

ISSUE 1

our voice

Dear Student Trustees,

On behalf of the OSTA-AECO Communications Committee, I am very proud to present to you the first issue of “Our Voice”, OSTA-AECO’s official journal for student trustees. “Our Voice” exists to encourage progressive dialogue between student trustees and education stakeholders on current education issues. It voices the concerns of student through various forms of creative writing. We are proud to publish topics that are selected by our writers on topics they personally feel are pressing and significant for the student community of Ontario.

I hope you find our publication to be insightful and thought-provoking. Our hope is that our articles will ignite stimulating discussion amongst peers during your weekend here at the OSTA-AECO Board Council Conferences.

Never be afraid to share your voice,



Patrick Quinton-Brown

“Our Voice”

Editor-in-Chief and
Director of Communications
OSTA-AECO

www.osta-aeco.org

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This issue available online at:
www.osta-aeco.org/

definition of a student trustee

1
2

student trustee [stood'nt truh'stee]
noun:

Sits on a board of trustees as an official liaison between a particular student population and their respective board of education

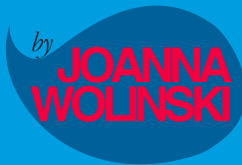
Provides a voice for students and facilitates communications between the school board and the students

3

A link to the school board with insight of the opinions and needs of young people within its schools for the purpose of improving their quality of education

4

One of the most unique, dynamic, extraordinary, and coolest young leaders on the face of the Earth with the ardour for change in today's education systems and the students they serve.



**One of the most
dynamic individual(s)
you'll ever meet!**

Whether they are creative or outspoken, shy or determined, a student trustee is a young person who is always willing and ready to generate a spark for change. Individuals such as these are students who have involved themselves in Student Advisory Councils, Youth-in-Action groups or simply shown initiative to a notion or cause that they are passionate about. They have never backed down in attaining their aspirations. Individuals with open minds and self-motivated in nature, they are the students that have been chosen to represent all their peers throughout their respective school boards to make sure every student is heard. While sitting on a board of trustees they are essentially the same as an adult trustee, with one major difference: they do not represent the taxpayers but the students in publicly funded schools.

The position of Student Trustee first began in the early 1990's in exploration of innovative ways to revitalize the education system in Ontario. Among the prolific changes set out by Bill 160 was the creation of a "pupil representative" now referred to as a Student Trustee. By the start of the 1998/1999 school year, all of Ontario's school boards had chosen a Student Trustee to represent the

student population at the board table. These students would be the voice of all the students in their school board, finding ways to get the students voices heard and forging new paths to take action in bettering their school board's education system. Although this initial task seems challenging, Student Trustees are always ready to uncover a will; for where there's a will, there's a way. The Student Trustee would also sit on their school board's Student Senate to communicate to other student leaders and inform them of the board's initiatives and actions. This Student Senate exists to establish and promote the student vision in all schools. Although it may seem like a Student Trustee's life is filled with board meetings, Student Senate meetings, school visits and education news updates, it's productive. They are always creating new, innovative and engaging ideas to please the students of their board. Each Student Trustee is different from their precursor, yet each one never fails in reaching their goals in working for education. These young individuals are one of the coolest cats on the block. **Definitely.**

TECH NOLOGY IN THE CLASS ROOM

by **MATT
FONDEVILLA**

*

*Updates have been made, would you like to download?

*DOING THE SAME THING YOU'VE
ALWAYS DONE, BUT EXPECTING
OR WANTING OR MEETING
COMPLETELY DIFFERENT
RESULTS. IF WE CONTINUE WHAT
WE'VE ALWAYS DONE, WE WILL
CONTINUE TO GET WHAT WE'VE
ALWAYS GOT*

(KELLY, 2006 P. 9)

The quote above comes from, "Teaching the Digital Generation" describing what insatiable means. It can be used to define what education is failing to get out of students today - the skills necessary to be successful later in life from repeated mistakes. For the most part, schools have been able to satisfyingly keep up with each generation of students. What I find interesting is the relevancy of technology as a form of learning to today's generation of kids.

It is obvious we have grown in a different time than our grandparents. In fact, our current generation of students is more apt to use technology in their daily routines of life.

These are 'digital kids'. These students are constantly and fully exposed to the digital world. Several instances of technology use are seen everyday with our generation of digital kids.

For example, students can use Facebook to get everyone they invited to their party. Another uses their SLR camera and upload to their blog to

instantly share a photo of Lady GaGa from last night's concert. Another can use their laptop and project their PowerPoint presentation to the whole class. A group of Twihards can all text message each other to simultaneously squeal every time Edward appears during a showing.

We can all relate to these experiences of (sometimes abusive) technology use. But what does this mean for our schools exactly? Schools need to adjust accordingly to the new generation of digitally-inclined kids. Every teacher wants their students to achieve success. But today they face a different generation of students. Thus, they must adapt to the change of students and adopt a new teaching style.

The current trend appearing from this generation is its growing use of technology. Sadly, schools are not structured well-enough to support a new generation of students even as this trend's importance elevates.

There are programs that try to support students from any profile to achieve success by specifically using technology. The only problem is that they are pinpointed to select minorities when really, it's a majority issue.

Schools must change accordingly to this new digital reality. They must look critically at the current lifestyle of students. The real problem is that those in control of education don't want to change the school of today because it has already been a success.

