



President's Message



• By now, you have probably received word from your Workplace Steward about our upcoming general membership meeting on December 9th. A strike vote will be taken, therefore every member is encouraged to attend this very important meeting. After five days of negotiations, **not a single issue has been resolved**. Bulletin #2 provides an update on negotiations and more detailed information about the meeting.

• Please remember that December 6th is an altered school day. Procedure #3061 (2002-2003 School Year Calendar) specifies that the total hours of the altered day and the evening interviews will meet the usual expectations for the length of a professional day. Your principal is required to consult with staff on arrival and departure times for the altered day. Page four of this newsletter includes tips for new teachers - and anyone who needs a refresher! - to keep in mind when preparing for and conducting parent-teacher interviews. Also, once again this year you are entitled to a half-day release day for the purposes of prep time. Money is allocated for this prep time in each school's block budget - be sure to use it, it is **your** money! Details about this release time can be found on page 31 of your collective agreement.

• I met recently with Sally McIlveen, Superintendent of Employee Services, regarding Criminal Background Checks and Offense Declarations. There have been some delays in getting this process off the ground, but it is expected the Criminal Background Check consent forms will be sent out before Christmas to those members who were hired prior to December 31, 1998. You have two choices: fill out the consent form and the Board will pay for your background check; or collect your own criminal background check at your own expense and submit it to the Board by July 31, 2003. ETFO provincial supports the use of the consent forms and their staff and legal counsel has had input into the development of this central process. The College of Teachers began collecting background checks from all applicants to the College as of January 1, 1999. Those who became members of the College after that date will only be required to fill out an offense declaration. These will probably be completed in June 2003.

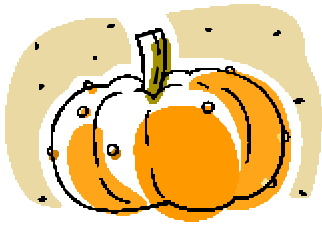
• November 8th was the final day of the arbitration hearing for the 300-minute instructional day grievance. Only 14 schools are in compliance with the collective agreement with an instructional day of 300 minutes. Of the approximately 90 schools who are not in compliance, 28 have an instructional day of 310 minutes or more (the highest is Bobby Orr North with an instructional day of 320 minutes!!!), meaning that they have taught an additional minimum of 8 hours without pay so far this year. We are presently awaiting the decision of arbitrator Stanley Beck, and will let all members know the outcome as soon as we hear.

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Vice President's Viewpoint



A few years ago ETFO was part of an initiative called WELCOME TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL. Representatives of the Principals' Association joined us in an attempt to create a committee which would address and hopefully solve the problem of inappropriate actions by some parents in our schools.

Of course, we all realize that parents can be the school's greatest allies. Parents who support the school staff and give their time, skills and resources to assist student learning and school spirit are a great asset to the school community. Most parents are in this category.

Unfortunately, time and effort is often spent on those parents who think it is their right to be in the school no matter how many others they inconvenience and, at times, endanger, by not following simple rules. For example, the parent who arrives at the classroom door to drop off a book and expects the teacher to relate "how Johnny is doing" while 30 other students wait for the teacher. Or the parent who insists on bringing a child to the classroom door before the entry bell with a dog, a wagon and two pre-schoolers in tow. These examples sound ridiculous, but they happen every day.

Our Director lists some guidelines for parents in his letter in the Durham Board calendar. We gave each Steward a poster listing these guidelines. It should be posted in a prominent spot in the front entrance of your school. Please call our office if you need another.

Ask your Principal to borrow the kit from the Communications Department at the Board office. The videos, overheads and hand-outs in the kit are useful for both parents and staff. Everyone in the school community should work toward continued mutual respect and cooperation. These are necessary for a safe, healthy learning environment for children.

Heroes & Zeroes



Heroes: the many teachers who take the time to mentor a new teacher in their school, whether formally or informally. Unfortunately, the teaching profession is known in some circles as the profession that "eats its own young". Helping a new teacher to swim (instead of sink), does much good in many ways. Obviously, you are helping a new teacher learn the ropes, but you are also touching the future by getting a teacher off to a good start for what will hopefully be a long and fulfilling career. Mentoring a new teacher is also rewarding to the mentor: it is good for your professional growth and may help you view the profession from a perhaps long-forgotten perspective - that of a new teacher.

