very successful program.



Brian Robertson



Christine Brown



Joan Littleford

**Brian Robertson**, a member of the Limestone Teacher Local, was named the outstanding elementary teacher of 2011. Brian was described as having an enviable gift for ensuring that all students were active and engaged learners. He was often seen with his guitar in hand for French lessons or guiding a student walking tour of Mountain Grove, Ontario near Land O'Lakes Public School. His efforts to address student needs would find him rewriting a play to include a student with autism and designing courses for his young runners to meet each of their needs and provide them with frameworks for success. Brian retired this past summer, but we are confident that his many interests and passions have served as examples to the countless students and colleagues who had the privilege of working and learning with him. Congratulations, Brian, and best wishes for a long, healthy, and rewarding retirement!

## OTF Fellows

OTF also celebrates the achievements, dedication, and service of members and partners with whom we work. The OTF Fellowship was inaugurated in 1964 to commemorate OTF's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The first OTF Fellowship was presented to the Honourable George A. Drew, then minister of education and premier. Since that time, ETFO (and its predecessor organizations) have nominated many individuals for this special recognition. ETFO General Secretary Gene Lewis and Deputy General Secretary Marilies Rettig were named Fellows of the Ontario Teachers' Federation prior to the formation of ETFO. ETFO presidents, first vice-presidents, and OTF table officers are counted among the Fellows of OTF.

Many long-serving and dedicated staff members have also been awarded fellowships for their work on behalf of the membership. This past August, OTF welcomed two of ETFO's recently-retired staff into the Fellowship circle: **Joan Littleford** and **Christine Brown**.

Throughout her career ETFO executive assistant Joan Littleford worked with intense passion in the area of early learning and full-day kindergarten garnering respect for ETFO throughout the province and beyond. Christine Brown, most recently coordinator of Protective Services at ETFO, was the calm and dedicated researcher whose work provided the foundation for collective bargaining. She was also an advocate for disability issues.

As past president of OTF and OTF Table officer for ETFO, I was also privileged to receive a Fellowship this year. The legacy of those I join is truly humbling. 🍷

RIAN MCLAUGHLIN is ETFO's representative at OTF.



BY PAUL TAILLEFER

# The Importance of Media Literacy

**M**edia exert a powerful influence on youth. The media messages kids absorb help to shape their perceptions of what is normal and important, cool and fun, or scary and unappealing. Teachers are enthusiastic about helping students become media savvy and they are open to new strategies, skills, and ideas to accomplish this goal. Our provincial, territorial, and federal governments can play a key role in ensuring that media education is taught in classrooms, by providing program funding, supporting curriculum development, and creating policies that recognize and prioritize a student-centred learning process like media education.

Seven years ago, CTF and the Media Awareness Network partnered to hold the annual Media Literacy Week (MLW). Our goal was to build national awareness about the importance of media education in Canada. Since then more than 60 collaborators and sponsors have added their support – including many CTF member organizations: ETFO, the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Alberta Teachers Association, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants du Nouveau Brunswick.

In the past seven years, the growth of social media has been nothing short of phenomenal, giving rise to a wide range of networking sites such as Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, LinkedIn, Flickr and Google+. This is why we decided to make "Digital Citizenship" the theme of this year's Media Literacy Week and to call on Canadians to encourage young people to think about their rights and

responsibilities as they navigate the digital world. CTF offered subsidies through our *Imagineaction* program to support teachers who wanted to help their students become active and responsible citizens in an increasingly complex world.

I was very proud to join ETFO members at the Trillium Elementary School in Orleans on November 7 for the official launch of Media Literacy Week. Short animated videos about character building and digital citizenship produced by grade 3 and grade 6 students were presented to the school, school board representatives, and their federal MP.

CTF's efforts to promote responsible behaviour online include education about cyber-bullying. Responding to a growing number of incidents of cyber-bullying toward teachers and students, CTF produced the brochure "Cybertips for Teachers." The brochure, which urges teachers to be professional and prudent while online, has turned out to be extremely popular – nearly 110,000 have been distributed across Canada. CTF has now updated the brochure to include social media content.