IT
DS
BE

NOW WE'RE

TALKING

Schools must change to fit the lifestyle of today's digital kids. This is the information age, not the industrial age; information is sent and received extremely efficiently. Digital kids operate at twitch speed allowing them to communicate instantly with friends, access resources from anywhere around the world, use computer programs to work on three projects all at the same time. Back then, it was slower and considerably harder to do what digital kids can achieve now. This is because they are exposed more to the digital world than their older generations were, thus giving them the ability to process information faster. The digital generation has the technology to do so much and the great thing is that they can easily manage these tools.

The needs of digital kids are different from kids in the past. Some schools were once structured to fit the working force of farmers. In that time, perhaps farming was a huge career field and many students came from families that farmed. The summer vacation months we have today, July and August, were likely meant for those students to farm and harvest with their families before school started again in September. This may have been acceptable at the time since it met the needs of that generation. Today, however, there is a much needed change to fit how digital kids behave and act like.

CELL

It is very important that we look at new ways to in order design schools to grant younger generations the best opportunity to be successful in life. Bill Gates says it best when he said:

*[HIGH SCHOOLS] ARE OBSOLETE...
[MEANING,] THAT OUR HIGH SCHOOLS
CANNOT TEACH OUR KIDS WHAT
THEY NEED TO KNOW TODAY...
[IT'S] LIKE TRYING TO TEACH KIDS
ABOUT TODAY'S COMPUTERS ON A
50 YEAR-OLD MAINFRAME. IT'S THE
WRONG TOOL FOR THE TIMES. OUR
HIGH SCHOOLS WERE DESIGNED 50
YEARS AGO TO MEET THE NEEDS OF
ANOTHER AGE. UNTIL WE DESIGN
THEM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF
THE 21ST CENTURY, WE WILL KEEP
LIMITING, EVEN RUINING THE LIVES
OF MILLIONS...*

(GATES, 2005)

Schools haven't made any big changes to how lessons are taught. Students still sit and listen to teachers speak. Information is dealt in black and white handouts and large textbooks. Tests based on content are still the main tool to evaluate - putting heavy emphasis on memorization techniques instead of other important learning tactics. These were skills taught for students in the Industrial age. They are inadequate for the Information Age. What is needed is a set of basic skills to develop in order to use and apply them in the very alive, digital world. In this way, today's real world of work is being ignored by teachers, administrators, parents and politicians.

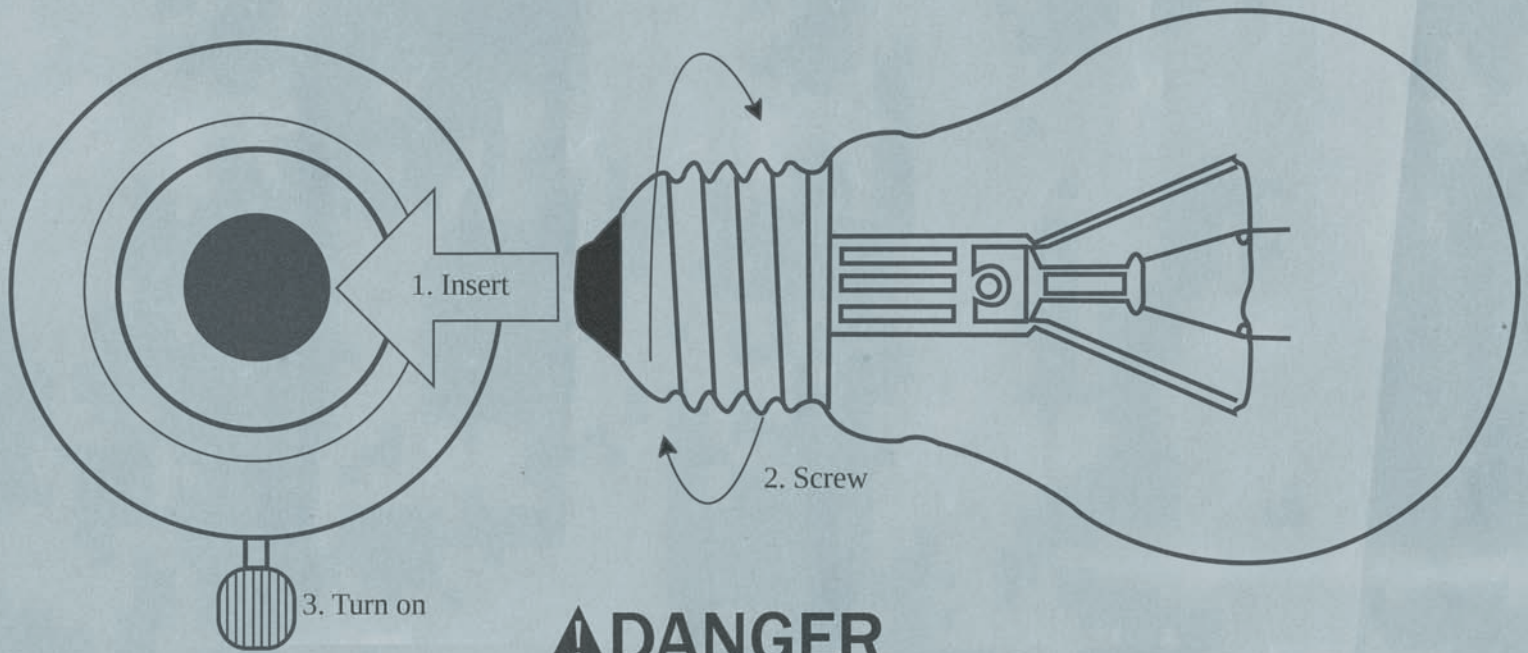
The online digital world will be the method of getting that job a student wants. We can capture an idea of the work world tomorrow easily:

*THE WORLD OF WORK IS AUTOMATING
RAPIDLY, AND ROUTINE WORK OF
KINDS IS DISAPPEARING. TOMORROW
WORKERS WILL SURVIVE ON THE
BASIS OF THEIR UNIQUE TALENTS
PLUS THEIR ABILITY TO INNOVATE
CREATE, MARKET, AND SELL THEIR
IDEAS IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE.
THEY WILL PROBABLY BE SELF
EMPLOYED, EVEN IF THEY WORK
UNDER CONTRACT FOR A LARGE
CORPORATION.*

(WORZEL, 2006, P.7)

As mentioned previously, the work world is changing at a pace as fast the generations change. It is imperative to keep up with the working force out there with current and future generations of students. The digital generation has much more to offer with their abilities. Schools are not reflecting correctly from the work world as they should be.

fig. 7.808b



Dangerous

FAN
WU

by

Inequity in Ontario Sexual Education

Equity is not simply social justice. It isn't just confronting racism, sexism, or homophobia in a direct way. It's also making certain that the knowledge being propagated is balanced, well-rounded and unbiased. Equity means freedom, and freedom is fundamentally the power of choice, the power of making one's own decisions. And this is an essential area where our abstinence-exclusive, heterosexual-focused sex education flounders. When teaching the same old straight-laced path becomes a detriment to students and constricts their liberty of choice, something must be changed. **Something must be modernized.**

Abstinence-only sexual education is a misguided and dangerous curriculum to teach. It's giving students an inflexible guideline which is absolute; bend this guideline, and it will break. Flexibility doesn't exist: "Don't have sex until you find yourself a nice wife. Period. No exceptions." Realism is left abandoned in some ideal world where the internet doesn't exist and your average Dick or Jane wouldn't dream of fooling around before tying the knot. This idealism, rooted strongly in conservatism too archaic even for most conservatives, fails in almost

...the safety concerns of various "taboo" yet common sexual practices are simply not being addressed.

every respect. At best, it reaffirms the beliefs of those who were already on that path; at worst, it leads to higher pregnancy and STD rates as well as guilt, confusion and shame.

A mentality all too common with signers of abstinence pledges is "I'm never going to have sex before marriage. Why carry condoms around?" When they face the cold, real truth of libido, they're totally unprepared. Uninformed mindsets breed dangerous activity. These students are tricking themselves into a truth that is not their own. When they realize that abstinence-until-marriage is an unreasonable goal for them, they have to carry the unnecessary guilt of the pledge's empty promise. There has not been any research to show that abstinence is a flawless practice. The abstinence pledge should be abolished in all shapes, sizes and forms, and should be replaced with a dire look at the consequences of sexual activity at a young age.

I am not saying that students be exposed only to consequences. A brighter look at healthy, active sex lives is currently mistakenly absent from our curriculum.

The rote repetition of "She was pregnant at sixteen. Her life was ruined," and "He got gonorrhea at fifteen. His life was ruined," become not only tedious but terrifying. Sexual education shouldn't be at either extreme – to glorify it, or to scandalize it would be a mistake. It simply should be taught simply, with the sincerity of both sides of the story.

Why is vaginal sex-focused education so predominant in an age where sexual deviance, experimentation and LGBT communities are rampant? The constraints of presenting only one sexual path are stifling and unhealthy.

I'm not proposing a Kama Sutra 101 class by any means; however, the safety concerns of various "taboo" yet common sexual practices are simply not being addressed. Not teaching the dangers of anal and oral sex is a crime, as nothing breeds STDs more efficiently than ignorance. As recent statistics show, anal sex and alternative sex have hit record peaks due to the increase in adolescent risk-taking. For the school board to ignore this is a crime; it has to embrace the same left-leaning mentality of today's youth. How will students know, when they want to experiment (and the truth is they will), what healthy alternative sex is? To teach sex properly as the many-faceted jewel it is and not as some archaic ideal will elicit snickers from the back of the room. But it will also spark the few, or the many, in the class who were themselves thinking about those exact same facets. Teaching "other" methods of intercourse will be beneficial to HIV awareness, potential dangers and truly "safe" sex.

With Catholicism, the issue is much touchier. From what I understand, only abstinence-exclusive education can be taught

in Catholic schools due to the underpinnings of the faith. To do otherwise would be to shake the very foundations of Catholicism. But I believe parents and students should be given the choice to non-abstinence focused education no matter what. Safety, equity and knowledge may transcend even the borders of faith, and it is irresponsible to take away

from students the reality-based knowledge and understanding that could save their lives.

It's clear that sexual education needs to catch up to our modern high standards. It can't afford to be the "joke" class, with STD rates higher than ever; it can't afford to hold back when lack of information will kill students. When I was in school, our sex education

the

HILARY
HOLMES

by

Are you **stuck** with Shakespeare?
Does math have you **frazzled**?
Headaches with homework?

*

Never fear, the
**Ontario
Educational
Resource
Bank
is here!**

the student saviour

The Ontario Educational Resource Bank (OERB)** offers free homework help and resources for authorized students and teachers. The Ministry of Education has developed the website for provincially-funded school boards, teaching authorities and demonstration schools. The best part about this program – ***it's free!

unit was woefully short; the information presented sadly inadequate. Abolish vaginal, heterosexual-centered information; center the education instead on what is real. Abolish abstinence-only sex education and give them healthy alternatives in addition to abstinence. Could one consider this a “liberalization” of education? No. The futures of an increasingly

unstable generation are at stake. Sex education courses must reflect that and transcend political correctness or traditionalist outrage and be, simply, what is best for all of us.