Zeroes: yet again, the Durham District School Board. I think you can judge the health of labour relations between an employer and their employees based on the number and variety of grievances that are currently filed. No grievances = no problems. Relations between elementary teachers and the Board could be described as very sickly indeed - we have eight grievances in various stages at present. Two concern terminations, three are regarding seniority issues, one is about a letter of discipline, one is about pregnancy/sick leave denial, and one about the length of the instructional day (this last one is now pending a decision by the arbitrator in the case). The DDSB needs to take some quick action and end its shabby treatment of elementary teachers. Durham's elementary teachers deserve the best. Will Craig Burch, DDSB's new director of education support more of the same old, same old? Clearly a new direction is needed, and serious changes need to be made by the Board. In the interim, we'll keep filing grievances on behalf of members and maintain a tough approach at the bargaining table.

Preparation time: A Refresher

Your ETFO-Durham office continues to field various phone calls regarding preparation time. The following are answers to the most frequently asked questions.

How much prep time is a teacher entitled to under our collective agreement?

Teachers with instructional duties are entitled to 135 minutes of preparation time per five (5) day cycle, or 162 minutes per six (6) day cycle. This time should be in blocks of not less than 20 minutes each.

Teachers are further entitled to: 1) two half days of preparation time during the February and June professional activity days; 2) an additional half-day release day for classroom teachers (including French teachers, preparation coverage teachers) during the year.

My scheduled prep time landed on a holiday (e.g. Thanksgiving Monday). Can I get the “missed” prep time back?

No. Holidays are not instructional days, and therefore you are not entitled to prep times during these days.

I was ill and absent during my scheduled time. Can I get the “missed” prep time back after I return?

No. If you are away during your scheduled prep time, you will not be entitled to get them “back” after you return. Furthermore, if you were scheduled to provide prep coverage on a day you are ill, you will not need to pay “back” these periods when you return.

How can I ensure I get my proper prep time?

1) Review your assigned prep schedule and double check you are getting the proper prep time; 2) Schedule class trips on days you do not have a prep; 3) Keep track of days when you did not get your scheduled prep time (e.g. lack of supply teachers) and approach your administrator(s) to get the missed time back; 4) Be on time when you do your own prep coverage. Teachers covering your class will more likely be on time themselves.

How does the amount of prep time in the Durham local compare with other elementary locals across the province?

Durham elementary teachers have the lowest amount of prep time in the province. This is being addressed in our current round of collective bargaining.

Go Bills Go!!!

At 7:00 am on November 3rd, 45 football fans boarded a bus and shuffled off to Buffalo for a day of fun and frivolity at the Buffalo Bills/ New England Patriots game. While the Bills did not win the game, much fun was had by all, and the Durham tailgate party attracted much attention, not for our superior grilling techniques, but for the impressive smoke show and large size of the barbeque. Watch for more fun social events this school year, brought to you by Durham ETFO's



Dates to remember

November 20: General Meeting (4:30 pm) and Retirement Dinner (6:30 pm), Le Gala Banquet Hall, Whitby

November 26: Who Killed Dudley George? An evening in support of a Public Inquiry and the Ipperwash Justice Fund, 7:00-9:00 pm, Heydenshore Pavilion, 589 Water Street, Whitby

December 1: Awards deadline for various ETFO provincial awards - see your Workplace Steward for more information- contact the local office for application forms

December 10: Lorraine Scanlan's retirement

Recertification Update

Good news!!! The Metro Zoo, Ontario Science Centre, Science North in Sudbury, and the National Gallery in Ottawa have all withdrawn as PLP providers, due to pressure from teachers who would not book field trips to these institutions. Keep up the pressure, it's working!

Watch for the upcoming issue of the ETFO Voice magazine. It will include a Professional Learning Program Report Card on public district school boards in Ontario. It's no surprise that Durham is ranked as Level 1, needing attention and significant remedial work, having enthusiastically embraced the PLP program. Communicate your concern to the Board with a phone call or letter or school petition, and by not taking any PLP courses beyond the regular school day.

