

A message from the OTF President



Chris Cowley

Dear colleagues,

When I last wrote my *Interaction* message in December, I mentioned that I would be giving a presentation to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) about their proposed fee increase, which we discovered was primarily to pay off their mortgage at Bay and Bloor Streets in Toronto. Here at OTF, we mobilized our resources and the resources of our Affiliates to use social media, members and frank discussion with OCT councillors to send a message that teachers were absolutely opposed to this fee hike.

I asked you to get involved and let OCT know how you feel about their fee proposal. Your response was overwhelming. Thousands of teachers from across the province emailed, tweeted and voted in our poll to send a clear message that we pay enough to OCT.

On December 7, 2017, I addressed the College Council armed with your clear mandate to oppose the fee increase. After discussion, the Council voted down the fee increase and chose to keep fees frozen for 2018.

And as it turns out, the final OCT budget numbers were recently

released with a surplus of over \$700,000. Even without the fee increase, OCT is in a very healthy financial state!

By the time you read this, the election for the OCT Council will already have closed. I hope you had the opportunity to cast

your ballot. But a more important ballot is coming in June with the provincial election. The political landscape in Ontario has shifted considerably in recent months and teachers need to be aware of the importance of their vote to ensure an education-friendly government is elected. Teachers need to speak through their ballot for not only our profession, but also for our students.

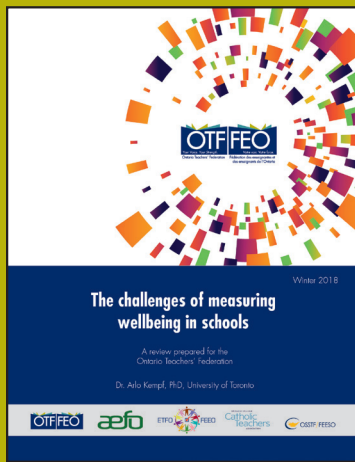
As we enter the home stretch of the school year, I'd like to thank all of you for your professionalism and dedication to our students and our publicly funded education system. Teachers are the heart and soul of our schools and OTF will always be standing behind you as you teach the love of learning every day.

Yours in education,

Chris Cowley
President

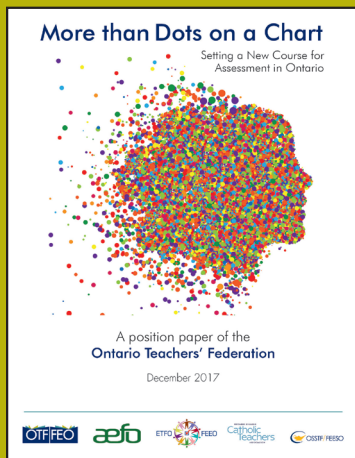


President Chris Cowley with
OTF members prior to OCT
Council meeting



This OTF paper reviews the challenges, limitations, and possibilities of the current policy conversation around measuring student wellbeing and investigates some of the related implications for teachers' work in Ontario.

bit.ly/well-being2018



Ontario is recognized as a global leader in education. Our collective understanding of assessment and evaluation has evolved since the publication of *A New Vision for Large-Scale Testing in Ontario* (2011). OTF and its Affiliates continue to believe in evidence-based research tempered and informed by the experience of classroom teachers.

We believe it is time to set a new course for assessment in Ontario's public education system.

bit.ly/OTFMoreThanDots



OTF Curriculum Forum Retreat

Get smARTS: Making Connections was the focus for members of the OTF Curriculum Forum at their retreat in early February. The aim was to provide practical ways to infuse arts-based education (dance, drama, media/visual arts, music) into a variety of subject matters. It also provided a healthy antidote to the sometimes-exclusive focus on literacy and numeracy to the detriment of the arts.

Several experts shared their passion for and expertise in the arts: Dr. David Booth, OISE/UT; Beryl Cohen and Jane Dewar, The Ontario Art Education Association; Kathy Gould Lundy, OISE/UT & York University; Jim Palmer, Ontario Music Educators' Association; Lauren Van Gijn and Matt Sheahan, Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators; and Jane Wamsley (Ontario Music Educators' Association).

Retreat participants came away with a deeper understanding of how to weave the arts into their own divisions and disciplines and leverage the arts to support engaging and effective teaching and learning opportunities. To learn more about the OTF Curriculum Forum, please visit bit.ly/OTFCF

Teacher activism and dedication in Canada and across the world

This was the observation of OTF President, Chris Cowley, after attending three educational events this past winter.

First was the Indspire national gathering of educators, stakeholder and Indigenous peoples. Over 1,000 participants from across Canada met in Montreal to attend workshops and seminars aimed at advancing the knowledge of educators and community activists around the topic of Indigenous culture and reconciliation. Chris was inspired by seeing so many ready to correct the mistakes of the past.

In February, the regional meeting of Education International (EI) was held in Trinidad and Tobago. OTF is an EI member through membership with the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). Member organizations from across North America and the

Caribbean discussed trends and issues in education. Chris attended workshops on engaging members and education privatization as well as many more. He commented that "events of this nature bring together educators from various regions where we can share experiences and best practices in our efforts to combat issues facing our schools."

The third meeting was the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) annual meeting in Vancouver and once again Chris realized that, regardless of where you are in the country or the world, education issues are very similar. BCTF had been locked in a bitter struggle with the previous Liberal government. Last year, a new NDP government was elected. The members of BCTF mirrored the activism and dedication of teachers both in Canada and across the world.

