

interaction

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A message from the OTF President

In August, while many teachers were returning to school to prepare for the new school year, the government chose to release the results of the EQAO 2013 Grades 3, 6 and 9 standardized testing. The government's critical commentary regarding the test results dampened the spirit of many teachers who were looking forward to the new school year.

The good news was that the reading and writing scores in Grades 3 and 6 continued to improve. However, EQAO reported a decline in the mathematics scores in Grades 3 and 6 over the past five years. In addition, the Grade 6 cohort showed a decline in their scores compared to their results in Grade 3.

The Minister of Education indicated that these poor scores result from the lack of teacher expertise in the areas of math and science. She suggested that teachers do not have the same comfort level teaching mathematics as they do reading and writing.

At the same time that the Minister may be calling for more expertise at the elementary level, there have been

changes in recent years which loosen the requirements for secondary teachers to hold specializations in some areas of the curriculum at the secondary level.

The perception that elementary teachers are not comfortable with mathematics or that they have a math phobia is misleading. Elementary teachers are generalists and do their best with the tools they are given.

Over the past few years, teachers have been aware that elementary students have been struggling with mathematics. They have shared these concerns with those with decision-making powers including principals, school boards and the Ministry.

Perhaps, there is a correlation between the highly literacy-based math program introduced over five years ago and the declining mathematics results. In addition, the Ministry focus for the past six years has been reading and writing. Therefore, school boards concentrated on language arts in order to improve those EQAO results. Teachers cautioned



against this practice, concerned that the end result would be improved reading and writing at the expense of other subject areas, namely mathematics.

A future announcement of Ministry initiatives in mathematics, as a result, will come as no surprise. However, the government needs to consult with classroom teachers to determine the strategies and programs which best meet the needs of students.

Colleagues, in this profession, we understand the importance of life-long learning. We adapt to changes in curriculum and program for the benefit of the students we teach, not test scores. For that, we are to be commended.

Wishing you a successful school year,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'J. Pauletig'.



OTF joins the world of social media

Join us on *Twitter*: @otffeo

A *Facebook* page is in process and should be ready by mid-October.

The *OTF/FEO website* is being updated and should be active by mid-October, at the latest.

Follow us on



@otffeo

CONGRATULATIONS

Ontario teachers are great!

Three teachers recognized for teaching excellence

On September 24, three Ontario teachers received the OTIP Teaching Award for excellence at the awards ceremony at the Toronto Airport Hilton.

Nancy Dye

Elementary Teacher Category
Wexford Public School
Toronto

Catarina Vindasuis

Secondary Teacher Category
East Elgin Secondary School
Aylmer

Kerri Lyn Grainger

Beginning Teacher Category
St. Columban Catholic School
Dublin

As well, Le Groupe Média TFO presented *le Prix TFO Éducation* to **Martin Bouchard**, École élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin in Ottawa.

“The award winners this evening represent the exceptional teachers in publicly funded education,” stated Julie Pauletig, OTF President at the ceremony. “We are so proud of you and of all members of the profession.”

The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) sponsors the OTIP Teaching Awards which are administered by OTF.

For more information about these winners and the awards, go to teachingawards.ca.



L to R: Julie Pauletig, OTF President; Kerri Lyn Grainger, winner, Beginning Teacher Category; Catarina Vindasuis, winner, Secondary Teacher Category; Nancy Dye, winner, Elementary Teacher Category; and Vic Medland, CEO, OTIP/RAEO



L to R: Terry Hamilton (OSSTF); Kevin O'Dwyer (OECTA); Earl Burt (OSSTF); Dr. Samantha Nutt (War Child Canada); Henri Babin (AEFO); Ann Murphy (OECTA); Mary Morison (ETFO); James McCormack (ETFO); Anne Vinet-Roy (AEFO); and Harvey Bischof (OSSTF)

OTF welcomes new Fellows

Annually, in August, OTF recognizes members and non-members with the awarding of the OTF Fellowship.

To be considered for a Fellowship, various criteria are considered:

- outstanding service to OTF;
- outstanding service to education;
- enhancing the image of women in the field of education;

- advocating social issues, particularly as they impact upon women and children;
- furthering the positive image of women in their community; or
- contributing to the elimination of stereotyping in the school program.

The recipients of Fellowships this year all met more than one of the above criteria. Congratulations, Fellows.

A message from Rhonda Kimberley-Young

**SECRETARY-
TREASURER**



Given the international attention to Ontario's education, OTF has met with delegations from a number of jurisdictions. This fall, we'll be hosting two delegations of Russian school principals. I am looking forward to learning more about the education system in Russia.

Typically, our international visitors want to hear the secret of Ontario's success from the perspective of the Federation. I usually point to some of the key factors—stable funding, reasonable class sizes, well educated and committed teachers, a deliberate focus on the success of each student, support for students with special needs, a clear common curriculum developed with teacher input, among others.

