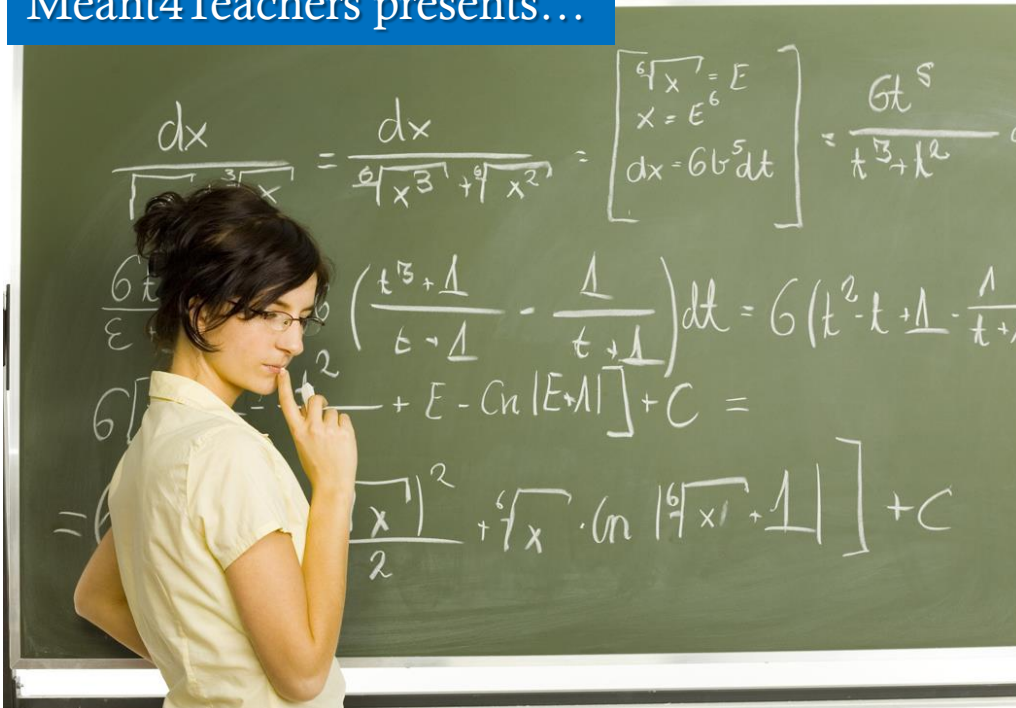


Meant4Teachers presents...



TEACHERS BECOME VICTIMS OF ADMINISTRATIVE MONEY SPIRAL

## “It’s Their Problem Now”

by JULIA AHADIE

Remember those days when you were sitting in your high school classroom? Listening attentively to the teacher, taking notes, and studying when you got home? I remember teachers asking us how we managed to work part time jobs while studying for tests in grade 11 and 12. It seemed like the norm during that time.

I am currently 2-weeks away from completing my Bachelor of Education degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. My two teachables are physics and mathematics, at the Intermediate/Senior level. At OISE, there are two practicum placements, where you student-teach for a four-week period. My second practicum took place at a high school in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). There was a lot going on at this school, they had an amazing robotics team and teachers who really cared about the students and were really involved in the school.

There was one thing however that never sat well with me, and it was something that I would witness every day I would teach there, something that is happening at a lot of schools: a lot of students don't care about doing well in school, and care even less about

the consequences - reason being: there aren't any.

That might sound a little strange..."no consequences"? But then how will students learn? That is exactly my point. At the TDSB, enrollment numbers have been declining (see stats on next page), and a lot of schools are losing funding because of it. My second practicum school is actually one of the few schools that will actually increase in enrollment next year, despite the entire board losing numbers (because it is expensive to live in Toronto), but that doesn't stop them from not wanting to lose funding.

A common practice for students at my practicum school was to skip class, and I don't mean once a week, I mean they would show up once a month, missing tests. A lot of schools have rules that if students miss a certain number of days in a row without a valid reason (such as a medical emergency), they get penalized e.g. suspension. At this school however, there were no consequences for missing "x" number of classes in a row.

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May 15, 2014

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A good feeling to think back to is why we became teachers in the first place – to help others, so why not one another? Every resource contribution makes a big difference. Thank you, on behalf of Meant4Teachers.



