

A message from the OTF President



Chris Cowley

Teachers,

The conclusion of another academic year always provides us with an opportunity to reflect and take stock of our classrooms, our schools and publicly funded education in Ontario. Sadly, there is much to be concerned about, but also much to be proud of.

This school year is ending much the way it began; with a sense of optimism and concern. Last September, there was optimism that schools would return to a sense of normalcy and that the pandemic would become endemic. Sadly, that did not come to pass and as the winter months set in, schools were closed and the lives of students, parents and teachers were again upended. Today, we are once again facing a sense of optimism and concern. Optimism that the pandemic can be put behind us, and concern that schools and publicly funded education will continue to be far off the priority list of a re-elected Ford Government.

Despite the challenges of the past year, teachers and education workers have much to be proud of. Through your dedication and commitment, schools reopened last September. Student learning thrived and schools again became the welcoming and safe places our communities rely on. Thanks to your passion for strong, publicly funded schools, teachers across the province spoke with one voice during the recent provincial election campaign to defend a world class education system. Although Mr. Ford was re-elected, teachers and education workers sent a clear message that education is always an investment in our future, not a cost on a balance sheet.

Throughout the year OTF has been advocating on your behalf as well. Whether it is giving teachers exemplary PD

opportunities, representing your pension interests, speaking to MPPs about ongoing EQAO issues or pressuring the College of Teachers to improve their service to members, OTF has been working to represent the interests of our profession.

As I complete my second term as President, I know that many reading this are feeling anxious about what the future will hold for our schools and our profession. But I also know that, when called upon, every generation of teachers has risen to the challenge of their time and has spoken with one voice to promote strong schools and advocate for the needs of our students. Our generation will be no different.

In solidarity,

Chris Cowley
President



Two research reports surface consequences of mandatory virtual learning and highlight impact of Ontario Government's education policies before and during COVID-19 pandemic

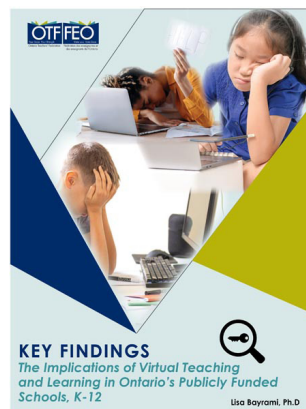
On May 30, 2022, OTF released two research reports highlighting the impact and consequences of education policies before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: *The Implications of Virtual Teaching and Learning in Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools, K-12*, by Dr. Lisa Bayrami, and *Schools, Austerity and Privatization in the Pandemic Era*, by Dr. Paul Bocking. The results of the two studies repudiate the oft-advanced merits of mandatory online learning for students from K-12 and represent an indictment of the Ontario Government's education decision-making during the pandemic, including chronic underfunding of publicly funded education.

Dr. Bayrami's report shows a powerful alignment among three cohorts of survey respondents—families, educators and students—about the effects of an over-reliance on virtual teaching and learning, especially the adverse impact on the academic and social-emotional needs of students. More specifically, students' attention spans, motivation or readiness to learn, active and interactive engagement and achievement gains all suffered or declined. That was especially true for students living in poverty, students with special needs, students from single parent homes, and English-language learners. Of note was the universal acknowledgement that the hybrid model, in which educators attempted to engage students in face-to-face and virtual settings simultaneously, was a fundamentally flawed model and disastrous experiment for students and teachers alike.

In his report, Dr. Bocking underscores the fact that insufficient Government funding led to

- Untenable class sizes in elementary classrooms and schools
- The re-structuring of timetables into quad and octomesters in secondary schools that increased learning gaps
- Extended periods of mandatory virtual learning, including the unmitigated failure of the hybrid teaching and learning model in both elementary and high schools.

Furthermore, Dr. Bocking's report points to a disturbing pattern of decisions by the government that signal an underlying agenda to privatize aspects of publicly funded education.



For example, the government's decision to expand the mandates of two public institutions TVO/ TFO, effectively transferring responsibility for e-learning courses from school boards to them and allowing them to market online courses to private schools and overseas markets, was telling and worrisome.

Taken together, the findings of the two research studies provide evidence that the policy of mandatory e-learning courses and hybrid learning in publicly funded education should be rescinded. Instead, the government should restore appropriate levels of funding to support in-person learning and to centre the expertise of qualified Ontario teachers and educators in addressing students' learning gaps and needs stemming from the pandemic.

To access the key findings of *The Implications of Virtual Teaching and Learning in Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools, K-12* – click [here](#).

To access the full report of *The Implications of Virtual Teaching and Learning in Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools, K-12* – click [here](#).

To access the key findings of *Schools, Austerity & Privatization in the Pandemic Era* – click [here](#).