The OERB currently has over 3500 resources for students in kindergarten up to Grade 12. The site is accessible from both home and school, and users may view the material as many times as they like. Authorized teachers are permitted to upload or download resources, and they are encouraged to share the resources among their colleagues when they find useful information.

Permitted users can copy, distribute, display and/or alter resources for use in the classroom or home. These resources must support the teaching and learning of the Ontario curriculum.

The content of the Ontario Educational Resource Bank includes multiple ways to aid students to make associations within and between the strands of the subject or course, and between the subject/course substance and the community.

Another initiative supported by the provincial government is the Homework Help website. It can be accessed at HomeworkHelp.ilc.org. This project is mainly for help with mathematics. It is one-on-one, confidential, live tutoring

sessions from Sunday to Thursday, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Students can ask a question, draw on the interactive whiteboard and watch and learn online. There is a virtual locker where students can store information or sessions that they find useful. There are even videos of tutorials that are archived and can be accessed at any time. The Homework Help initiative also provides fun, interactive math games for students of all ages and skill levels.

The goals of both these programmes are to make homework less stressful for students. The Ministry of Education strives to reach every student through these initiatives, and make academic support available to students from all walks of life.

BLOOD ON ONTARIO SCHOOL UNIFORMS SWEATSHOPS



The average Ontario student

begins their day with a balanced breakfast, a quick shower, a wardrobe change, and a brush of their hair and teeth before the mad dash to catch the morning bus. Few, if any of these students have ever questioned whose rights they are wearing on their sleeve or whose dignity they are stealing when they pull on their socks. A coalition between nine of Ontario's Catholic School Boards, Development and Peace, and the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) was formed in June of 2006 to ensure that students within these Boards will never find the need to ask these questions.

ARIO'S RMS:

by

CHELSEA
GRAY

School boards that have signed on to pay the WRC an annual fee of \$10,000, promise to combat the relentless issue of sweatshops abroad.

These boards include:

- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
- Durham Catholic District School Board
- Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario
- Halton Catholic District School Board
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
- St. Clair Catholic District School Board
- Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board
- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- York Catholic District School Board
- Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board
- Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board
- Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board

The WRC has investigated only one factory that supplies to R.J. McCarthy's thus far.

In just one investigation, it exposed a sock factory in China referred to as Lianglong.

The report was filed almost a year ago on April 3rd, 2008.

The investigation revealed flagrant violations of workers' rights, including:

forced and excessive unpaid overtime

workers required to work every day of a given month, while Chinese law requires workers to take a minimum of one day off per week

near or below freezing temperatures in both the dormitory and working space

the failure to pay all workers the legal minimum wage of 750 yuan per month, as they pay as little as 400 yuan per month dormitory and working space

failure to provide legally mandated social benefits including social security (pension), workers' (injury) compensation, disability insurance, and maternity benefits to employees

dirty, hazardous, illegal and unsafe conditions in the dormitories, bathrooms and factory

the withholding of a portion of workers' pay for up to a year at a time

labour contracts that violate local law

These violations are obvious breaches of both Chinese law and the fair labour policies put in place by many of our boards, and are by no means unique to the Lianglong factory. Yet no board has changed their uniform arrangements. It seems that many of the Boards in question have chosen to ignore a very important part of the Catholic faith, the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

By becoming

an affiliate of the coalition, forming a policy, and fully disclosing all workers rights violations found by the WRC in the factories where our uniforms are manufactured, the Boards took action to implement our Catholic values and stop R.J. McCarthy's, a popular uniform provider, from using sweatshops.

Before complaining

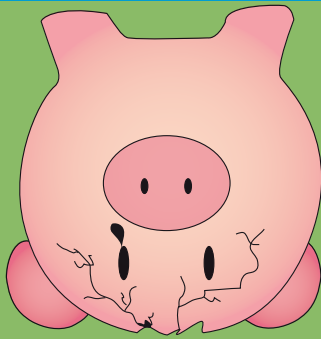
about the condition of your school bathrooms, consider the outhouses that the workers are forced to use. For a work force of 200, living in dormitories at the factory, one women's and one men's restroom is provided, having only 3 toilets each. This is fewer toilets than can be found on just one floor of many schools. Also, the men's bathroom is noted to have no toilet paper, and is so unclean that it is permeated by a noxious, almost intolerable odour. The path to the women's outhouse is made of mud, rock, and broken pavement.

This issue

seems to raise endless questions. How can we really call ourselves good Christians when we steal human dignity from Chinese workers by simply buying a pair of uniform socks? Why do so many School Boards have a policy that they do not enforce? Why do they refuse to take action even after they have had a list of findings and recommendations presented to them to alleviate the problem? Why do they continue to pay such high annual fees to the WRC if they ignore their reports anyway? How is it that so few people are aware of the problem? Should this not be an issue that all students are made aware of so that we can collectively make a difference? It is time that we respond in an honourable manner as our catholicity would dictate.

Advertising in Schools:

BIG
money?



by
**BEEJAN
GIGAS**



mistake?

BIG

FUTURE SHOP, BEST BUY and other big corporations teaching kids?

Well, okay, maybe not that extreme, but what would happen if their presence really strangled the generation of tomorrow in our classrooms?

Many argue that ‘the school’ is one of the few sheltered areas from today’s money-hungry conglomerates. They allow a student to focus and take their minds off their Playstation and Xbox (well, for about 5-7 hours).

