

interaction



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A message from the OTF President



While pension issues have kept OTF busy, there have been a number of non-pension events this fall. You will read about many of these events in this issue of *Interaction*. However, I would like to talk about common themes from the *People for Education* conference and the *Sharing the Learning Summit*.

The messages from both conferences were similar. Teachers are important, collaboration among teachers is essential, and teachers must better communicate what we do to help students learn. We all know that the professionalism of teachers is under attack. For example, a program in the United States, *Teach for America*, promotes only six weeks of training for prospective teachers. This pyramid scheme of hiring results in 85% of those hired and assigned to disadvantaged schools leaving the profession by their fourth year. They leave long before they have mastered the craft of teaching. These programs miss the important concepts of mentorship, growing teacher leaders, on-going renewal and collaboration among teachers that are so important for us to move forward.

We also have an important role to play in assuring the public that Ontario has one of the best education systems in the world. Teachers seem to be hesitant to promote what they do but this has to change. Teachers must begin to share their successes—with other teachers, with administration, with family and friends, and especially, with the media. The media might not always print the “good news” story, but, as Wayne Gretzky said, “You miss 100% of the shots that you don’t take.”

On another note, as has been the custom, OTF will not be mailing cards this year. Instead, OTF is making a donation to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada (LLSC), a voluntary, non-profit organization dedicated to funding blood cancer research for diseases such as leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin’s and myeloma. As well, the organization provides education and patient services.

Finally, but most importantly, I wish you, your family and friends all the peace and joy of the season, and a new year of happiness in a world of peace.

Terry Hamilton, President

Fall wrap-up



Books of Life debut

Life in northern Ontario, hunting expeditions, the importance of grandmothers, a basic lexicon of words in Ojibwe—these were samples of over 200 student-composed books displayed at the *Books of Life* booth at Word on the Street in Toronto on September 23. There were stories from refugee teens at an Ottawa high school, an alphabet book from students in a Deseronto Grade 1/2 class, and the list goes on. The books were composed using various media such as paintings and crayon drawings, feathers and poetry, photography, video footage and audio clips.

Thousands of members of the public viewed the students' books at the booth and heard teachers and students talk about their experiences and read excerpts from their books.

Books of Life is a literacy-based awareness project, created by OTF and funded by the Aboriginal Education Office. In the 2011-12 school year, the project involved partnering teachers in schools where there are relatively high First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) populations together with teachers in schools where there are few to no FNMI students. Teachers used aboriginal storytelling techniques with their classes over the course of the year to create and produce books about their lives.

More information about the *Books of Life* project can be found at otffeo.on.ca. Just click on the *Books of Life* icon.

2012

OTIP Teaching Awards Winners



Left to Right: Vic Medland, CEO, Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan; Francine LeBlanc-Lebel, OTF Past President; Julie Caron, Chef des services éducatifs, TFO; Talia Hunter, Winner, Beginning Teacher Category; Jodie Lang, Winner, Elementary Teacher Category; Monica Petrus, Winner, Secondary Teacher Category; and Terry Hamilton, OTF President



2012
Word on
the Street

Volunteers for the OTF booth at Word on the Street 2012 were kept busy the whole day, talking with parents, students, teachers and the general public.



Comments from the Secretary-Treasurer



Ontario is among the top performing education jurisdictions in the world. You don't have to take my word for it. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) studies confirm that, on international comparison tests, Ontario's students have been and continue to be among top performers. We are not quite Finland—but the gap between us is now pretty narrow. And, it's not just that. The gap between Ontario's highest-performing students and lowest-performing students is smaller than in most jurisdictions. This is arguably a more important measure in that it demonstrates that the concepts of universality and equity have real meaning.

However, while the whole world seems to be patting Ontario on the back for its success, I continue to read editorials or letters to the editor which condemn Ontario's teachers or our education system. Our success is a well-kept secret at home, even though it is being celebrated abroad. As Terry stated in the *President's Message*, I encourage teachers to lose their humility and speak with pride about their students, schools and Ontario's success. Your voices may be the key to sustaining that success.

Recently, I was part of an Ontario panel at a conference in Ohio. Ontario was one of five top performing jurisdictions, invited to share and discuss its success. I spoke about teacher selection, teacher training and ongoing professional learning. I was proud to state that Ontario has excellent teachers—well qualified, well trained and committed to ongoing professional learning. It is one important reason for our success, although it is by no means the only one.

