

# Standing Together

Winter 2011

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## WELCOME TO THE UNION

My first teaching job was in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, where I taught English to seventh and eighth graders. The only public school in town, Waccamaw Elementary brought together advantaged children from the beautiful beach houses of the Grand Strand Coast, and impoverished children from the inland side of Highway 17, some of whom had no indoor plumbing, let alone books, at home. My days were wonderful, stimulating, and exhausting.

Then, at around 4:00, I would pack up and head north along the highway, to punch in by 5 at Rosa Linda's Mexican restaurant in Murrell's Inlet. Watching my students and their families being seated at one of my tables made me cringe. A young-looking 24-year-old (I was once yelled at to produce my hall pass), I worked hard to establish and maintain authority at school; rushing for refills, cleaning up messes, and working for tips were parts of my job, but they seemed problematic when the customer was one of my eighth-graders. However, teaching in Georgetown County, South Carolina required a second income. \$30 a day didn't cover basic living expenses, even for a single person. Benefits? Prep time? I don't know what you are talking about.

You might imagine my culture shock when I moved back to Ontario, and later resumed my career. Professional pay scales, health benefits,

and ever increasing preparation time to help meet the ever increasing demands upon teachers – these conditions were unheard of in my previous teaching life. In Durham in the 90's, teachers were respected in the community; more importantly, they respected themselves, and each other. Teachers seemed to move around the schools with a cheery, calm air of security and capability. (I was reminded of this phenome-



non, recently, when my aunt moved from a private, out-of-town, nursing home into a unionized, regionally-run facility; the staff explained that the refreshingly open, positive atmosphere reflected a unionized environment, with established teamwork, job security, and a fair, enforceable contract.) I also got a quick lesson in collegiality from my

first Oshawa principal. She invited me to share initial experiences and concerns, but cautioned me first not to talk about any of my co-workers, as this would violate my union contract by negatively impacting the working conditions of a colleague. Professional security? Personal safety? A lot of workers can only dream of such working conditions.

What makes the difference? Years of hard work, and standing together, by teachers before us and still among us; hard fought and hard won contracts, productive conversations between teachers, teachers and the community, and then between our representatives and our employers; an attitude that, together, we can and should achieve the respect and working conditions which ensure that, although *teaching* is a challenging profession, *living* as a professional teacher should not be so challenging. The only difference between my job in South Carolina, and my career here? You. In gratitude, and in admiration, I participate as actively as I can in our union; together, we define who we are, and who we will be.

Now, I'd like to hear from you. What has caused you to become involved with our union? What would help you to become involved? What role has our federation played, in your life and career? We would like to make this column a regular feature; if anyone has a story, please share!

**Barb Haynes, Teacher,  
Athabasca P.S.**

## Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Fellow members of ETFO have you heard the word? Our current collective agreement has significant improvements to our benefits plan! We know it's difficult in our busy world to thoroughly read through our collective agreements so we are hi-lighting some potentially life changing benefits for you.

One of the most impressive changes found in our current contract agreement is in our hearing aid coverage. Our coverage went from \$400 every 48 months to \$4000 every 48 months, that is more than a 1000% increase! Imagine how well you will be able to hear your students calling for you all day!

Another area that we gained improvements in was vision care. We now have \$450 every 2 years. With an increase in care for our eyes, we will be much better at distinguishing between our students.



Alternative practitioner coverage has also increased to \$500 per practitioner each year! The next time you are stressed out, you can feel comfortable calling and booking a massage; the next time you throw your back out, you can rest easy knowing a chiropractor's care is covered. With



so much coverage, you'll be as fit as a fiddle and able to continue participating in DPA with your students.

All joking aside, the above mentioned amendments to our contract were negotiated by our federation. The benefits are in place to improve our quality of life both in our profession and in our personal lives as well.

Through the power of col-

lective bargaining, Durham Elementary teachers have the privilege of being able to access several services to maintain good health, including chiropractor services, massage therapy, orthotics, chiropodist, naturopathic doctor and many more.

Submitting receipts for services rendered are too much of a hassle you say? Reimbursing has never been easier! The on-line submission for claims is extremely user friendly and it often only takes three days to receive reimbursement and the money goes right into your account!

The voice of the federation is the voice of its teachers. Through the power of collective bargaining, we have made many strides in providing benefits to all elementary teachers in Durham. When we are able to stand together as one, our reach is strong, our voice is clear and our message is positive. Treat yourself well, treat each other well.

Collectively written by,

**Aaron and Megan  
Staples**

## Do the Right Thing

Are you unsure how to include LGBT equity in your classroom?

