

Comment & Opinions

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Send your letters
to the editor
to the address below

EDITORIAL

Getting better results

If parents have new concerns about their children's education in light of recent Grade 3 testing statistics, there's one thing you can do to improve the quality of education at your local school — get involved.

Becoming active in your child's education is the simplest, most significant thing you can do to improve his or her education experience. If the parents of each and every student were to get more involved in their education, the entire school's performance would improve.

Not every parent can — or should — start volunteering every day in their child's school. There are simple things parents can do at home to support their child's learning efforts. One of the most obvious involves the key to all learning — reading.

If children spent more time actively involved with books instead of passively sitting in front of the television, their reading and writing skills would definitely improve.

Parents of children as young as Kindergarten age can read to their children every night, buy books as presents on special occasions and set good examples themselves by reading newspapers, magazines and books.

Parents of successful students know what homework their children are doing each night; help them when they need support or resources; but resist doing homework FOR them.

Whether parents simply rehearse spelling words each morning or take an interest in the drawing or assignment their child brings home each afternoon — they can make a critical difference in their child's education.

If you're not pleased by how your child's school ranks against others, you can start making improvements in your own home.



Eddie Shack a star of oxymoron game

You ever play the oxymoron game? It's fun.

My dictionary defines oxymoron as "a combination of contradictory or incongruous words." There are a lot of natural oxymorons in the language, such as 'bittersweet' and 'deafening silence.'

But it's fun to make up your own oxymorons, such as 'airline food', 'government promise' and 'civil servant.'

How about police reports that list stolen goods that were 'found missing'? Zombies described as 'the living dead'? A computer manual entitled 'Advanced-BASIC'?

Those aren't bad — but I've got one that's better. It's better because it's brand new and perhaps even coming to a town near you. It's...

An Eddie Shack book. I should explain to youngsters in the audience that Eddie Shack is an ancient Canadian. He goes all the way back to the time when Canada

had a game called hockey played by men who got paid not much more than the average working stiff down at the meat packing plant. There were only six elite teams then, and Eddie Shack played for two of them: the New York Rangers and, more famously, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

As a player, Shack was, um, enthusiastic. He wasn't a great stickhandler, or skater, or scorer. But you always knew when Shack was on the ice. He tended to run into things. Mostly opposing players.

The knock on Shack was that he was a buffoon. A big, goofy, lolling clown with a huge bugle of a nose, a loud braying laugh and, well, not much in the way of gray matter holding his jug ears apart.

They said that Shack was dumb as a goalpost. So dumb he couldn't even write his own name.

It wasn't true. Actually, Shack himself was responsible for the rumour. When he first became popular as a



Basic Black
Arthur Black

hockey player he quickly tired of signing his name for endless streams of autograph hounds, so he had a rubber stamp of his signature made up.

Eddie figured the rubber stamp would save him time. All it did was bring him grief. Pretty soon the word got around that Shack could neither read nor write. Even players on rival teams took to taunting Shack for his stupidity.

As usual, the rest of the world was underestimating The Shackster. Once, in a game against the Boston Bruins, Shack was weathering a vicious ribbing about his supposed illiteracy from the Bruins bench.

Late in the third period, Shack intercepted a pass, powered in from the blue line and blasted a shot between the Bruins goalies legs.

Shack skated straight over to the Bruins bench, stopped in a shower of ice chips and chanted: "Goal. Spelled G.O.A.L."

Not that Eddie would ever be mistaken for a Shakespearean scholar. When he showed up at our local bookstore to sign copies of 'his' new book (actually, it's an 'as told to' written by Ross Brewitt), Shack held up a copy and deadpanned "I haven't read it, but a lot of people who have, say it's quite funny."

Our paths had crossed before. I remember sitting beside Eddie at a lobster banquet in Prince Edward Island years ago.

That's the image of the guy I'll always remember. A big lug in a cowboy stetson beside me, tucking into his lobster as enthusiastically as he used to body check incoming forwards. And lobster juice and butter running down his big, thick fingers onto the huge Stanley Cup rings he wears.

A lot of people forget that Shack played on four Stanley Cup teams during his NHL career.

Just like they forget that he's made a very comfortable life for himself since his retirement, doing commercials for razors and garbage bags and motels.

He has also owned a chain of donut shops, a bar called Hillbilly Shack's and an entire golf course on the outskirts of Toronto. And now he's on the book tour circuit. Along with Margaret Atwood, Peter Gzowski, Carol Shields and Nino Ricci.

Dumb? Oh, yeah. To coin an oxymoron: dumb like a fox.

Teacher pension plan the real issue

Dear Editor,
I recently watched the Ontario Legislature's debate of Bill 160 on the parliamentary channel and the M.P.P. for Scarborough West, Jim Brown, whose wife is a teacher, brought forward information about Ontario's education system that has received little public scrutiny.

Brown raised the issue of teachers' unions' complaints of underfunding of Ontario's education system and pointed out that Ontario teachers have "the richest, most lucrative pension plan in North America, a fund that owns a major share of Maple Leaf Gardens, 46 per cent of the Sun newspaper

LETTER

chain and myriad other investments."

Brown pointed out that because of a deal arranged with N.D.P. Premier Bob Rae, the government (read hard-pressed taxpayers) was committed to paying \$8 billion dollars above its regular contribution into the teachers' plan over the next 22 years.

That means we taxpayers are, this year, contributing \$1.1 billion into a fund with a \$1.8 billion surplus, projected to be a \$8-\$10 billion surplus next year. In other words, almost 10 per cent of the education budget of

\$14 billion goes into a very rich teacher pension fund!

And teachers' unions have the gall to complain about an "underfunded" education system?

I hope, with all the rhetoric about education underfunding, that parents and others might ask teacher union reps how they can justify draining this kind of tax money out of the system while they moan about underfunding and at the same time have a huge, growing surplus in their pension fund.

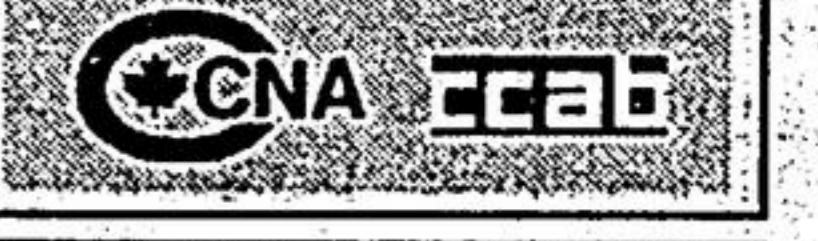
It strikes me that honesty and the interests of students have taken a back seat to self-interest!

Donn M. Fowler, C.D.

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