To access the full report of *Schools, Austerity & Privatization in the Pandemic Era* – click [here](#).



A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer



Scott Perkin

Dear colleagues,

It is hard to believe that another school year is quickly coming to an end. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, and face the same government of the past four years, it is difficult to assess at this point in time what the next (2022-2023) school year will look like . . .

What we do know, however, is that the current state of affairs in Ontario education must change for the better. We simply cannot accept another four years of a government that continues underfunding the education system, that consistently ignores the voice of the profession, and that changes educational policy without genuine consultation.

OTF has just released two significant pieces of research (both of which are highlighted in this issue of *Interaction*) regarding the impacts of online teaching and learning in Ontario, and the austerity and privatization agenda of the Ford Government. And the findings of both research

projects are troubling and make one thing abundantly clear: the current state of affairs in education is simply not acceptable to Ontario's students and educators.

I encourage all educators, parents and students to review the results of these important research pieces, and to support the efforts of OTF and its Affiliates in advocating to the Ontario Government for a better-funded, more equitable, and truly collaborative education system in the province.

In the meantime, I wish all of our OTF members a safe and healthy summer, a well-deserved break from the challenges of the past two school years!

Yours in education,



The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario - Recipient of 2022 OTF Special Recognition Award



The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is pleased to announce that The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is the 2022 recipient of the OTF Special Recognition Award.

This award is presented annually to an organization, group or individual to acknowledge outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario, beyond the school board level.

The COEO is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe and high-quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages.

OTF will recognize COEO with presentation of the 2022 Award to COEO President Karen O'Kafka at the August 22, 2022 OTF President's Banquet in Markham.

Facing History & Ourselves, one of our partner organizations, is offering a series of low-fee, professional learning experiences for educators this summer. Register at facinghistory.org/calendar.

TEACHING COMING OF AGE IN A COMPLEX WORLD:

A modular collection of resources

July 12, 13, 14: 11AM - 4 PM ET | Online synchronous learning (\$25 USD)
Experience a Facing History and Ourselves approach to English / Language Arts through hands on reading, writing, speaking and listening activities using our new collection of Coming of Age curriculum resources; develop the mindset and tools to build a Coming of Age unit that centres student identity, invites perspective taking and ethical reflection, develops literacy and critical thinking skills, and expands students' capacities for engaged civic action.

MINI COURSE: TEACHING HOLOCAUST AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

July 21 - Aug 18 | Blended self paced and online synchronous learning (\$50)

Learn current scholarship on the history of the Holocaust, human behaviour, group dynamics and bias through a holistic, student-centred approach that enables students to connect history to their own lives and the choices they make; discover interactive, multimedia resources, new teaching strategies, and engage with a survivor of the Holocaust. This course is intended for middle and secondary school classroom educators and curriculum coaches.

TEACHING FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE IN CANADA

Aug 16 - 17: 11 AM - 4 PM ET | online synchronous learning (\$50)
Explore Canada's history of schooling to better understand the root causes and interrogate present day inequities in educational access and outcomes; engage with scholarship, tools and strategies to address these historical legacies and to place students at the centre of systems.



As the 2021-22 school year comes to a close, so too does the second year of OTF's *Ici on parle français* professional learning grant program. This year, the funding received by OTF from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) enabled 35 teacher teams and 100 individual teachers to pursue professional learning activities and/or to purchase FSL teaching resources. For those working in a team, the maximum grant was \$500 per team member (maximum \$2,000 per team), and for those working individually, the maximum grant was \$250.

In total, more than 200 teachers benefitted from *Ici on parle français* PD grants this year. In their final reports, the vast majority of the teachers told us that the self-directed professional learning that they had chosen improved their confidence in their French language and pedagogical competencies, as well as their actual French proficiency and their instructional and assessment practices.

OTF has applied for renewed funding to continue the grant program in 2022-23. Stay tuned for further news of this in the coming weeks!

the Collaborative

The *Collaborative Inquiry* is a new resource for elementary and secondary school teachers interested in inquiry- and problem-based pedagogy. The Collaborative Inquiry connects K-12 teachers with academic experts in the fields of social sciences, humanities, and arts (SSHA) from universities across Canada to support teachers and students to nurture inquiry- and project-based learning in the classroom.

Using a virtual portal, teachers can [request a connection](#) to an academic expert to help support different stages of the inquiry-learning process, including developing

New resource for elementary and secondary school teachers

guiding questions and research plans, collecting data, or presenting results for formative or summative assessments. The Collaborative's "connection brokers" manage the networking and collaboration process for everyone, connecting teachers with academic researchers who are eager to support student learning and inspire students to explore SSHA disciplines and careers.

Questions? [Reach out to learn more!](#)