Over the last decade, most Ontario teachers would agree that the goals for education of the Ontario Government have been laudable, even if implementation has left something to be desired in some cases. There has been a focus on student success and achievement.

Issues such as bullying, homophobia, and student mental health have been openly discussed. There has been more consultation in developing policy and curriculum. There has been reinvestment in education which has led to smaller classes, extra supports for students and an expansion of early learning. The *what* of education has been pretty commonly believed and embraced by all in Ontario. The results prove that working together and investing in education works.

But the *how* also matters. In order to achieve the steady improvements in Ontario, it took investment and a network of trust—a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration. Politicians, the Ministry and OTF have all credited the relationship and collaboration as being key to the improvements we've seen. And it also took money. Ontario has proven that financial investment and respect for the profession pay off in results.

In the decade before, it was equally proven that you can't do more with less. Treating those who matter most to the success and well being of Ontario's students, not as partners but as enemies, hinders student opportunity, achievement and equity.

The question is where the next decade will take us and whether there is a way back on track from the place in which we now find ourselves. It seems to me the lesson we've learned about what drives success is pretty clear. Let's make sure we don't keep it our secret.

Rhonda Kimberley-Young

Pension update



OTF was involved in conversations with the government as part of the Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan (JSPP) consultations over the past few months.

On October 23, Finance Minister Dwight Duncan reported that three plans—Ontario Public Services Employees Union (OP Trust), Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) pension plan and the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP)—had reached agreement with the Ontario Government on broad terms affecting those plans for a five-year period.

Since that time, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions issued a media release, indicating that the Finance Minister's comments regarding HOOPP were "premature" since the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) disagreed with one aspect of the terms. Therefore, the status of that deal is unclear.

The Minister reported that there was no deal at that time for the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. OTF remains open to continuing discussions with the government. However, any discussions are confidential at this point in time.

As well, the deadline for filing a valuation has been extended to February 28, 2013. At this point, OTF and the government partner have not yet determined whether to file a 2012 valuation.

OTF will share further information when available. Information from other sources is rumour and speculation.



TLLP • PALPE

sharing the learning summit

On November 4-5, halls and meeting rooms at the Delta Meadowvale Hotel in Mississauga were packed with tables displaying teachers' projects related to professional learning themes. The TLLP *Sharing the Learning Summit* was the culmination of more than a year's work on these projects and gave TLLP teachers the opportunity to display and share their projects. The projects touched a wide variety of areas such as Aboriginal education, the arts, core/immersion French, literacy, media literacy, and numeracy/mathematics.

a sampling of projects

THE WIRELESS CLASSROOM: USING IPADS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

With a focus on transformational knowledge and increased student engagement to improve critical thinking, learning and achievement, iPads and wireless technology were used as the critical way of learning in a pilot classroom. Over the course of multiple cross-curricular units, the increased achievement of Grade 8 students in the digital classroom was compared to that of the same Grade 8 students in a control classroom. The results showed that students in the digital classroom had an increased engagement to their learning, thus leading to a greater increase in achievement.

Mark Lefebvre
Niagara Catholic District School Board
TLLP project for middle school

USING HIGH YIELD PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES TO TEACH NUMBER SENSE AND NUMERATION: BIG IDEAS IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSROOMS

Using English resources as templates, information was compiled and lessons created by using high yield strategies; ie, Bansho, Math Congress and Gallery Walk. These resources will be shared with other French immersion teachers, both across the board and across the province using Web 2.0 tools; ie, Wikis. Also, they will help teachers teach and reinforce number sense and numeration skills by using the three-part problem solving method.

Renée Cousineau
District School Board Ontario North East
TLLP project for elementary school

THE IMPACT OF ENGAGEMENT, ATTACHMENT AND ATTENDANCE ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Building on previous projects, this project focused on promoting school engagement and attendance to have a positive impact on student achievement. The experience as a Student Success Team indicates that, when students are placed in the appropriate level and are engaged in their studies, they are successful at earning credits. The goal was to identify innovative strategies that will encourage non-attendees to attend school more regularly and thereby, improve their academic achievement and ability to accumulate credits. The work was based on the premise that all students, given the necessary support, can achieve at high levels.

Scott Buffam
Renfrew County District School Board
TLLP project for secondary school

To learn more about TLLP, check out the program under the OTF Initiatives link at otffeo.on.ca.