Advertising in schools is often a topic of debate in education institutions. It can be both good and bad. An article put forth by the Brampton News explained both sides of the argument. On one hand, they said something like a milk machine is a good type of advertising that allows thought-provoking ideas on a positive idea like healthy eating. On the other hand, allowing companies to advertise the hottest new video games in schools would be negative; a source of distraction from a student’s future. These are the types of tribulations that school boards as a whole face when experimenting with this very complex issue.

Of course advertising in schools would be a source of major income. The Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education-School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee attempted to research

the issue and find a balance. Interestingly enough, they found that the cost of taking up roughly two minutes of class time with advertisement would provide just over 300 million dollars of revenue to a respective school board.

After seeing a statistic like this, society needs to make a pressing decision as to whether or not our students’ education could receive a price tag. Should advertising as a whole even be allowed at all in schools? Of course, as it stands today, school boards still allow the name brand of technology to be advertised on their computers, printers and other classroom tools.

At what point do we draw the line and put a stop to children’s education being interfered by names, brands and logos? In this case, you’re influencing minds that have not reached their matured state in a place of study.

Perhaps the President of Apple was correct in saying that “People don’t know what they want. So you must tell them.” A scary thought. Advertising in school is counterproductive. And it’s something for student trustees to think about during the conference.

Dress Code & Uniform



What is one of the most enduring policies in our school system that exists in all boards, that is both ever-changing and can bring about the highest degree of controversy? How many students, generation after generation, have fought for the cause of “self-expression” and have forged the path of defiance for future outspoken trend-setters? At some point in every high school student’s career, one has questioned the policy in their school that is the dress code. Some will continually push the envelope; others will be shrewdly conservative, while others still, will demonstrate only the occasional risqué ensemble at school. Regardless of what category you fall into, you are aware of the presence of the dress code in your own school and you have a fairly accurate perception of how well students respond to it.

Dress Codes: are they really effective?

After taking a step back, however, you may realize that the dress code may not be especially enforced in your school or is not even clearly defined. Why is this? Is a legitimate dress code a thing of the past, followed only by our parents' generation? Or is there some lingering influence left by the dress code in the modern-day school system?

In order to find a satisfying answer to these questions, one must first examine the original purpose of a dress code or, in the case of Catholic schools, a uniform. Dress codes are created to establish a sense of order or uniformity, and to achieve a focused and respectful learning environment. Of course, we can't forget that schools are shaping the future citizens of our country and must, in theory, reflect the values of society. Therefore, uniforms and dress codes must also reflect those same values. Are dress codes really fulfilling these tall orders, though?

*The reality is that its role in the day-to-day procedures in schools is **losing** significance with each passing year.*

As stated previously, the first goal of a dress code is to achieve order, focus, and respect in the school environment. However, every high school community has its flaws, and many of them are due, in large part,



to the dressing habits of its students. For instance, the attire of a teenager or the ways in which they accessorize a uniform may not only define their personal style, but also their level of intelligence, social status, attitude, and habits. This leads to serious cases of bullying, peer pressure, substance abuse and more within a school. In the end, there is only so much “order” that can be present in a building containing thousands of teenagers, and a uniform has only a minimal impact on promoting an orderly habit.

What’s more, the concept of respect is something that has become clouded in young minds as the years have progressed. Even in Catholic high schools, where the expectation is to treat your peers as individuals made in the image of God, the uniforms are distorted to portray provocative and disrespectful messages. An action as simple as not wearing the proper uniform pants can destroy that goal of respect in a Catholic school. Evidently, it is difficult to rely solely on the seemingly-obsolete policy of a dress code to create an effective learning environment in today’s world.

As for the aspiration of making conscientious citizens-of-tomorrow, we must re-evaluate the current state of society and certain messages being conveyed by the media before considering the effect a dress code would have on this creation process. In a world where disagreeing, slandered politicians control nations, media companies run wild, and practically any part of the human anatomy is permitted to be shown on television, reflecting the “values of society” is not

really saying much. In fact, if school dress codes truly wanted to mirror that of today's society, there would not be any dress codes at all! This further proves that having set limitations on how to dress at school is, in essence, purposeless. The aim of having a dress code instil focus, dignity, respect, and societal morals in students at the high school level is obviously unrealistic and cannot be achieved entirely on its own.

The general ignorance towards dress codes and uniforms, and the dwindling number of students that are aware of the details of their schools' respective dress policy are signs that this long-enduring tradition may be becoming obsolete in the modern world of education. The reality is that its role in the day-to-day procedures in schools is losing significance with each passing year.

Do dress codes need to be eliminated entirely? No, as that has the potential to induce anarchy in school boards. Do dress codes need to be adjusted or given specific attention by school administration? Yes, if schools would like to stop the process of their dress codes disappearing entirely into educational oblivion. In order to stop this policy from being extinguished, serious consideration of the student opinion may be necessary so that the official dress code may be clearly illuminated once again.



...the uniforms are distorted to portray provocative and disrespectful messages.

Field Trips:

benefits outside the classroom

by
BRIDGET KING

My first major field trip overnight was our grade eight class trip to Ottawa. As we packed our bags excited to embark on an exciting two night whirlwind tour comprised of cultural and historical aspects in the heart of our nation, some were definitely more excited than others. Coming from a small town of 5,000 located in Southwestern Ontario, with an economy focused on farming and rural initiatives, this trip was a chance of a lifetime for some of my fellow classmates. Many had never even been out of Ontario and were granted bragging rights after we biked across the bridge to Hull, Québec. Although I was not in the same situation as some of my peers, having been to Ottawa many times, I came to appreciate how influential and important extracurricular excursions are to youth today.

