



SWIS Ontario Newsletter

Issue 69—November 2010—Hamilton

This is the newsletter of the Ontario Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, a partnership of the Settlement Sector, School Boards and Citizenship and Immigration Canada

There are ten SWIS programs in Ontario: Durham (SWIS Durham), Hamilton (SWISH), London (SWIS-London), Niagara (SWIS Niagara), Ottawa (MLO), Peel Region (MSEP), Toronto (SEPT), Waterloo Region (SEPWR), Windsor-Essex (SWISEW), York Region (SEPYR)

There are also four francophone programs: London Region (PIDEF), Ottawa (ALM), Toronto (PIDEF), Windsor-Essex (SWISEW)

Email us at: info@cicswis.ca



NOW ... and then?

NOW is far more than a 4-day program. Its impact lasts throughout the school year and even longer. So in this issue NOW participants and peer leaders tell us their story of NOW. We will also discuss tips and promising practices to ensure your school and students are able to maximize their NOW experience.

As there were over 80 schools connected to NOW this year, regional versions of this newsletter will also be produced. These newsletters will be posted on each region's news page at www.swisontario.ca.

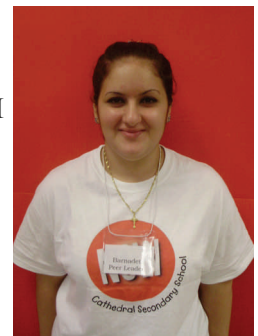


Giselle ...

I came to Canada because my Mom was here. She thought that this country would give us better opportunities. I didn't want to leave my country, my friends and family. I was really afraid because everything here was different: the weather, the people, the language, manners, and the school. The last one is what worried me the most: school. Some of the SISO workers told my Mom about the NOW Program at Cathedral High School. I was surprised when I had fun with other newcomers and the peer leaders. I was excited to return the second day. During the program, they explained to me about the education differences that this country had compared to my own country. On my first day of school I still was afraid but thanks to the NOW program I already knew the school and some people. After a year here in Canada I feel much better and confident. I even participated in the NOW Program for the second time, but this time as a peer leader. This time was even better! I had much more fun than the first time. Helping others made me feel really happy.

Barnadet ...

I came to Canada with my family because my dad wanted to open a new business and he wanted my sisters and me to study outside Greece. I have a lot of cousins in Canada but I was sad because their culture it is a little bit different than mine (they are from Iraq, but I had learned the Greek culture). Even the language was hard to understand. On my first day in school my sister and I had to find a locker and our classes. I understood the teachers when they were talking to me but I couldn't speak in English very well. My dad drove me to school, but he didn't know that it would finish at 3:00 PM so he didn't come back to drive us home! I got lost, but thankfully the teacher was able to find someone to help us. I wanted to go back home. But over time my English got really good and I began to feel better. One of the Settlement Workers at Cathedral told me that she wanted me to help newcomers in the NOW program. I was really happy to help new students. I was one of the peer leaders. It was so good. We took the new students around the school and we showed them and explain them what the school system is. I think the NOW program helps the newcomers to know about the school better so when they start they will not get lost.



Natalia ...

I arrived in Canada in July, 2008. I came here with my mom, dad and sister. I remember that my father was nervous because we didn't know if we were going to sleep on the floor or on the street. What are we going to eat ... what is going to happen here? We got out of the airport and took a taxi to SISO where we were told about a shelter where we could stay. When it was time to go to school I was so nervous that I didn't want to go. My parents told me that I was going to be in a program for newcomers called NOW. The first day that I went there I was so shy, I didn't want to talk and I wanted to run out of there. But when I heard other Spanish people it was so good, because I knew that I was not going to be alone! That day I made a lot of friends. It felt like being in Colombia! The peer leaders helped me so much, and in that program I learned everything about the school, many programs and many ways to help a newcomer. When I started school the peer leaders kept helping me and the other new students. We had lunch together and they helped us with translations many times. I'm so grateful to them. NOW helped me so much. Now I am a peer leader, and I see how the peer leaders, the teachers and the settlement workers from SISO are like a family; we work together to help the newcomers to make them feel like this is their home and that they are with their friends, and that they can count on us for everything. I learned how to treat everyone from different cultures and make them enjoy every day. I enjoyed every moment in the NOW program as both a newcomer and a peer leader, and I want to continue helping all the newcomers.



TIPS for NOW all year round ...

- With the support of a teacher, establish a club to welcome students who arrive after NOW
- Empower the club members to identify subjects for meetings and possible group or school-wide activities ... be sure to keep the peer-led emphasis of NOW throughout the year!
- Use NOW curriculum pieces for lunch-hour or after school activities
- Partner with a Youth HOST program to enhance your follow up activities
- Encourage peer leaders to consider other leadership opportunities (e.g. student council)
- Run a one-day or half-day orientation event for students (and parents) who missed NOW ... consider running an orientation event during the semester break
- Invite NOW students and peer leaders to share their stories at the parent council

Send us your ideas at info@cicswis.ca.

Welcome to Farida Kassum

The new SWIS Assistant Provincial Coordinator

Farida decided to retire from teaching full time two years ago, opting instead to teach part-time and explore other interests. These included writing ESL and ELD curriculum for the TDSB, working on ESL resources for the Ontario Ministry of Education and being one of the authors of the Coming to Canada Teacher's Guide for SWIS. She joins the provincial coordinator, Darcy MacCallum, providing consultative support to all programs and will focus on the development and updating of SWIS resources.

Farida recalls her experience as an ESL teacher: "The Settlement Worker and I met all the newcomer families that registered at our school. I can still see the look of relief on the faces of many of these newcomers when the Settlement Worker explained the many ways in which she could support them transition to their new home. I am extremely fortunate to have this opportunity to work with SWIS and be part of a group that really makes a difference."

Welcome aboard, Farida!

Previous SWIS Newsletters in English and French can be accessed through the link at: www.swisontario.ca

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