

# From the President

November—December 2013 Editor: Donna Howey President

Grand Erie Elementary Teachers' Federation



**GEETF Meetings and Events are listed on our website**

[www.gefed.on.ca](http://www.gefed.on.ca)

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Grand-Erie-Elementary-Teachers-Federation-of-Ontario/218009294961984>

**Twitter:** @geetfo

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## Managing Teacher Workload in Good Health!

A psychologically safe workplace is one that: "promotes workers well-being, and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health including in negligent, reckless or intentional ways." This definition is used in the CSA Canadian National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. There are individual responsibilities and employer responsibilities to maintain a psychologically safe workplace.

Some hazards that can sometimes happen in our workplaces that have a known ability to cause psychological harm include incidents of student aggression, verbal abuse of teachers, and objectionable or bullying behaviour directed at a teacher. As teachers we need to participate with the employer in actively reducing the risk of these hazards. ETFO has an upcoming workshop that could be helpful for teachers facing tough situations, "Life Preservers Difficult Workplace Situations".

<http://www.etfo.ca/professionaldevelopment/etfoworkshops/pages/default.aspx>

Register soon. These workshops typically have wait lists.

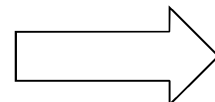
There are other issues that can affect employee mental health. The workplace guide, "Guarding Minds at Work" identifies thirteen Psychosocial Risk Factors that can have impact. For more information see, [http://www.psmc.ca/info/risk\\_factors](http://www.psmc.ca/info/risk_factors)

Workload management is one of the identified risk factors. As a teacher, you have many essential duties and many additional jobs; some of which are voluntary and some of which are required. Teachers who plan and prioritize their workload are better able to maintain work-life balance and are less likely to suffer mental health problems related to stress. Some teachers are perfectionists. While perfectionism has an up side, it also has its hazards—try to avoid them.



Communicating with parents is one of the duties of a teacher. The Parent-Teacher interviews held in November are one way we work with parents to help them understand and support their child's learning. I hope you didn't have too many interactions like in this cartoon.

[www.motivationalplus.com](http://www.motivationalplus.com)





## Our Office

You will find us at our office at 49 Dalkeith Drive, Units 1 & 2, Brantford. Our phone number for local calls is 519 753-9291 and toll free at 888 753-9291. The office is open each day from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Many evenings the office is open much later due to meetings and workshops. We also endeavour to leave Fridays at 3:30 pm.

## Occasional Teacher Handbooks

Whenever we need to be absent from school we rely on our colleagues, Grand Erie Elementary Occasional Teachers, to carry out our duties.

Occasional teachers depend on us to provide them with a lesson plan and an up to date handbook that includes information about the school and the students.

We depend on occasional teachers to let us know what school work was completed as well as any information about students (behaviour, ...). You can encourage this feedback by requesting it, leaving your preferred contact, and requesting their preferred contact.

Remember your ethical obligation to your OT colleagues. If you are unhappy about something, go directly to the OT. Don't make a negative report to the administrator. You are required to inform the OT, in writing, within 72 hours if you do make a negative report to the administrator.

## Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week November 17 to 23

The Safe and Inclusive Schools Act (Bill 13 passed fall of 2012) was a precursor to the Ministry naming a "Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week". Each school is to have a plan in place for promoting a safe inclusive school climate, preventing bullying, and intervening to address bullying. In Grand Erie, each School Improvement Plan has three components. One component is "Promoting Safe Schools and Improving Home, School and Community Partnerships". This section of the SIP is designed to address this requirement.

Additionally, the Safe Schools Incident Report Form has been revised. Teachers are required to submit a report to the principal when they are aware of student behaviours that must be considered for suspension. There is an increased duty for principals to follow up with the person who submitted the report. Forms are available on the staff portal.

## From the CLC website:

### "Together FAIRNESS WORKS

When workers get together and stand up for fairness, they get results. Together, working people have won [decent wages](#), [safer workplaces](#), [fair treatment](#) and benefits like paid vacation time, [job training](#), and [insurance coverage](#) for things like glasses, dental care, and medicine that keep them healthy and productive.

They didn't stop there. What they got at work, they got for everybody else by standing together and demanding more from the people they elected to boards, councils and legislatures. That's how we all got some of the things most of us take for granted today – minimum wages, statutory holidays, [paid vacation time](#), public health insurance, public [pensions](#), weekends, etc.

Together, working people built Canada's middle class and created a country with fairness as one of its fundamental values."

**Don't be fooled** by Tory policies described as modernizing labour laws. Right to work has not resulted in economic improvements in the states that have adopted it. It is referred to as, "Right to Work for Less!" Hudak's plan to bring this to Ontario is misguided.

As educators, we should have additional concerns about Tory policy. The Tory education agenda includes: merit pay for teachers, stalling full-day kindergarten, expanding standardized testing and redefining teachers' duties. I recommend:

<http://etfvoice.ca/painting-ontario-blue-what-would-a-tory-government-mean-to-you/>