With the downturn of the economy in recent years and the rising cost of fuel, many school boards are re-evaluating trips that have been of major influence in shaping the lives of many young adults. School trips have to adhere to strict guidelines ensuring they cover all aspects of the curriculum and even follow Catholicity requirements in Catholic schools. These guidelines may deter teachers from working excursions into their class timetable. However, as a student who has gone on many field trips over the years, I can say that you really aren't learning until you apply your "textbook" knowledge

to real-world experiences. Field trips are crucial outlets for students to practice their knowledge while learning new things along the way.

Looking back on my grade eight trip, the benefits of exposing kids to culture that they would not otherwise experience are priceless. Many parents lack the time or financial availability to expose their children to such valuable opportunities. Whether coming from a rural background and stepping on the streets of Toronto for the first time, or coming from a large city and visiting a farm for the first time, it is undeniable that these excursions cause students to re-think their traditional views. They even provide positive discussion surrounding diversity.

Field trips should be worked into the curriculum now more than ever. Schools today are constantly focused on academics and getting higher scores, straying away from hands-on learning. An education should cater to developing a person not just academically but socially, emotionally and physically as well. Field trips fill this void in the education system. In order to graduate students who are real citizens, we need to focus on educating all aspects of a person.

Not just a break from the classroom or a wasted day, a field trip truly is the ultimate learning experience. Incorporating all aspects of the curriculum and applying this knowledge beyond the classroom and out into the real world not only benefits students greatly, it sets them up on a path to success in life. Now is the time for educators to re-examine how excursions are worked into the curriculum and truly educate students, not just academically. Incorporating field trips into the educational system more frequently will not only benefit students themselves but society as a whole. For that we should be ever grateful.

education should cater to developing a person not just academically but socially, emotionally and physically as well.

Have you ever found yourself wondering about the slow yet sudden change in society's attitude to start using public transportation, eating local, or turning off the lights when leaving a room? Have you seen the ads on television and in newspapers telling you to start "going green"? What has influenced people to start really realizing the power of green and what is this impetus of pursuing this particular colour of the light spectrum?

When considering the costs and benefits of a green lifestyle, it is good to start off by understanding what is meant by "going green." Generally this catchy expression is defined as adapting your lifestyle as to do less damage to your Earth. It can be accomplished by adopting environmentally friendly activities to conserve energy, reduce pollution and save energy. It's a reaction to individual actions taken to curb the harmful affects on the environment through consumer habits.

The current green movement was rooted in the theory that the increased release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere was contributing to a warming of the Earth. Such concerns gave a heads-up to governments, businesses, and common people like ourselves to reassess their own contribution in the release of CO₂. We were to attempt to reduce our own output of the gas.

But in reality, it is a topic much broader than that. It is a heightened awareness of using the planet's resources more efficiently in efforts to

conserve our natural resources, reduce emissions of harmful pollutants and start improving the condition of the planet.

The concept of going green means a wide range of alternative activities. It can range from the ambitious approach to becoming totally free of electrical energy and supporting yourself with solar or wind power, to much simpler approaches like buying recycled paper. Going green tends to leave people to think that they must drastically change their lifestyle and be completely free from fossil fuels and other pollutants which harm the environment. Although this is an ideal solution we should all be working toward one day, it is remarkable how just a few simple changes can lead to a better planet for all of us. We can reduce our overall consumption, create less waste and still have the benefit of saving money and feel good about living a green lifestyle.

Eventually, I believe almost everyone will be seeing the small benefits of going green. It will inarguably be the next "it thing" for decades to come.

**Some simple ways to help the environment and yourself !
This can be a self-satisfying success in the long run.**

Power of Green

by
JOANNA WOLINSKI

Simple Steps to a Green Solution

Home:

- * eliminate pesticide usage in your home
- * grow houseplants that help clean your air in your residence
- * move away from plastics to more natural products.

Diet:

- * choose organic foods,
- * eat seasonal, locally-grown fruits
- * stay away from processed and fast meals.

Money:

- * turn down the heat
- * think twice before jumping in the car
- * wash clothes in cold water and hang-dry.

Energy:

- * switch to a laptop it cuts ¼ of energy use
- * turn off unnecessary lights to reduces lighting energy by 45%
- * invest in fluorescent lights

Within Ontario's gigantic, thriving public education system, there is a lot of diversity – some of which is obvious and explicit, and some of which is subtle and implicit. Minority groups or special interest groups have many opportunities to make their voices heard and to tackle specific projects within our schools. However, some dissent has risen over whether Christian or Muslim or LGBT groups have a place in public schools. Surprisingly, the groups which have caused the most uproar have proved

real difficulties lie in faith-based clubs. The holiday season of 2009 presented a new opportunity for an old debate to resurface. My school's holiday hamper drive was sponsored and run by the Christian Fellowship Club, who simply asked each classroom to prepare a cardboard box full of toys and non-perishables for the needy. However, they did not

mention the charity involved; and when a few concerned students found out they were giving to a Christian charity, they rang the alarm bells in protest.

The issue is a touchy one particularly because neither side is wrong, and both sides are equally justified. On the pro side, why shouldn't a Christian Fellowship be donating

Special Interest Groups

What's on the Menu Today?

by HAILEY BROOKS

In an ideal world, 'obese' is *not* in our vocabulary.

We could eat pounds of greasy bacon and eggs for breakfast, a burger or two for lunch, and large plate of poutine for dinner then wash it all down with a 20 oz. pop...while still feeling great.

