

the OTF curriculum forum

We're here for you!



The OTF Curriculum Forum was formed in 1981 to provide a venue for professional interaction among the Subject, Division and Special Interest Associations and OTF and to provide an active and important liaison between the member Associations and the Ministry of Education.

The members of the Forum are: OTF, the four teaching Affiliates of OTF and representatives from the approximately 45 different Associations. Subject Associations are organized by subject for teachers and for consultants and there are two Division Associations: one for Primary Educators and the other for Junior Educators. All established Associations have an open invitation for membership on the Forum and, as new Subject Associations are formed, they too are invited to join the Forum.

The Curriculum Forum meets three times during the school year. A Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from four Associations (two elected each year for a two-year term), two Affiliate representatives (appointed for a two-year term on a rotational basis) and the OTF senior staff member responsible for curriculum, meets regularly to plan Forum meetings and the retreat. The Chairperson of the Forum is elected at the October meeting and is always from one of the Subject Associations.

At the Friday Ministry meetings, members are provided with updates from the various divisions of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch and on current education initiatives from the other branches within the Ministry. Forum members are asked for their input and expertise related to policy, curriculum, assessment practices and other essential elements of teaching.

In recent years, the focus of the Curriculum Forum meetings has been on both personal and professional development for the members and, ultimately, for the teachers across Ontario. Speakers and guests from a wide variety of organizations

provide resources, materials and ideas for conference workshops on topics such as current brain research and its influence on the adolescent brain, differentiating instruction, local government week, students at risk, anti-bullying, teacher and student exchanges, E-Learning, workplace health and safety, education for sustainable development, year-round schooling and many other topics.

The Forum is funded primarily by OTF and the Associations contribute materials, time and the expertise of their representatives who attend the meetings. All of the Associations fund their events and conferences through membership fees collected from their members. Some of the larger Associations, such as the Science Teachers' Association of Ontario (STAO), offer French workshops for Francophone members. Discussions are underway with the Ministry to improve the opportunities available from the Subject Associations for AEFO members.

If you are not a member of either a Subject or Division Association, please consider becoming a member. The process for joining varies among the Associations and information is available on their respective websites. Membership across the Associations has grown steadily over the last few years, as classroom teachers become aware of the wealth of information and opportunities available to them as members

In June, OTF will be launching the new OTF website where you can go to find information on the Forum, links to all of the Subject and Division Associations' websites and updates on Teaching Matters, the OTF professional development program. We encourage you to spend some time on the new site and discover what the OTF Curriculum Forum can do for you.

interaction



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a message *from the President*



George (Joe) Lamoureux

OTF has a new look and I am excited about the next stage—a website remodelling—to be launched in June at www.otffeo.on.ca.

Dear Colleagues,

This is an important time in the history of OTF as we celebrate the 65th Anniversary and set some new directions for our organization. My hope is that with a comprehensive review of the Bylaws and Policies of the Federation we can modernize while at the same time respect our traditions. I would like to see OTF become more significant to our members while continuing to complement the work of the affiliates and not encroach on them. Yes, we have had our disagreements from time to time, but we have also had very significant achievements such as the Pension Partnership and excellent Professional Development opportunities that are well received by our members. I would like to increase the involvement of our Governors in Federation committees and workgroups. Of course this will require consensus and adequate budgeting, both of which are achievable—and I suggest essential—for the future of OTF.

I see OTF becoming more attractive to our newer members—those who twitter and tweet—by being more environmentally friendly and relevant. Recently at OTF I participated in training on elluminate—our new communications software that will make virtual conferencing an option for OTF. As well I attended the “Expanding Our Horizons Conference” in Toronto that opened my eyes to the virtual world of communications. We need to capitalize on this, in order to make OTF more important in the professional lives of members. We purport to be the voice of teachers in publicly funded education and have a great opportunity to expand our range with new technology. I also attended this year’s OTF/OADE Conference and was totally engaged in the discussion and interaction with the Deans and the TELC committee members. At the conference I was reminded by a colleague that a good teacher is like a candle—it consumes itself to light the way for others, something

our members do every day and often too much. One reason is the governments’ insistence on using standardized testing as a measure of teacher success. In January, on CHCH television I enjoyed having the opportunity to defend the work of our members against a representative of the Fraser Institute who claimed the only measure of teacher effectiveness is standardized testing. I challenged him to find one positive suggestion to assist teachers with their data and reporting and he could find none. We know organizations like the Fraser Institute only seek to attack teachers and publicly funded education. As noted in this issue, OTF and the Affiliates are united in their concern around the Government’s recent development of a School Information Finder website. Our fear is that the Fraser Institute’s manner of assessment of the education system is reflected in this initiative by the Government.

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SCHOOL

information finder



On April 1, 2009, the Ministry of Education launched a new tool accessible from its main page, entitled the School Information Finder (SIF). The name itself suggests that one could search for relatively general information about the schools in Ontario, but this is far from the actual function of the site. We propose another name for this offensive initiative: School Information Finder, Tool for Education Research (the SIFTER). It will enable parents to sift through schools comparing questionable data.

The original intent was for administrators to be able to use it as a tool to support the work of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) and their Statistical Neighbours initiative. Without consultation with education stakeholders, the Acting Deputy Minister, Ben Levin, sent a memo to Principals on March 24, 2009, announcing that this new site would be up on the Ministry's website at the end of the month. In that memo, the Deputy Minister requested that Principals "not share the link with others, outside of school and school board staff", essentially giving them a gag order.