We know that social networking sites can be tremendously beneficial in teachers' professional learning but they can also present pitfalls. As educators, we have a professional image to uphold; our conduct online is no exception. The revised brochure provides practical tips so that teachers can take advantage of the educational benefits provided by social networking sites without putting at risk the safety of any student or member of the school community. For more information, contact us at [info@ctf-fce.ca](mailto:info@ctf-fce.ca)

I want to take this opportunity to wish you and yours all the very best in this Holiday Season! 🍷

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**PAUL TAILLEFER** is CTF president for 2011-13. He is a former president of L'association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO).



# Poverty and Schools in Ontario



## How Seven Elementary Schools Are Working to Improve Education

**P**overty and Schools in Ontario will be a valuable resource to help us better understand students' lives.

The researchers – Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker from Brock University, and Joe Flessa from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto – studied 11 schools in poor neighbourhoods. Their case studies focus on seven of these schools and what they do every day to ensure that all students are provided with the best opportunity for success. Their research adds an Ontario perspective to the largely American body of knowledge on the impact of poverty on education.

In his foreword Ben Levin, former deputy minister of education in Ontario and Manitoba, writes, “The examples, stories, and ideas in this book provide much food for thought for everyone wanting a school system that truly treats all children as deserving good education, no matter their background.”

ETFO commissioned this research as part of a larger project, funded by the ministry of education, that looked at what teachers could do to improve the academic chances of students living in poverty. Details of the project were highlighted in “Poverty and Learning,” a special issue of *Voice* published in June 2008. It is available on the *Voice* website, [etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca) ► *back issues*.

PAT MCADIE is a research officer at ETFO.

The authors describe how schools work to understand different kinds of school success. Many focus on character development. Some actively engage parents and families in their children's education. In some, teachers work together to help all the students in the school.

Each chapter focuses on one school and concludes with a set of questions to encourage readers to reflect on the issues in the context of their own experiences and setting. Here are some examples.

- How would you describe the relationship between your school's goals and the goals of the school district? In what ways do they work in conjunction and in what ways do they work at cross purposes?
- How might teachers, staff, and administrators welcome parents and families into the school building, considering such issues as physical layout, cultural context, or language barriers?
- What is the historical/traditional context of your school? Can connections be made between the history/tradition of the school and present-day programs and community partnerships?


This inquiry approach acknowledges that there is no one solution or strategy that will work for all schools, for all teachers, for all students: each situation brings its own set of unique challenges and requires its own strategies.

However, there are lessons to learn across schools. The authors have identified five major cross-case findings.

- *Teacher inquiry*: "... inquiry-based approaches, which take context into account, matter." (p. 95)
- *School leadership*: "[Activities like coordinating professional learning, organizing the school play or finding volunteers] represented some of the multitude of ways that a team of

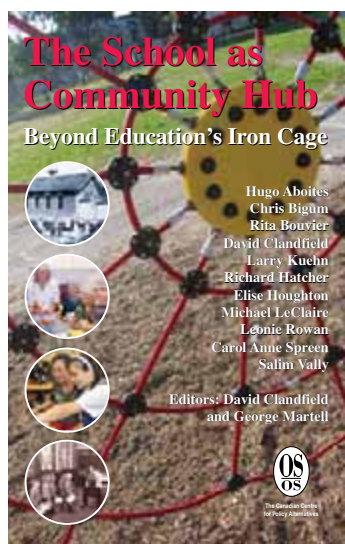
educators and sometimes parents had shared the leadership responsibilities for initiating and sustaining attempts for positive school change." (p. 96)

- *Making community connections*: "All schools in our study described the importance of making connections between school and home, and between school and community agencies. Most of the schools viewed these efforts as some of their greatest challenges; for no school was it easy." (p. 96)
- *School climate and culture*: "In addition to efforts to bridge the distance between home and school, our case study schools were concerned with building community within school walls." (p. 99)
- *Multiple supports needed for multiple issues*: "Intergenerational poverty and long histories of distrust and negative experiences with schooling in one community are not the same as episodic poverty experienced in communities experiencing a sudden economic downturn . . . Our case study schools represent this diversity of experience, and what this variability indicates is that there are multiple places for policy to intervene in supportive ways." (p. 101)