We *don't* live in an ideal world.

So why does society continue to eat like this?

First of all, we need to face the facts. In 1978, 14% of adolescents aged 12 – 17 in Canada were classified as obese. As of 2004, rates have more than doubled; 29% of adolescents are suffering from being overweight. In Ontario alone, 27% of adolescents are overweight or obese. Who's to blame for this? Do we blame our parents for packing those sugary sweets that we crave for every single day? Do we blame the cafeteria for selling poutine and cookies in the first place? Or do we blame the education system for a lack of information on student nutrition? Here's the thing. We can tell our parents to cut out the junk. We can choose to bypass the poutine and cookies and purchase a healthy wrap instead. We can research a balanced diet and demand more education. We can blame whoever we

to a Christian charity? Does it matter what the charity's faith is, as long as those who need food are getting it? Dissenters are much more cynical of supposed

Banished From Schools?

**FAN
WU**

by

goodwill that the religious purport. Why take the risk with a Christian charity who could take this opportunity to indoctrinate the vulnerable? What right does one religion have to run a school-wide food drive in a secular public education system?

The answers are scarce, but there is a lot of room for compromise between the two factions. Religious groups should not be allowed to force their faiths upon anyone, either directly or indirectly, nor should they run clubs exclusive to people of that faith. A Jewish student

should feel as welcome in a Muslim group as he would in an Israeli Appreciation society. Every religion who has an extracurricular presence in the school should get the same benefits for equality's sake. If they wish to do a school-wide project, they are entitled to do so, as long as they provide all necessary information. If one is uncomfortable with the idea of donating to a Christian charity, then he or she does not donate.

In many schools, cultural or belief-based clubs are not a place where stereotypes are perpetuated; rather, they are another way of promoting and spreading diversity and information.

want for increased obesity, but in the long-run we're still going to be the self-conscious ones looking in the mirror waiting for change. Really, change is waiting for us.

The question is: what do we do now? How can students maintain their grades, their jobs, their extra-curriculars, their social life, and on top of that a healthy diet too? Being unable to answer this question is what has gotten us into this rut! To me, the answer is simple. Exercise and moderation are beautiful things! On average girls 14 - 18 should intake approximately 2000 calories while boys should intake 2200 calories (which adjusts according to how active you are). I'm not saying measure every little thing you eat or never consider eating cake again, but just always be generally aware of what your body is taking in each day. The bottom line:

calories in must equal calories out in order to live a healthy, active lifestyle. So the next time you're stuck eating fries in the cafeteria, have an apple with it instead of cookies. And grab a bottle of water instead of a soda. You'll be able to focus better, jog longer, look better, and most importantly feel good about yourself!

for student trustees for living an active lifestyle while on the go:

1. ALWAYS eat breakfast; it jumpstarts your metabolism.
2. Cars aren't always necessary, walk to a friend's place.
3. There's so much to explore outside, try and take a day outside the virtual world! See for yourself!
4. If you know you're going out to eat, choose low fat and low sodium foods during the day so you can splurge at night.
5. While taking a study break, refresh your mind by doing 15 minutes of cardio or stretching.

TIPS

Every year on the last Sunday in October, members of the Niagara Catholic District School Board come together in solidarity for their annual social justice campaign. The Niagara Catholic Pilgrimage is now in its 34th year and continues to grow stronger over time. In its beginnings, the Pilgrimage for the Third World was simply a group of students at Notre Dame College School who, under the leadership of Fr. Jim Mulligan, began raising money for those less fortunate, more than a continent away. This year, over 4000 students walked together, along with an estimated 1000 other family members, staff and alumni.



Niagara Catholic Pilgrimage

by

**MEGHAN
GROCHOLSKY**



"It started right here 34 years ago," explained Notre Dame school principal Ralph DeFazio. "Today, other Catholic schools in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Port Colbourne ... will do their pilgrimage. In true Notre Dame fashion, the pilgrimage continues here like no other." The aim of the Pilgrimage is simple: to help those less fortunate. Throughout the month of October, students who take part in this tradition collect pledges and promise to walk on Pilgrimage Sunday with their respective school. These students meet at 8:00 a.m. at their school for an opening liturgy after which they begin their walk. They come back to the school at approximately 1:00 p.m. where they take part in a closing mass.

"This year was the first time I had ever walked the Pilgrimage all the way through," said Rob Wormald, a grade 12 student at Notre Dame College School. "There is definitely something serene in walking along the path and taking that one Sunday out of the year to dedicate to those less fortunate."

Some schools walk straight through the downtown of their cities. Others take a more scenic route along the Welland Canal. These walks range in length from ten to twenty kilometres, but they all lead back to a holy place, where those involved celebrate mass and reflect on their journeys, both physically and mentally. The money raised by these schools all support diverse projects in Third World Countries. These projects include the construction of schools, medical clinics and orphanages. Separate communities in

Haiti, Dominican Republic, Dominica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru and Rwanda all receive direct support from Niagara Catholic schools.

By definition, a Pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place. In the case of the Notre Dame Pilgrimage, it is a journey back to the school gymnasium where, after the 20 kilometre trek, mass is celebrated. The gym is decorated with banners used in the walk in previous years, all boasting slogans which urge students to take action against global poverty. It is here that the highlight of Pilgrimage takes place; the candle-light liturgy. All lights in the gym go out, except for the single candle lit beside the altar. Every person is given a small candle and the light travels person to person through the gym, until the darkness is eliminated. This small act is symbolic of the change which those involved in the Pilgrimage are trying to accomplish; as their light travels throughout the world, they hope to eliminate global poverty, and help all those that they can.

