



SWIS Ontario Newsletter

Issue 69—October 2010—Niagara Region

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.



Dora ...

I really enjoyed participating in the NOW program and it's an honour to be one of the peer leaders. It was a great experience because we got to know new people, different cultures and we also learned skills which could be useful in our future.

The basic idea was to make the newcomers feel comfortable. They were also able to practice English with us and get to know the school and its system because in their country it is probably different.

The activities were interesting. Everybody liked them—especially the ice breakers because they helped to get closer to each other and be friends. We also made a self-profile that we, as peer leaders, presented to the newcomers as examples to make their own. We talked about our cultures and it was a great feeling to share them. On the first day we watched a movie about moving to Canada where students told their own experiences, so the newcomers saw that they were in the same boat when they came here and that later it will not be that hard. We visited the YMCA and the library where they got some information about what they can do there. We had a scavenger hunt to discover the school so it would be more familiar to them on the first day of school. These are just some examples what we did during that week and I think it was helpful and fun to them and to us.

The training was so much fun too. We had a training two weeks before the actual program. Basically we learned how to lead these activities successfully. We had an awesome crew and we can thank a lot to our settlement workers because without them it would not have materialized.

Briefly I really liked to help the newcomers because once I was one of them and I did not speak English. I was scared too, so I know how they feel when they go to school. Everything is so new! I hope NOW makes their lives a little bit easier and that they know that they can count on us anytime. I am glad I could be part of this, because it is a great team that we have.



Mimi ...

Thank you for the Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW) program has chosen me to be one of the peer leaders in my school in the year of 2008. Through the NOW program I learned how to help others and as well as myself. Although soon the NOW was timely finish, but I continuing taking care of newcomers inside and outside school, because I considered myself as a peer leader forever, and the NOW's spirit is not just to help one at once, but to help whoever is needed help in anytime of our life time.



Newcomers always face a narrow social network problem, I often thought about how I can help newcomers to widen their social network and help them to joint their community. In my case, I tried and tried in different ways, and finally I ran a dance club, which I provided free dance lessons, and then brought my dance students, classmates and friends to perform and participate at many events such as the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life Fundraising Activity to contribute their talents, strengths and love to their school and community, as well as to be a positive and active self. On August 13th, 2010, I've started my business, Toronto Yoga Centre. Of course, it has a non-profit program which is continue providing free professional yoga and dance lessons, and lots of valuable opportunities for newcomers to assist themselves.

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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