



SWIS Ontario Newsletter

Issue 69—October 2010—Windsor

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.



Class of 2010 - Windsor Peer Leaders

Ali ...

The First day of school, in 2008, was not really hard to me because I was one of the students, who participated in the NOW program in that year. It was the first time that they ran the program. I met great friends, the peer leaders, and they helped me so much through that year.

One of the problems that I had was being in a new system of schools. However, one of the peer leaders, my friend, taught me how to work the schedule of courses out.

Carlos ...

The first time that I went to a Canadian school I was so scare because I didn't have any friends and I didn't know the school, the school was so big that I get lost went I enter into the school ... I went to a very good program for the new people in the school: NOW. There I meet a lot of new people in the school like me, also I meet the peer leaders. They was so helpful because they help me find my classes, washrooms, and the most important my locker. The most important thing I learned from NOW is to not be shy. So I talked to the people in my classes, and I asked the teacher questions when I didn't understand . NOW helped me make friends not only with people who spoke my own language, but with Canadian friends (who also helped me improve my English!).

Hamza ...

I came to Canada on September 10, 2009. My new school was welcoming. They gave me my timetable and told me what am I expected to do in a Canadian school. Since all these procedures took a long time, I was late for my first class. ("Better late than never show up!" I always say.)

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The teacher in my first class assigned me to a girl (who is one of my closest friends now) to guide me. But, since I grow up in a country where men don't usually speak with women, I found it hard at first to communicate with her. I just followed her until she showed me where I need to go next. After the second class I didn't know where to go next and couldn't figure out how to open my lock. I went to the main office to find someone who can help and was introduced to one of the settlement workers (who happened to know my language!). I really felt comfortable and asked her to help me with the rules and the lock and the school map, which she did. She also introduced me to other teachers and students. Meeting newcomers eased my fear and meeting peer leaders gave me courage to stand up for what I believe in. I really had so much fun with the newcomers and peer leaders and working with the settlement workers made me appreciate their job and made me think of becoming one.



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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