This year, over \$202,000 was raised by the Niagara Catholic community to aid those less fortunate. Over 5000 community members, students and staff alike banded together to promote social justice and to do their part to end poverty.

This is a tradition which teaches students to become socially aware, to help those in need, and which brings together the greater Niagara Catholic community for one day and a common goal.



*This year, over **4000** students walked together,
along with an estimated **1000** other
family members, staff and alumni*



*It started right here **34** years ago,
- explained Notre Dame school principal,
Ralph DeFazio.*



Hailey Brooks is a student trustee for Durham Region. She was born in the city and traded in taxi rides for tractors, moving to Uxbridge at the age of nine. Hailey works as a supervisor at Tim Hortons. She is also a member of the Uxbridge Curling Team and a part of the leadership committee at school where she motivates others to get involved. Hailey is very outgoing and expresses herself through various aspects of creative writing. After high school, Hailey aspires to attend university where she hopes to study radio and television.



Matt dreams. Matt writes. Matt is not Lady Gaga. Born with a contagious smile and never saying 'No' to anything, he became one of Hamilton's Student Trustees. Matt enjoys the fine and performing arts. His major interest is graphic design and aspires to become a professional in this career field. Open-minded, and passionate, he's the go-to guy for an engaging chat. When not designing or ranting about his enthusiasm for change, you can find him scouting for retro vinyls at a record store. With, "Our Voice", he hopes the unheard voice of students will be represented swiftly and justly.



Beejan Giga is a student trustee for the Durham District School Board. He is a grade 12 student at Pickering High School in Ajax. At his school, he is the executive director of the principal's council, and an advisor on his student council. Within the Durham community, Beejan acts as a youth portfolio leader, a regional-provincial soccer player, a local children's soccer coach, and works for Scotiabank. He is also involved in numerous grassroots initiatives. Next year he hopes to study at the Schulich school of International Business.



Chelsea Gray is a student trustee for the Halton Catholic District School Board. She is a grade 12 student at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Oakville. She is the chair of her school's peace and justice club, the editor of her school newspaper, an appointed prefect, and an active member of her student council, yearbook staff, grad committee, chaplaincy, & mock trial teams. She enjoys volunteering, creative writing, and dancing. Next year she will be studying International Development at the University of Waterloo or McGill University. She hopes to one day make a significant, positive impact on the world.



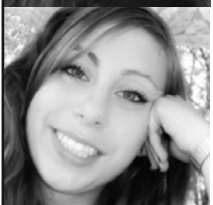
Hilary Holmes is a Student Trustee for the Bluewater District School Board. She lives with her parents Julie and Paul, and her sister Jessica in Kincardine, where she's a student at KDSS. Hilary is on her Student Council Executive, Athletics Council, Prom Committee, and is a co-president of her O.S.A.I.D. chapter. She enjoys sports, music, art and academics. Hilary spends her summers working at a children's camp, and also enjoyed contributing to her community as a Youth Representative on the Kincardine Community Planning Committee. Hilary hopes to study Molecular Biology-Genetics and Studio Art in the Arts and Science program at the University of Guelph next year.



Bridget King is currently a grade 12 student attending Sacred Heart High School in Walkerton. She is a first year student trustee serving for the Bruce-Grey Catholic DSB. She is deeply involved in her school community through the student council executive, as well as being a member of the Sr. Girls basketball team, Trinity peer leadership program and Reach for the Top club. As well as volunteering in her community as a leader at a kid's summer sports camp, Bridget also plays rep hockey for her town's midget girl's team while also balancing a part-time job at the local nursing home.



Olivia Suppa is one of the many talented writers who contribute to the student magazine Our Voice and is committed to raising awareness of current issues present in the Ontario school system and throughout the world. An ambitious, driven and talkative young woman, Olivia is currently a grade eleven student at St. Jean de Brebeuf Catholic High School in Vaughan, and is the junior student trustee at the York Catholic District School Board. She also currently serves as co-president of her school's student government. In her spare time, Olivia enjoys reading, dancing, playing the piano and engaging in conversation with just about anyone who will listen.



Joanna Wolinski is the current student trustee of Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB and is in grade 12 at Catholic Central High in Windsor, ON. Wolinski's past times include shopping, reading, researching, dancing, spending awesome time with family and friends, and just getting to know new people. She enjoys being a leader for her peers, taking part in social justice issues and going green. One of her life goals includes travelling to all of the continents of the world and doing missionary work overseas. Her future endeavours include going to university to study biochemistry, then going to medical school to study paediatrics.



Fan Wu is a student trustee from the Toronto District School Board whose hobbies include reading in every conceivable position, listening to music, and scrawling words on the corpses of long-forgotten trees. One might find him soaking up the sun in a library, enjoying a play at a theatre, or fighting for students' human and education rights wherever he goes. Fan Wu hopes to become a lawyer when he grows up so he can assist the defenseless, the poor, the downtrodden. Be on the lookout for the Wu Clan Barristers & Associates.

Patrick Quinton-Brown is a Grade 12 student from Sinclair Secondary School in Whitby. He is proud to serve as a student trustee for the Durham District School Board and as Director of Communications for OSTA-AECO. A lover of the arts and humanities, Patrick values creative thought and self-expression. He is a strong believer in the voice of youth. With a deep interest in politics and social justice, Patrick aspires to one day become involved with international law and responsible policy development.



Bios