Afraid you might say the wrong thing?

Concerned how the community might react?

You'll be pleased to know of a new curriculum resource that is in every school, and ALL the content has been fully endorsed by ETFO, OSSTF and the Durham District School Board.

It is called "Happens to be..."



and you can find a copy on the staff portal; look under Programs>Equity & Diversity>Resources.

You'll find all sorts of ideas. Remember, when we cover LGBT issues in the classroom,

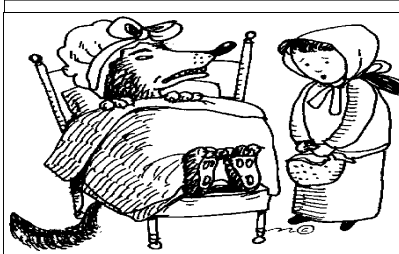
we are not only supporting those who identify as such, or might one day, but also those living with same-sex parents, with same-sex relatives and even your fellow staff members. Just demonstrating the courage to speak up for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people in your classroom is a lesson in itself.

Inclusion is the law, not a matter of convenience, but this sure makes it easier.

In solidarity,  
**Andres Musta**  
**Gandatsetiagon PS**

## Get the Whole Story: <http://durhametfo.ca/>

We are up and running fast. Our Durham ETFO website contains everything that a twenty first century teacher could ever need to find the cutting edge and bring learning to life. Well, maybe not everything but we are offering lots and anything that you think is miss-



ing, just drop us an email and we will see it gets en-

tered. Not only is the site jammed packed with information it also leads to our Twitter Account so you can have your say in 140 characters or less. Find out what is going on in our local and in the world of teaching.

**Dave Mastin 1st VP**

## The Politics of Dancing : Calling All Music Teachers

"The Politics of Dancing" was a hit song by the British new wave group Re-Flex in 1983 . There is politics in dancing and in having fun and we do not do enough of either.

At last years Labour Day Parade in Toronto the theme was Public Workers and teachers lead the way. After we marched into the CNE we had the chance to sit and watch all the other unions stream in. What was to be a relaxing interval be-

came an eye opening experience.. In marched the Fire Fighters lead by their huge band. The Police followed lead by their pipe band. The Labourer's Union was escorted by their Brass Section. Hotel Workers had dancers, electrical workers had precision flag troupes, city workers had steel pan bands. We were not proud. Teachers had lead the parade with a record player squeaking out Britney Spears' tunes from the window of yellow

school bus. Not a very good showing for our profession.

We can do better and it can start right here in Durham. We have hundreds of trained musicians in our union. We need a band. We need a choir. We need one person to start the process. We have rehearsal space. We need that one person to bring the arts to life for our union. Call me and be that person. Make us proud. 905-666-1122

**Gerard O'Neill President**



***You deserve the best working conditions possible as a teaching professional. From class size to salary, prep time, benefits, and workplace protections, there's only one way to make improvements – and that's through collective bargaining (CB).***

***Collective bargaining has delivered steady increases in wages, increased preparation time, limits on supervision time, improved pregnancy leave, and better job security.***

***Your collective agreement strengthens your workplace protections, establishes a grievance procedure to resolve disputes, and ensures your rights are protected. The process also helps counterbalance the considerable power which employers hold in the workplace.***

***In short, collective bargaining provides a way to do collectively what you can't do on your own. It's about***

***ETFO members working together for each other, and for a better education system.***

***At both the provincial and local levels, ETFO brings a wealth of experience to negotiations. But throughout the process, there are times when you will need to make decisions about the direction that 2012 collective bargaining takes. Your participation in this process, and your support of your bargaining team, will be crucial.***

***We'll keep you up to date with the information you need. But bargaining only succeeds when members are engaged and involved. After all, it's your future – you're in the driver's seat when it comes to making those important decisions.***

Our bargaining goals for the next collective agreement were adopted by local representatives at the Representative Council meeting Oct. 26-27.

Our goals are as follows:

**BARGAINING GOALS FOR TEACHER LOCALS**

- To eliminate the existing 2% salary differential.
- To negotiate a real salary increase.
- To negotiate maximum class sizes in all grades and programs.
- To negotiate improved preparation time.  
To negotiate limits on teacher workload.
- To negotiate benefit improvements.  
To negotiate improved pregnancy and parental entitlements.
- To negotiate language that ensures that vice principals and principals do not engage in bargaining unit work.
- To negotiate experience credit to include all occasional teacher work.



**From Our Provincial Office**