



OCSTA News

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



- The Discipline of Celebration:
Do we know how good we have it?

"Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice!...Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4: 4-7

This past week, I have been following the tragic events of the floods in the West (and the southern U.S.). What struck me was an interview by CBC with a family whose farm and home may be affected by a planned break in the dam wall. The husband and wife basically said that they were unhappy about the situation but then confessed that trouble was part of everyone's life, that tough decisions needed to be made, and that they were happy that no loss of life had occurred. They went on to say that this was a very difficult time but that they had been through other difficult times. Their position was one of gratitude; they were not idealists but realists. They could see the difficult situation and be resilient in the midst of it. They expressed gratitude for each other, their families, their friends and even for the way the crisis was managed. In an era of individualism, they could step back and see the big picture. They were models of grace and gratitude.

Last November, I had the privilege of going to the Nehemiah Centre in Nicaragua with Worldwide Christian Schools. I visited many schools and did some teaching at the centre for teacher facilitators who would then go out to their 100+ schools all over the country to teach, in turn, what they had learned. When visiting the schools in some of the very poorest neighbourhoods in Nicaragua, one question that was continually asked of me was, "What do you think of our classrooms and our schools?"

The question was interesting and also enlightening. The question was really whether I thought they were good schools and whether good education was happening. I was happy to answer in the affirmative. I saw happy students, dynamic teachers, and the love of learning in every school I visited. The classrooms were open air, the resources were in short supply, and the money was scarce. But I was humbled and grateful to see dedicated teachers, engaged students, and visionary principals. Everyone had to sacrifice to make education happen—everyone had to model grace and gratitude.

When I meet with the executive directors of the other teacher associations in BC and the Prairies at Christian Schools Canada, we often talk about the "ideal" Christian educator—what training and experience he or she ought to have. We have come to the conclusion that teaching or service experiences in developing countries are an excellent training ground for an ideal educator. The reason is that educators who have seen schools in other situations are much more prone to be grateful. The Canadian educational scene is by comparison so rich, so privileged, so just, so peaceful, and so fair that we need to recognize just how good we have it. This is not to take away from the stress and pain and discouragement that are evident in some schools in our association. This is not to say that anything difficult or controversial should be swept under the carpet. But we do have the opportunity even in difficult situations to declare that God is good and that we are blessed in our Christian schools.

Throughout our 2011 regional PD days, Dr. Bruce Hekman presented his workshop on the *Discipline of Celebration*. In it, he encouraged all of us to recognize that fear prevents learning and understanding, but living in the flow of the Spirit requires us to move from worry to celebration. In the workshop he quoted Jon Ortberg:

Where there is no vision but lots of methods, there is legalism. Where there is vision but no understanding of method, there is frustration. Where there is neither vision nor method, there is apathy. But where the vision is strong, and method is actually effective and workable, then transformation can happen.

So the challenge for each of us, as we reflect on this past school year and look forward to the summer and the new school year ahead, is to ask for eyes to see the vision; hands to work for transformation; wisdom to know the best methods; and openness to seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling and tasting God at work in our lives and in the lives of those around us. I hope and pray that each of us models grace and gratitude for our students, colleagues, and communities.

May you each have a wonderful Sabbath time this summer, and may you be revitalized and rejuvenated in your daily walk with God.

Shalom! Diane

May/June 2011
Volume 32, Issue 6

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OCSTA EMPLOYMENT SERVICES-*WHAT DOES OCSTA DO IN THIS AREA OF SERVICE?*

In light of a number of questions, particularly about our role in Employment Services and the increase in membership dues in this area, we wanted to give you a snapshot of what OCSTA does for our members in the area of Employment Services.

