

For immediate release

## Toronto secondary school teacher receives OTIP award for teaching excellence

**TORONTO, September 26, 2018** — Lauren Hortie, a teacher at Oasis Alternative Secondary School in Toronto, was honoured with the OTIP Teaching Award for excellence in the Secondary Teacher Category at a ceremony in Toronto yesterday.

Lauren co-designed a program to teach compulsory subjects in an authentic project-based way to at-risk students. Thus was born the Skateboard Factory. Lauren draws upon students' strengths and talents to create skateboards which they then offer for sale. Lauren has created a safe and trusting classroom community. Lauren includes current trends such as Indigenous Studies, popular culture and community contact to create a program which is inclusive and relevant to the students' lives. Inclusivity helps under-represented students see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Lauren's personal work habits, her commitment and passion are reflected in the improvement in students' work and life habits. The success of the student projects is evident in skateboard sales, participation in local art shows and even a New York art show and the popular workshops students host for other young people.

Perhaps, the following quote from a student sums up Lauren's success, "before I came to OSFI, I had been out of school for two years, had no high school credits and, with anxiety from past school experiences, had lost my motivation and essentially given up. Her [Lauren's] work has given me the opportunity to break free from my anxiety towards school to get my high school diploma and create a path towards success."

More information and a video honouring Lauren are posted on the Teaching Awards website: [teachingawards.ca](http://teachingawards.ca).

The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation co-sponsor the OTIP Teaching Awards for excellence in teaching in the publicly funded school system. Three awards are presented: elementary school teacher, secondary school teacher and beginning teacher.

About OTIP: Creating Insured Members for Life. At OTIP ([www.otip.com](http://www.otip.com)), we not only understand the education system, we believe in it. OTIP has been committed to providing quality insurance benefits and advice for the best value since 1977. Across all lines of insurance, OTIP provides coverage to over 160,000 education employees in the province. Owned by Ontario's four education affiliates (AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF) and directed by a Board of Trustees, OTIP was built on the belief that educators would be better served by a not-for-profit insurance advocate that was part of the education community. This remains our philosophy today.

OTF is the advocate for the teaching profession in Ontario and for its 160,000 teachers. OTF members are full-time, part-time and occasional teachers in all publicly-funded schools in the province – elementary, secondary, public, Catholic and francophone.

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