

DEAR PARENTS,

I am writing this letter on behalf of a school that is dedicated to making kids' lives a meaningful, yet enjoyable experience. At our school, kids come first. We are always available during break, lunch, or after school, for our students. Tutoring on off hours is part of a normal day. Modified programs have been incorporated to suit the needs of all of our students. Our focus is as much upon the individual student as total class effort. We try to enlighten our students with positive feelings for themselves and for the young and the old around them. As professional educators, we work as a team, valuing each other's expertise, using our knowledge to fundraise and organize enjoyable and informative school events! We watch over your children during their breaks and offer a variety of after school activities. We teach your children the basics, but we do not forget the many other skills that are going to keep them competitive members of future society.

We understand our job is dedicating ourselves to your children. What we cannot understand is why parents and politicians today continue to criticize our efforts. The effectiveness of schools cannot be determined by either the drop-out rate or tests which are said to measure basic skills, but do not reflect the reality of our large multicultural population. We all know that "whole language" was not a teacher's original idea, but a concerted effort by many educational researchers and probably a few politicians.

What we really need to improve our schools is: smaller class sizes, better technology available to all students, current texts and resources, professional development that is geared to the needs of students and teachers, grants and allowances that will help teachers in participating in university education programs, and most of all, the respect of parents and politicians.

Elena Naccarato

YORK REGION

PROUD

PROUD ROLES IN DELIVERING EDUCATION

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER

Who decides what will be taught in the schools of Ontario? The Education Act, passed by the Province of Ontario, is quite clear on this: the Minister of Education decides what will be taught, the qualifications of the person who will teach it, and which textbooks will be used for each subject. This same act states that school boards shall erect schools to meet provincial standards and pay the teachers certified by the Province.

In 1856 Egerton Ryerson presented his famous report on education. His report was prepared after several years of touring the world. He was impressed by the strong central control of Prussia, the textbook system of Ireland, and the overall system established by Horace Mann in Massachusetts. His report was ninety-five percent Horace Mann.

The basic structure of educational administration in Ontario has changed little in the past 147 years: the Minister of Education decides what will be taught; which textbooks will be used; and what the qualifications of teachers will be. It is quite clear that teachers do not decide what will be taught, therefore we cannot blame or praise them for the school curriculum. Teachers must do what the Minister decides, and as good public servants explain it to parents and defend it. If anyone feels the program is not what they would like it to be, do not blame the teacher who is legislated to be the messenger for the Minister of Education.

Bruce Gorrill

Our Teachers Are At Your Service

- 1) In the classrooms every day
- 2) For after-school counselling
- 3) At parent-teacher conferences
- 4) Grading papers at home
- 5) As student activity sponsors
- 6) On chaperone duty
- 7) Helping at sports events

The pleasure is all hours.

AFTER THE FINAL BELL...

The school bell to end the day is, for many students, the signal that their day is finished and they can relax. However, for thousands of students and hundreds of teachers it is simply the signal to begin the second part of their day. A part of the day which might include a variety of activities. One of the most significant roles a teacher can assume is that of coach. Presently, school athletic programs serve thousands of students and all of these programs are run by teachers who, on a strictly voluntary basis, spend countless hours as practices, games, fundraising, arranging tournaments and planning trips.

The busiest place in a school at 3:30 is usually the gym area, with many schools offering upwards of 30 athletic teams ranging from Archery to Wrestling. The extra hours spent by staff are staggering. Anyone who has ever coached a minor hockey team or community baseball team will attest to that.

In a normal season, a teacher/coach will routinely spend 60 hrs. running practices, 44 hrs. at games (including time spent on buses to and from matches) and 16 hrs. fund-raising and at tournaments. This a total of 120 hrs. or 3 full work weeks, all composed of after school hours and weekends. Many coaches spend much more time than this and may well coach more than one sport. It is easy to take for granted these volunteer hours and overlook this dedication; however, the teacher/coach does play an integral role in the lives of the athletes. Often the coach has a profound and lasting effect on the students.

Ask yourself what you remember most about your school experience; for many of you it was the enjoyment of playing on a school team. Would that experience have come your way had it not been for the dedication of the teacher/coach?

Dave St. John



OCCASIONAL TEACHER

The term "Occasional Teacher" may be a new term to many people. "Occasional Teacher" is the legal name for those people generally known as "supply teachers" or "substitute teachers". In short, an occasional teacher is a teacher hired to take the place of the regular teacher who is absent for less than a school year. Occasional teachers hold the same qualifications as any other teacher in that they must be certified by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Most of these part-time teachers are mothers who elected to quit full-time teaching to be home while their children were young. Some are recent graduates who are unable to secure full-time work due to a surplus of teachers. A few are recently retired and a few are people who choose part-time work.

The day of an occasional teacher is often a long one. Many of them are up at 5:00 a.m. in order to be ready for the Board dispatcher to call between 6:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. At the school, the first step is to go to the office, report in, go to the designated classroom and prepare for the day. How well the day goes depends to a large extent on how much information the regular teacher has left. Some pupils will test this new teacher to see if the expectations are the same as the regular teacher.

The day is not over when school is out for many who do this work. The evenings are often spent taking courses, attending workshops, reading and doing research in order to remain up-to-date on subject matter and approaches to teaching and classroom management.

The work is satisfying, particularly when you revisit a classroom and the pupils seem genuinely pleased to see you, or when walking in the hall or school yard you are greeted by name. The down side is that these teachers must be ready to go even on days when they are not called. In that regard, a full-time commitment is made to a part-time job. The part-time aspect of the work is reflected on pay day.

Bruce Gorrill

ONLY A SCHOOL SECRETARY

I thought long and hard about the type of article people might enjoy reading-- something witty or funny, perhaps.

But in the back of my mind, it occurred to me that there was nothing really profound I could say. It also occurred to me that my many happy experiences were the result of a number of good friendships, developed over a considerable time, with people who were community minded.

One secretary volunteers at Brownies; another at Guides; still another at Pathfinders. Another co-worker divides her spare time between the Cancer Society and the Richmond Hill Winter Carnival. Yet another few plan, co-ordinate and execute our annual Children's Christmas Party. And they also manage to support the Sick Kids Fund at the same time. Others still, have helped to assist at their kids schools via pizza day lunches, magazine drives, PTA involvement, and other fund-raisers. And this list goes on...

When I sat down and thought about this group, something dawned on me. These extraordinary people all had families too, and they did not represent an exception, but were the norm. An overwhelming number of secretaries had in their own way, touched someone in need and made their day brighter. And they did so over and over and over again. They were among the first to always stand up and be counted. The common denominators included: volunteering to help someone less fortunate; being a concerned and compassionate human being; demonstrating leadership and organizational capabilities; having the ability to get a job done from start to finish while juggling family and regular work responsibilities.

One secretary I spoke to, talked about the public's perception of her "cushy government job" saying that the general comment always seemed to be "Wow, are you ever lucky to be working there!" Interestingly enough, the harder she worked, the luckier she got!

Another secretary commented on the fact that she was surprised her waist line hadn't trimmed down considering the number of lunches that she gave away to children who forgot theirs at home.

When someone asks what you do for a living and finds out that you are ONLY a school secretary, I hope you are as proud as I am of our generous and caring family.

Laura Romanowsky

CUPE 1734 represents Secretarial, Clerical and Technical Employees



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