It wasn't until a high ranking representative from the UK asked me how we went about closing bad schools that I realized I was missing the obvious. If a community or school board felt a school needed to improve, the question here would be how do we help the school do better, not how do we shut it down? What the UK visitor didn't realize was that almost all children in Ontario go to school in the area they live. His jurisdiction had done away with catchment areas years ago in favour of "choice and competition." When the school is seen as part of the community, everyone wants the school and the children in it to do well. The idea of closing bad schools is foreign to us.

The whole foundation of publicly funded education, which we often take for granted, is the pre-condition for our success. We haven't adopted a market approach to education, although we have successfully fought off a few attempts by misguided politicians to do so. I had assumed that fact was known and understood by those looking from the outside in. It was not but is now my new starting point when we have visiting delegations.

From time to time, there is a movement to reshape our education system into a corporate market model but our longer history reinforces the fact that community schools based on co-operation, collaboration and compassion—the very values we teach children every day—will win the day. I'm reminded of this fact each time I read a new "study" or "report" from the Fraser Institute which supports privatization of public services. My view is not that they are simply overlooking the obvious but that they are deliberating campaigning to undermine the universality and public confidence so critical to the success of our education system in Ontario.

As we near World Teachers' Day, I'd like to personally thank my teachers from Land O'Lakes Public School and Sharbot Lake High School for helping me develop the critical thinking skills to know the difference between a "report" and a "campaign." The idea of universal public education, like universal health care, is quintessentially Canadian. It is also worth defending and can never be taken for granted. Some reports, however, should be taken with a grain of salt.

Support the



Annually, OTF chooses one charity to support and promote. This year, that charity is the Children's Wish Foundation.

Each year, thousands of Canadian children between the ages of three and 17 are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. The Children's Wish Foundation of Canada is dedicated to granting an exceptional wish to every child.

Children's Wish has granted more than 19,000 wishes for children and their families—about 1,000 annually. As stated on their website, each wish is as unique as the child who makes it. A wish can range from a personal computer or a home theatre system, to travel or a meeting with a celebrity.

You can support Children's Wish by visiting childrenswish.ca/en/home.



Learning with OTF

Safe@School

There will be new web-based resources coming in October, including a new professional learning module on working with parents to resolve bullying, equity and inclusion issues and a new website for students. Check out safe@school.ca and changeourworld.ca.

Teachers' Gateway to Special Education

This website is being updated with many new and useful strategies and guides for working with students with special needs: teachspeced.ca.

New Directions in Teacher Education

This conference, co-hosted by the Ontario Association of Deans of Education and OTF, is slated for February 21 and 22, 2014. More information to follow.

Access live webinars

OTF Connects webinars provide effective opportunities to learn, create and collaborate with teachers across the province. Teachers leave each session with immediately useful ideas for their classroom.

Register online at offeo.on.ca at *OTF Connects*. A wide variety of session topics are available in the 2013-14 calendar, including 21st century learning, critical thinking, financial literacy and violence prevention.

Teachers and Parents as Partners

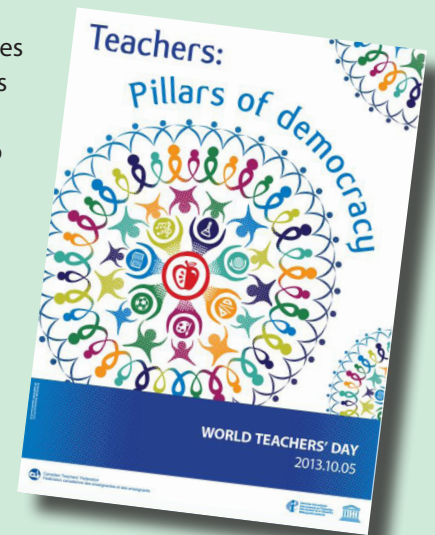
This new project is just getting off the ground. Watch for more news on this.

Teachers: Pillars of democracy

This year, World Teachers' Day in Canada recognizes the contributions that teachers make not only to education but to the democratic society in which we live.

OTF and OTIP recognized the excellence of teachers in Ontario's publicly funded system with the presentation of the OTIP Teaching Awards for excellence.

Also, OTF, in partnership with the Toronto Marlies hockey team, will publicly recognize and thank teachers at the Marlies' home opener on October 5.



OTF is proud of our members and thanks you for your devotion to teaching!

Cool tools for teachers & students



SMART Ideas 5.0 is Ministry-licensed concept-mapping software, free to teachers and students in public education. The software helps teachers or students to create multi-level visual representations of information and learning using colourful symbols, arrows and clip art to reinforce concepts from all subjects. An unlimited number of levels can be added to any symbol in the map, along with links to video files, audio clips, documents, photos, presentations and websites. There is also a French version. To learn more, visit <http://bit.ly/17OkDn1>.

Prezi is a free, cloud-based presentation software that supports teachers and students to create, collaborate and communicate in real-time. Teachers and students can access, on the website, hundreds of sample *Prezis* and creative ways to get the most out of the tool. With versions for tablets, smartphones, and desktop computers, students or teachers have access to an array of tools to help avoid the linear presentation trap that can occur with PowerPoint and marry creative and critical thinking. To learn more, visit <http://prezi.com/>.