A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer



Rhonda Kimberley-Young

In the December *Interaction*, I reported that OTF was moving. We have been in our new space now for about 10 weeks. The move occurred over a weekend and staff arrived to have functioning phones and computers first thing on Monday. It was an exhausting period for OTF staff, especially those most involved in the move, but the new space works very well. As well, it will be cost-effective over time since we are sharing space with the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO), who are delightful roommates, by the way.

OTF has published two important position papers since our last newsletter; one on standardized assessment, *More than Dots on a Chart: Setting a New Course for Assessment in Ontario* and the other, *The challenges of measuring wellbeing in schools* – both are available at otffeo.on.ca. Please share these papers with colleagues who may find them of interest. These are just some examples of the advocacy OTF does for the profession.

During the winter months, OTF also got its first glimpse at pension results. As you know, the January 2018 changes have already been reported. The OTF Executive will soon report on the current funded status of the Plan to members - the OTPP results are released in early April.

We've had visits in recent months from two international education delegations: a Swedish delegation in February and a South African delegation in March. We've also communicated several times with the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (NSTU) since they are experiencing many of the reforms Ontario experienced over 20 years ago under the Mike Harris government. Their government is intent on significant changes which, in OTF's view, will do nothing to improve education in the province, but will create division and turmoil.

Three of the four Ontario Affiliates recently had annual meetings, over-shadowed only by the highly unusual PC leadership race at the same time! With an election in June, Ontario's teachers who lived through massive funding cuts to education under the Mike Harris government will be a great source of knowledge to those newer to the profession. It was a scandal at that time when it was revealed that \$1 billion was to be cut from education. The PC platform for education remains unclear at this time but it is important to not take promises at face value. Teachers should take note and take action.

On March 5, President Chris Cowley and Secretary-Treasurer Rhonda Kimberley-Young met with educators from the Education Labour Relations Council and the Department of Education, South Africa



OTFFEO TEACHING MATH through problem-solving 2
Professional interactive learning conference for teachers by teachers

Keynote speakers
Jon Orr, Kyle Pearce

July 5-6, 2018
Holiday Inn Toronto International Airport
970 Dixon Rd., Etobicoke

EXPLORING
Best practices
Tech-enabled learning
Inquiry-based classrooms
Play-based learning
Effective assessment strategies
Math curriculum implementation

Registration opens May 14, 2018 at 4:00 pm
otffeo.on.ca/learning

OTFFEO SUMMER institutes 2018
Professional interactive learning for teachers by teachers

Exploring curriculum through the lens of
Assessment literacy
English language learners
Equity and inclusive education
Experiential learning
Financial literacy
Global competencies
Indigenous worldviews
Information and communication technologies
Inquiry- and play-based learning

Registration opens June 1, 2018

To register, visit otffeo.on.ca/learning

OTFFEO PEDAGOGY b4 3 TECHNOLOGY
Supporting learning with digital tools

Professional learning for teachers by teachers

August 22-24, 2018
Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites Conference Centre & Spa
8500 Warden Ave.

Interaction with experienced educators
Demonstrations and hands-on opportunities
Leveraging technology to enhance teaching and learning
Minds on Media: experiment with new technologies with expert teachers
Sharing best practices

International keynote speaker on technology, education and cyber literacy
Kevin Honeycutt

Registration opens June 17, 2018 at 4:00 pm
otffeo.on.ca/learning



TEACHERS' GATEWAY TO
SPECIAL EDUCATION

www.teachspeced.ca



Teachers' Gateway to Special Education Back by popular demand!

In response to many calls from members to update this useful resource, OTF has revised the Teachers' Gateway to Special Education. The updated website provides specific strategies and resources to help teachers address the unique needs of students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Well-organized and extremely user-friendly, the Gateway includes links to board special education plans and Ministry documents, definitions of key special education terms and provides a practical guide for

teachers building Individual Education Plans (IEPs).



OTF Connects Webinars for professional learning

OTF Connects Spring program supports teachers in the areas of mathematics, kindergarten, technology, curriculum and wellbeing.

These free 90-minute interactive webinars, offered from 7:30 to 9:00 pm on weekdays, are accessible from your home computer.

www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/otf-connects/calendar/

Find recordings and resources from previous OTF Connects webinars at www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/otf-connects/resources/.

Follow on Twitter @otf_pd.

Pension enhancements for OTPP members as of January 1, 2018

On January 1, 2018, three decisions by the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Ontario Government, as joint sponsors of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (Plan), went into effect; all of which are good news for OTPP members.

The contribution rate for the Plan's active members was reduced by 1.1%.

Full inflation protection was restored for those who retired after 2009. Pensioners who retired after 2009 received a one-time increase in January 2018 to restore their pensions to the levels they would have been at, had full inflation protection been provided each year since they retired. They also received a slightly higher inflation increase for the portion of their pensions earned after 2009. Cost-of-living increases for this portion of pension credit equal 100% of the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), up from the previous level of 90%. Pension credits earned before 2010 remain fully inflation-protected.

The early retirement reduction factor was lowered in some cases for members who are age 50 plus when they cease employment in education after 2017.

"All of this comes as good news for our members," stated Chris Cowley, OTF President. "We are restoring benefits and reducing contribution rates while ensuring the Plan remains fully funded."

For more information on these changes, go to www.otpp.com.