Secondary Enrolment - Actual and Projected  
2002 - 2036  
Full Time Equivalent

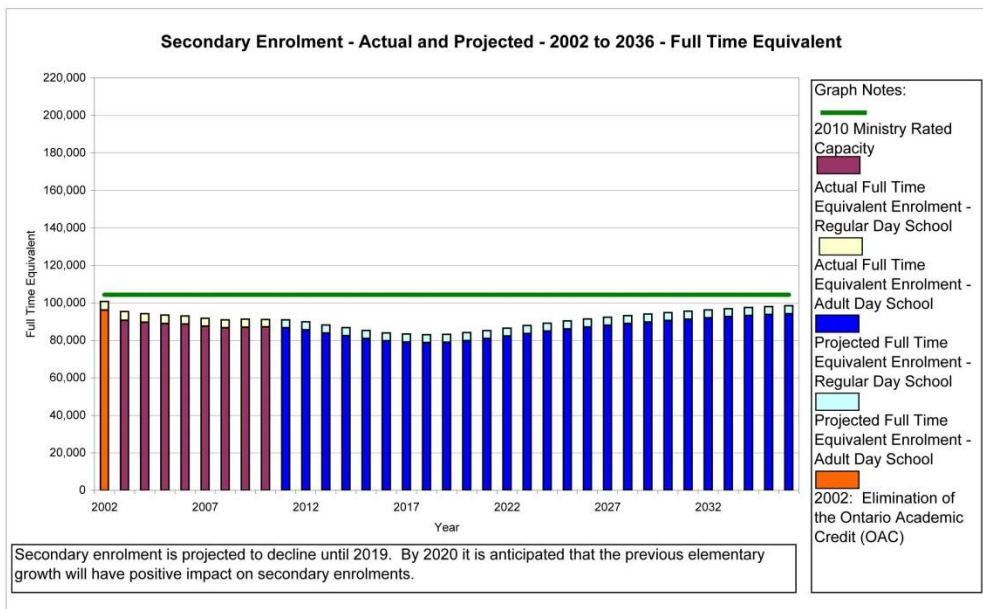
September 19, 2011

## “It’s Their Problem Now” cont’d...

Hence, students would miss lesson material, not show up for tests, and when they would do the test on the re-write date, they would fail. Many of the teachers in the math department who would speak with me on a daily basis would tell me that there are a lot of students on their attendance list who they had never even met, and we were already almost halfway into the semester.

So what's the problem? When the majority of your class skips and frequently fails assessments, the administration of the school looks at the teachers like they are not teaching properly. Granted, if the teacher has a lot of failing students, year and year in different courses, it is probably the instructor, but a lot of the time, it's the school system that encourages this kind of behaviour. The problem is actually compounded year-after-year, because this series of events most likely happened the year before. If the previous year's teachers also couldn't reach the students to teach the proper set of curriculum requirements, it becomes the next teacher's problem.

In response to this, teachers are put in the position to make their tests easier, so that the majority of their students can pass. A lot of the time when I would prepare tests for the grade 11 college-level math I was teaching, I was asked to remove a lot of the questions because they were too difficult, even though similar-level questions appeared in the textbook.



So at long last I come to my point (finally, right?). A lot of students know they won't get penalized for missing class, and with the 'I don't care' attitude, they perform poorly on assessments. Thus, teachers make their assessments easier, hoping to get the majority of students to at least pass, so that they are not pin-pointed by the administration. However, having not learned the proper material in the class they have right now, they go to their next class the following year having no prior knowledge, and this unfortunate pattern keeps repeating until these students graduate (if they make it to this point). It seems like a spiral, and the only reason this doesn't get fixed is because of money: schools need money, and they get

money by having high enrollment numbers - you don't get high enrollment numbers by suspending students.

I should also mention that this doesn't happen at every academic level – I mostly observed it happening with teachers who had applied-level classes, or college-preparation classes. I myself witnessed this many times, in the Grade 11 College-level math course I was teaching. Schools should just focus on teaching the students to the best of their ability; after all, they are the future adults of this world.

*Thanks for reading and stay tuned for our next issue!*

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