In January, you will notice that your paycheque is thinner than usual, as the College of Teachers' fee is increasing by 34%, from \$104 per year to \$139. This increase will be used solely to fund the

Status of Women Report

The Status of Women Committee started the year off at a brisk pace, participating in the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Mother-Daughter Walk in September. The money raised goes toward gender-specific research. Much of previous heart research was based on information collected from men only and has been found not to be applicable to women. We were a group of ten mothers with our daughters, who ranged from stroller age to adult, walking on a sunny Sunday morning. A good time was had by all.

October was Women's History Month and ETFO provincial sent out some excellent resources to assist teachers. Among these was a poster highlighting immigrant women's contributions to Canada. Check with your Workplace Steward or contact me if you would like more information on this subject.

Events planned for this year include the Grade 8 girls career awareness conference on April 8th, 2003, and a Women in Action workshop in spring 2003. If you were unable to attend our first planning meeting but would like to make a difference by getting involved, please call me at Rosebank P. S. or e-mail me:

Lena Glaes-Coutts, Status of Women Chair

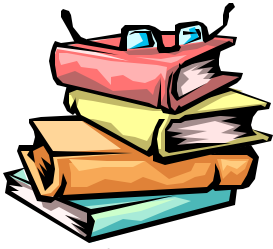
Tips for New Teachers

Parent-Teacher Interviews

The following are some suggestions to help make your first set of parent-teacher interviews a successful experience:

- 1) **Be prepared-** Have your mark book with you and examples of student work. Be ready with some practical suggestions for parents, in order to address the areas of growth you have indicated on the report card.
- 2) **Location-** if your classroom is located in a portable, it is recommended that you conduct your interviews in the main school building, either in the gym or in the library. This way you can avoid being trapped by irate or chatty parents and parents will not be required to wait outside on a chilly doorstep.
- 3) **Make parents comfortable-** greet parents by name and with a handshake; conduct interviews at an adult-height table and seated in adult-sized chairs; you may want to have a box of chocolates or bowl of candy available to offer a little treat.
- 4) **Start the interview on a positive note-** e.g. "I really enjoy having Alex in our class" or "We really appreciate Vijay's sense of humour".
- 5) **Watch the time-** adhere to interview times by wearing a watch or sitting where you can see the clock. Keep a copy of the interview times at the table with you. If parents wish to meet for a longer period of time than that allotted, tell them you'd like to continue the conversation at a mutually convenient time and ask that they call you to set up an appointment.
- 6) **Difficult parents-** we've all encountered them! The best defense is a good offense... request, in advance, that the Principal, Vice-Principal or SERT be present at the interview. Remember that the purpose of the interview is to discuss student progress and strategies for improvement, not to defend your teaching practices.
- 7) **Make notes during interviews-** especially if a plan of action is discussed (e.g. involving the SERT or developing a behaviour contract). After dozens of interviews, you're unlikely to remember the details of each, unless you write them down.
- 8) **Think of your comfort, too-** have a bottle of water handy, and don't forget to schedule a washroom break.

Teacher Annual Learning Plans



Beginning September 2002, every teacher is required to prepare an Annual Learning Plan in consultation with the principal. The Annual Learning Plan is part of the new teacher performance appraisal process, “Supporting Teaching Excellence”, introduced by the Ministry of Education in response to Bill 110, the “Quality in the Classroom Act 2001”. Following are some tips to help guide you in the process of filling out your first Annual Learning Plan:

- If it is your evaluation year, consultation with your principal must include a meeting as part of the performance appraisal process. The Annual Learning Plan must be finalized during the post-observation meeting, and should be signed by both you and your principal. Each of you should retain a copy.
- If you are in a non-evaluation year, it is up to you and your principal to decide how to review the learning plan you have created. The regulation does not require a meeting, but the Ministry recommends a meeting as a “best practice”. Both you and your principal must review and sign your Annual Learning Plan.
- Don’t forget that it is **your** plan! Keep it simple (submit only the form given - don’t write an essay!) and choose an area that you are interested in pursuing. The regulation requires that you choose at least one objective each year, so it is appropriate to pick just one. The area of professional growth that you choose should be achievable, realistic and related to your daily teaching practice. Some examples include: to expand the ways I can communicate with parents of students in my class; to enhance my grade 4 math program by using a new resource; to increase my understanding of using rubrics in my instrumental music program; to expand my knowledge of Early Literacy strategies for the grade 1 program.
- In the “rationale” section, explain in a positive way, without listing your weaknesses, why you selected this objective and what you hope to achieve this year.
- In the “Strategies and time lines” section, describe a practical strategy that is aligned with the school year and reflects the resources available to you. Make June 30 the completion date for any strategy you might list.