The following are just a small sample of the issues that OCSTA has dealt with in the past year:

- *A new teacher runs into trouble during a probationary contract: is progressive growth or progressive discipline warranted?*
- *A teacher's contract is not renewed due to redundancy: have the proper procedures been followed?*
- *A teacher is terminated: where does this person turn for support, advice, and advocacy?*
- *A teacher goes on short-term disability; who negotiates with the school/principal a way for that person to come back to work progressively?*
- *The CPC has not met and the decisions for contracts, salary, and benefits are made without input from the staff: how does the staff ask questions in a proper professional way and hold the process accountable?*
- *Contract schedules are being updated: where does the staff go for advice?*
- *A principal has put teachers on a Progressive Growth Plan: are teachers being treated fairly?*

As the Christian school movement moves into the 21st century, we continue to grow as a professional community. Our work at OCSTA, too, continues to grow and change. OCSTA is an association that works with teachers, principals and schools to build excellent employer/employee relationships. We uphold the principles of justice, trust, grace, accountability, and confidentiality when it comes to employer/employee relationships. We want professional educational communities where the best principles of employment justice are experienced.

Because we are human, Christian schools will always run into situations of conflict, community breakdown, mistrust, and misunderstanding. OCSTA's role is to professionally help teachers through those difficult times. We help individuals and sometimes staffs through various questions: How does an individual teacher navigate through any issue concerning employment in a professional way? How does a staff ask its leadership questions in a way that is respectful and appropriate? Your association is here to help and protect the vulnerable, it is here to support and advocate in crisis, and it is here as wise counsel (and a normalizing force) when members aren't sure how to react to situations and memos regarding employment and its standards.

The past few years have seen a significant increase in issues, whether they are redundancies, terminations, facilitations, mediations or accountability measures. OCSTA often supports and helps teachers through their own internal school grievance procedures or counsels teachers by helping them craft communication for their principals as responses to issues.

In addition, OCSTA utilizes an outside consultant for all questions relating to Human Resources. These include performance plans, progressive growth plans, progressive discipline plans, contractual issues, terminations, conflict and communication.

When all other avenues of procedure and process fail, OCSTA has access to the OACS/OCSAA/OCSTA Mediation/Arbitration Commission. This is a commission that hires a professional mediator for disputes and grievances. This is a joint commission of all the provincial organizations that support OACS schools. Being a member of OCSTA gives a teacher access to \$2500 of legal support in this formal mediation process.

Over the past number of years, we have seen a rise in contractual disputes, grievances, and terminations. OCSTA provides support and advice for our members in these cases. For example, we facilitated two formal mediations through the Mediation/Arbitration Commission this past school year. We have been consulted in three terminations. OCSTA is presently working with staff in a Christian school that is protesting the unilateral change of contracts where mediation and arbitration policies, redundancy policies, and termination policies and processes have been taken out of the contract. OCSTA wants to ensure that good policies and processes are part of every teacher's contract. Together as OCSTA members we try to ensure that justice and fairness is part of all teachers' contracts in OACS schools.

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OCSTA EMPLOYMENT SERVICES- WHAT DOES OCSTA DO IN THIS AREA OF SERVICE?

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At present, we have about 30 files open dealing with any number of HR issues. This, of course, means more time for the OCSTA office staff as well as costs in terms of travel and consultation.

We continue to believe that a Partnership Model for Employment is the best for teachers as well as for schools. We believe that the best working relationship is one where transparency, communication, and honesty as well as accountability and justice are all foundational. OCSTA continues to work towards that model of employment with all of its partners.

The development of the Employment Services end of OCSTA has been a blessing and a challenge. It is a blessing because we can together as a community of educators help one another, support one another and communally be there for each other. It is a challenge because as it continues to develop and really work well there are financial implications for the association. Employment Services is such a vital service at so many different levels. Your association continues to be the place where you can turn for good advice, support and, when needed, advocacy.

THANK YOU!

It is with much appreciation that the OCSTA board says goodbye to three members. We wish to thank **Kevin Huinink** for his leadership and contributions as board chair; **Vivian VanderHoek** for her dedication, vision and support on the Board executive; and **Willy Katerberg** for his experience, depth and wisdom on numerous portfolios in OCSTA. Every organization is only as good as its leadership, and we will miss each of you. Thank you so much for all that you have done to move the OCSTA organization forward!!