What would it really involve for all of us to take the issue seriously? The final recommendation is to everyone: "Acknowledge that incremental improvements can be important steps; improvements are not all or nothing. None of the schools we visited thought they were 'there' yet but all could point to important successes that grew from an intentional focus on improving learning opportunities for students affected by poverty." (p. 106) 







## The School as Community Hub: Beyond Education's Iron Cage

*Our Schools/Our Selves, Special Issue, Summer 2010*

Editors: David Clandfield and George Martell

Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

242 pages; \$15.00

Reviewed by **Charlotte Morgan**

Published as a compilation of nine articles, the common theme of *The School as Community Hub* is that bringing community services together enhances children's education, improves their physical and mental health, and strengthens the whole community.

In his opening chapter, Ontario's David Clandfield tells why community hubs are important and what could be included in them: "The full community hub will yoke the interactive neighbourhood school with the multi-use hub to produce a kind of New Commons where education for all, health, recreation, poverty reduction, cultural expression and celebration, and environmental responsibility can all come together to develop and sustain flourishing communities on principles of citizenship, cooperation, and social justice."

Drawing on his experience with Saskatchewan's School<sup>PLUS</sup> program, Michael LeClaire sees efforts to bring communities together as strands of an empowering journey, not as a destination. School<sup>PLUS</sup> initiatives enjoyed broad support and many continue, although repackaged to meet the agenda of a new provincial government.

Rita Bouvier, another contributor from Saskatchewan, offers the perspective of Aboriginal peoples. She quotes Sharilyn Calliou, a Cree-Mohawk, who stresses that our defini-

tion of community participants must move beyond a human one to one that is inclusive of all species.

It's impossible to ignore the barriers that confront advocates of strong communities. All the authors discuss the negative effects of the competitive, for-profit motive driving the global neo-liberal agenda. It's easy to see it in England, where the idea of "academies" competing with each other and funded in a hodgepodge of ways is being taken to new heights.

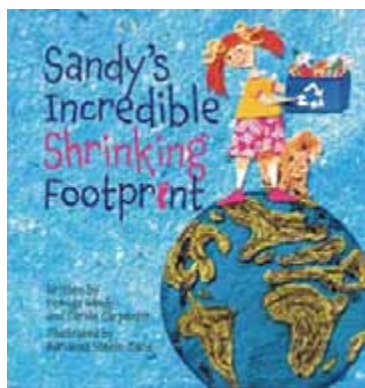
Meanwhile in South Africa, "the corporate model of school governance that protects sectional and exclusive interests is proving disastrous," say Salim Vally and Carol Anne Spreen. This is a country in which 20 percent of children are orphans and 68 percent live below the poverty line. And yet "issues of inequality and failure in the public education system have become a focal point for social mobilization," the writers state. "The Caring Schools Network is a school-community initiative which brings together 60 organizations around the country and promotes partnerships with schools and communities focusing on vulnerable children."

*The School as Community Hub* tells us how resistance to school closures in British Columbia has led to an unexpected resurgence of the community school; how Knowledge Producing Schools in Australia are celebrating the reciprocal values of children's learning and community engagement; how in Mexico the collectivist values of Indigenous peoples are extending to all reaches of the education system; and how green initiatives are taking root in Toronto.

Although somewhat academically written in places, overall this paperback is a relatively easy-to-read look at a variety of situations around the world and what can be done to improve teaching, learning, and living conditions for all.

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**CHARLOTTE MORGAN** is the former editor of *Voice*.





## Sandy's Incredible Shrinking Footprint

Femida Handy and Carole Carpenter

Illustrated by Adrianna Steele-Card

Toronto: Second Story Press, 2010

24 pages

\$15.95

★★★★

Reviewed by **Chris Vert**

Sandy lives in the city but loves visiting with her Grandpa at his house in the summer. She loves to roam the beach with her dog, Pepper, enjoying the fresh air, splashing in the waves, chasing seagulls, and rolling in the sand.

Sandy is disgusted, however, to find garbage everywhere. Bits of hotdog buns, squished pop cans, empty mustard containers. She is stunned that people would leave trash around. She finds a plastic bag and starts to clean up.