Possible strategies are:

 - *contributions to ETFO, other professional or subject associations (e.g. writing team)
 - *reading educational books, journals or articles (visit DDSB’s media library on-line or in person)
 - *take a course (college, university, art school)
 - *attend a conference or workshop (any courses mandated by the Board or your principal should be held during the school day and within the school year)
 - *visit another classroom or school to observe exemplary practices
 - *mentor another teacher or choose and work with a mentor if you are a new teacher
 - *share resources with colleagues or engage in team planning for a particular subject or strand
 - *investigate educational research or plan and conduct a research activity
 - *participate in a committee or serve on the school council
 - *pilot a new initiative or new material (e.g. science, music or math program)
 - *develop new technological skills
- The final section of the Annual Learning Plan includes a section for principal and teacher comments. If you don’t agree with the comments your principal has made on the plan, note this in your comments section.
- Your plan is not carved in stone - your personal and professional circumstances might change in the course of a school year. Your plan should be flexible and you have the right to change it.
- A good resource for goals and strategies is ETFO’s “Professional Portfolio: A Working Guide”. The complete performance appraisal manual is available on the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca in pdf format.



Q & A: Your Dental

How often can a teacher go to the dentist?

We have a 9-month recall, which means you can go to the dentist for your regular check-ups and cleaning every 9 months. This does not prevent a teacher from returning for fillings, crowns, emergency sessions, additional periodontal scaling, etc. Some people need to get periodontic work done more frequently due to the nature of their teeth.

Does dental work count by units?

Every 9 months at your check-up, you are eligible for one unit of periodontal scaling (this is the fun scraping they do) and one unit of polishing. Each unit equals 15 minutes. In addition, another 8 units of periodontal scaling per calendar year are available (again, 1 unit = 15 minutes).

Why do I have to pay extra when I get a check up?

Every year, the Ontario Dental Association increases its rates. The extra you are paying is the difference between the year 2000 rates (what we're covered for) and 2002 rates (what your dentist is actually charging). In negotiations, we are seeking improvement in this area by requesting coverage for current ODA rates.

All the above benefits information (and lots more) is available in the blue and white booklet entitled "Your Group Insurance Plan" which was originally issued in 1999. The Board should be providing this booklet to new employees. If you would like to request a copy, contact the Employee Services Department at the Board

Pregnant? Adopting? Taking a parental leave?



Our annual pregnancy/parental leave workshop will be held in February instead of the usual November date. If you are pregnant, adopting, or just in the planning stages, keep this workshop in mind - lots of good information and a great chance to network with other moms and dads-to-be.

At any time, our pregnancy/ parental leave kit is available from the local office - call us and we'll send you a copy. You don't have to wait for the

Professional Boundaries

Last week I attended a Professional Advisory meeting held by the College of Teachers. The purpose of the College's advisory was to define what constitutes sexual misconduct and to provide information about the Student Protection Act and the increased responsibilities faced by school boards and members of the College under this act.

All teachers need to ensure that their behaviour is above reproach. Experienced teachers should mentor those who are new to the profession and who may not be aware that some interactions with students, although well-intentioned, may be easily misconstrued.

In the last issue of the Advocate, Tom Lazor detailed how to be a proactive teacher in preventing allegations of abuse or assault, but even people who have been in the business a long while need reminders, such as:

- *Never work in a classroom with a single student, especially with the door closed.
- *Do not initiate a hug or any type of touching of a student.
- *Do not make remarks which could be classified as suggestive.
- *Do not enter into e-mail correspondence chats with students. The representative from OCT described this practice as a "slippery slope with a mine field at the bottom", and indicated that the College is receiving an increasing number of calls about this issue.

ETFO Provincial has released a video called "It Can Happen to You". In the four cases presented in the video, the accusations of physical abuse were proven to be false but the investigations conducted by the police and the school boards were devastating to the members and their families. **Don't take chances!** Think carefully about your interactions with your students.



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