FAREWELL TO JOHN VRIEND, OCSTA'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE CONSULTANT

Six years ago, John Vriend took up the challenge of being OCSTA's Employment Service Consultant. This work really did put OCSTA on the map as an organization that could help its members through difficult times. John's perseverance and leadership gave OCSTA the gravitas to allow the voice of the teacher to be heard. John's work on the Mediation/Arbitration Commission, his behind-the-scenes role at the Coordinating Committee, and his work on a *Partnership Agreement for Employment* (PAFE) strengthened our organization. John's passion for justice and fairness for all employees was always evident. His love of integrity, truth-telling, and transparency marked his tenure with OCSTA. As an organization, OCSTA wishes to thank him for being a trail-blazer and a loyal supporter of all things just. We wish him God's blessings for the future!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING OCSTA MEMBERS WHO ARE RETIRING IN JUNE:

OCSTA wishes to formally recognize our members who are retiring this year! We wish you God's richest blessings in your retirement.

Jane Andree, Dunnville Christian School
 Erna de Vries, Hamilton District Christian High School, Ancaster
 Arlene Forsyth, Timothy Christian School, Barrie
 Gayle Freeburn, Community Christian School, Metcalfe
 Maria Gittins, Willowdale Christian School, North York
 Ed Helden, Hamilton District Christian High School, Ancaster
 Ellen Hunse, Calvin Christian School, Hamilton
 Debbie Lantier, Ottawa Christian School
 Jerry Ottens, Community Christian School, Drayton
 Alice Rekman, Sarnia Christian School
 Kim Schelhaas, Stratford & District Christian School, Stratford
 Barb Siebenga, John Knox Christian School, Brampton
 Ren Siebenga, Toronto District Christian High School, Woodbridge
 Grace Zomer, John Knox Christian School, Woodstock

SUMMER 2011 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If you still wish to register for a summer workshop, please contact the office (office@ocsta.org) or 905-648-1200 to receive a list of confirmed workshops, or check our website: www.ocsta.org

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS ~
2011 SUMMER INSTITUTE ~**



Redeemer is offering a wide variety of courses this summer, including a new course entitled **EDU 432: DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

If you have not had a chance to view the new booklet, please visit www.redeemer.ca/conted or email Shalena Neven, Continuing Teacher Education Coordinator, for a copy of your own.

Registration deadline: ***May 31, 2011**

*late applications will be considered as space permits

FREE: We have the following textbooks available for free (you pay the shipping):

- Nelson Science (1999) - 30
- Nelson Science (2001) - 9
- Journeys in Math 3 - 24
- Journeys in Math 3 Teacher Resource Manual - 1
- CSI Science 3 - 28
- CSI Science 3 Teacher Manual - 1
- CSI Calling of God's Tribe - 1



Please call Chatham Christian School @ 519-352-4980 or e-mail office@chathamchristian.ca

Calendar of Events

May 6	OCSAA Membership Meeting	June 9	Erna de Vries & Ed Helden Retirement - Ancaster
May 7	Christian Educators Journal Board Meeting	June 13	Kim Schelhaas Retirement - Stratford
May 12-14	Christian Schools Canada Board, Langley, British Columbia	June 17-18	Cardus Board
May 19	Arlene Forsyth Retirement - Barrie	June 18	Gayle Freeburn Retirement - Metcalfe
May 25/26	Cardus Meeting	June 25	Ren Siebenga Retirement - Woodbridge
May 26/27	CSI Pension and Insurance Board	July 4-8	OCSTA Summer Institute, RUC
May 28	Maria Gittins Retirement - North York	July 4-15	Calvin College Master's Course at RUC
June 4	Jerry Ottens Retirement - Drayton	July 11- August 15	OCSTA Office Closed, Summer Holidays
June 8	Ellen Hunse Retirement - Hamilton	August 8-12	Educators Leadership Development Institute, Orillia
June 8	Barb Siebenga Retirement - Brampton	August 16-17	OCSAA/OACS/OCSTA Retreat

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