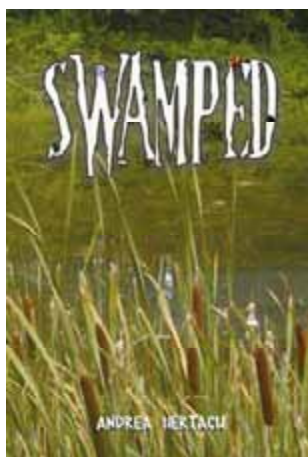
Sandy and Pepper meet up with and become inspired by the "Garbage Lady," who roams the beach picking up junk and passes on lessons about the little things Sandy can do to reduce her own ecological footprint. Sandy goes home excited about what she and her family can do to benefit the environment.

The book concludes with a list of 12 "Ways to Shrink Our Footprints." Almost too earnest and cute.

What makes this book different and quite remarkable, not to mention true to its message, are the illustrations, which are entirely done with recycled and natural materials – bits of paper, fluff, fabric, newsprint. They remind the reader of the detailed workmanship that is put into Barbara Reid's Plasticine illustrations.

This book is a good read-aloud, a jumping-off point for group discussion, a social studies lesson, and a series of "natural materials" art lessons as well.

CHRIS VERT is a member of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local.



## Swamped

Andrea Hertach

Available as an ebook from  
Guardian Books Publishing  
Inc., [guardianpublishing.com](http://guardianpublishing.com)

76 pages; \$8.49

Reviewed by Janet Cottleau

★★★★

Reviewed by **Janet Cottleau**

*Swamped* is a tale of a young girl's persistence in trying to stop the development of a gaming centre on swamp land behind her house. Marley comes up against the mayor, her brother, and many others who do not care about the impact humans have on the environment. As a result of these experiences, Marley devises many creative strategies to get everyone's attention and spread her message.

This story creatively discusses the impact of land development on the natural environment by telling it through the eyes of the creatures living in the swamp and the humans impacted by the change. The frogs, dragonflies, chickadees, dogs, and other wonderful creatures have colourful personalities that help readers empathize with them. Their conversations tell us about their habitats and lives, and about human impacts on the environment, both positive and negative.

This book is a quick read and would be great for late Primary and Junior teachers and students. It could be used as a prompt for science discussions about habitat and human impact on the environment, and also for conversations about advocating for what you believe in and the many creative ways to spread a message. This book could also be used in language lessons as an example of dialogue in a story. There are many different characters, and Andrea Hertach has done a good job clarifying who is speaking while at the same time maintaining a smooth story flow.

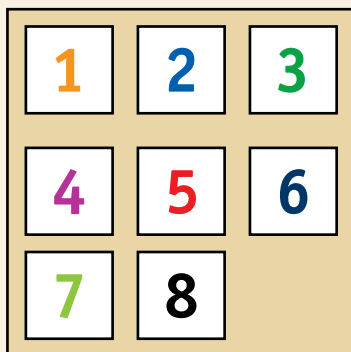
Andrea Hertach has been an elementary teacher for over 25 years. She is a member of the York Region Teacher Local and has contributed to *Voice*. *Swamped* is her first children's novel.

JANET COTTLEAU is a member of the Ottawa-Carleton Teacher Local.

# trivia

BY PETER HARRISON

## Blocks Box



Maria's favourite toy is a square box containing blocks on which are written all the numbers from 1 to 8 as above. She has learned how to slide the blocks around in the box – but not yet how to take them out. So, for example, she could move the 6 down into the space, then the 5 to the right and then the 2 down and so on.

Recently, I was astonished to see that, starting from the above arrangement, she had managed to slide the blocks to a position where, counting the space as 0, each of the three rows and each of the three columns and each of the two diagonals added up to the same total – and with the space back in the same column.

Reading the lines across the page from left to right (first line, then second line, then third line):

**What are the nine numbers in sequence in Maria's arrangement?**

Send your answers 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 correct entries received by January 28, 2012.

### SOLUTION TO OUR LAST PUZZLE

**The number 'spelled' out by the letters 'CAT' is 672.**

The winners are chosen by lottery. They are:

**Tien Yeung, Elementary Teachers of Toronto Local**

**Carrie Oliver, Rainbow Teacher Local**

**Nancy Baughan, Greater Essex County Teacher Local**

*Congratulations!*

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