Since 2003, when the Liberals were elected, education in Ontario has shown tremendous improvement, largely due to the collaboration between the Ministry and education stakeholders and the consultative nature of decision-making by this government.

On April 6, OTF and the Affiliate Presidents and General Secretaries met with representatives of the various parent organizations to discuss the site prior to the Education Partnership Table meeting.

Members of the Education Partnership Table include parents, teacher federations, principals' and supervisory officers' organizations, Directors of Education, student representatives, Faculty representatives, etc. The parents were – and are – justifiably outraged by the social demographic profiling as a consequence of this site.

At the Partnership Table meeting, Annie Kidder, Executive Director of People for Education, took the lead on behalf of the parents' groups and spoke against the site, requesting its removal until a formal consultation with education stakeholders could be done. In turn, each and every member of the Partnership Table objected to the site, commenting on concerns about the potential for:

- Parents "shopping" for schools, encouraged by the government
- Parents choosing schools based on very limited criteria, for example EQAO scores
- School closings as a result of parents choosing one school over another
- Parents taking their children out of the public system and enrolling them in private schools
- Misuse of personal and demographic information of parents and students
- Unfair comparisons and criticisms of schools, parents, teachers and students
- Increased racial and socioeconomic segregation based on school demographic information
- Intensifying the existing stigma toward children with special needs
- Unnecessary fluctuations in real estate and property values based on limited criteria

What is most disconcerting is the blatant contradiction between the existence of this site and the intent of the Ministry's new Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, formally launched – ironically – immediately following the Partnership Table meeting.

Not long after the SIF site came under public scrutiny, another site appeared, ranking schools in Ontario. This is exactly what members of the Education Partnership Table feared would happen. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=2gDbDb40vIr8TodiNiXXFg_3d_3d

OTF and the Affiliates became aware of the site the same day it was launched. President Lamoureux sent a letter to Minister Wynne, on behalf of the 145,000 teachers in Ontario, expressing our collective shock and disappointment about this initiative.

OTF and the Affiliates have written and sent an open letter to both the Minister of Education and the Premier, expressing our objections to the site and requesting its removal to allow for real consultation on this issue.

a message from the President

(Continued from page 1)

As your President I have been privileged to represent you in the past couple of months at events such as the: Public Education Symposium, Safe Schools Action Team Ministry Roundtable, Spirit of Mandela Steering Committee and Events, Pension Plan Evaluation and Board member meetings, the Workers Health and Safety Center Board, Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee - Students Stand Together, 17th Annual New Pioneers Awards 2009, the Retirement Reception of - Brian McGowan, OCT, Ontario Budget briefings and OSSTF's and OECTA's AGM's, Partnership Table and the ANTI- School Information Finder lobby.

It is important to me that your President is visible and accessible while defending publicly funded education and I am both. I feel that OTF has a strong future that can be built by all of us in this room and on the shoulders of those who have come before us, the best way to predict your future is to create it. Creating a more responsive and inclusive OTF is a tremendous legacy we can all leave for future teachers and educational workers in Ontario.

Yours in Federation,

George (Joe) Lamoureux
President

Your 2008-2009 Curriculum Forum

Association for Computer Studies Educators (ACSE)
Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
Association francophone pour l'éducation artistique de l'Ontario (AFEAO)
Applied Science & Technology Teachers of Ontario (ASTTO)
Consultants'/Co-ordinators' Association of Primary Educators (CAPE)
Catholic Association of Religious and Family Life Educators of Ontario (CARFLEO)
Council of Drama and Dance Educators (CODE)
Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO)
Educational Computing Organization of Ontario (ECOO)
English Language Arts Network (ELAN)
ESL/ELD Resource Group of Ontario (ERGO)
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
International Languages Educators' Association (ILEA)
Ontario Association of Business Education Co-ordinators (OABEC)
Ontario Association for Geographic & Environmental Educators (OAGEE)
Ontario Association of Junior Educators (OAJE)
Ontario Association for Mathematics Education (OAME)
Ontario Association of Physics Teachers (OAPT)
Ontario Association for the Supervision of Physical and Health Education (OASPHE)
Ontario Business Educators' Association (OBEA)
Ontario Classical Association (OCA)
Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA)
Ontario Council for Exceptional Children (OCEC)
Ontario Council for Technology Education (OCTE)
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
Ontario Family Studies - Home Economics Educators' Association (OFSHEEA)
Ontario Family Studies Leadership Council (OFSLC)
Ontario Geography Consultants' Association (OGCA)
Ontario Guidance Leadership Association (OGLA)
Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association (OHASSTA)
Ontario History, Humanities & Social Science Consultants' Association (OHHSSCA)
Ontario Mathematics Co-ordinators Association (OMCA)
Ontario Music Educators' Association (OMEA)
Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association (OMLTA)
Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA)
Ontario Philosophy Teachers' Association (OPTA)
Ontario Reading Association (ORA)
Ontario School Counsellors' Association (OSCA)
Ontario Society for Education Through Art (OSEA)
Ontario Society for Environmental Education (OSEE)
Ontario School Library Association (OSLA)
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)
Science Co-ordinators' and Consultants' Association of Ontario (SCCAO)
Secondary School Hospitality Educators of Ontario (SSHEO)
Science Teachers' Association of Ontario (STAO)
The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario (TALCO)
Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario (TESL)