

Pasquale (Pat) Piro, OCEA Chair 2023-2025

The 2024-2025 school year continues to be an amazing year for our OCEA team. Reflecting on my service time as the Central Provincial Rep, the Vice-Chair and Chair position I grew professionally and collaborated with many teachers, organizations, employers and communities. We adapted, supported and continually addressed challenges that educators face in performing their jobs in their respective regions and we can say with confidence this year was satisfying and rewarding.

In speaking to you my fellow colleagues, OCEA continues to fulfill its mission of “Facilitating and Supporting the Exchange of Ideas Among Experiential Learning Professionals”. OCEA’s Leadership Team works diligently to meet the challenges that educators are facing and respond to the needs of our members. The association’s accomplishments in the past year are defined below:

- OCEA’s membership numbers continue to be strong, and we are pleased to welcome a multitude of many new Co-op teachers and educators as members this year. We encourage all members take an active role with OCEA by presenting a workshop, being a resource writing team member, contributing to conference planning, or serving on OCEA’s Team;
- OCEA is committed to keeping members up to date on the latest news about Cooperative Education and other forms of Experiential Learning occurring throughout the province of Ontario. Thank you to Carol Madsen and our communications officer for publishing several e-newsletters and e-bulletins for our members this year;
- Proud to strengthen our relationship with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Training and Skills Development, OCTE, Skilled Trades Ontario, Skills Ontario, Job Talks, and OSCA to name a few and you;
- Working with graphics designers to revamp OCEA’s image, logo and posters. You will notice our new brand image on our website, documents and advertisements. Thank you to the OSSTF grant and everyone’s support;
- The 2025 OCEA Spring Conference will once again prove to be an exciting event with a selection of numerous workshops. The conference program has allowed for many opportunities to socialize and network with fellow educators from across our great province. We extend our sincere gratitude to the workshop presenters for their commitment to volunteer their time and expertise to prepare and provide professional development workshops for this event I’m sure is very much appreciated and valued by our delegates at OCEA;
- The 2024 OCEA Fall Symposium was held virtually back on November 7, 2024. It was well-attended event, providing quality workshops in both French and English. A big thank you to Carol Madsen and Escouade Multimedia for their tremendous efforts and support and to the OCEA Leadership Team for their time and dedication in organizing this event;
- Involved with the planning of our annual business meetings (ABM);
- Participated with our conference planning team. We wish to extend a huge thank you to this year’s Conference Planning Team: Carol Madsen, Julia VanderWeerden, Roman Nowak, Jenny Garrett, Sonya Kim, Erin Keyzers, and Karen O’Meara for their exceptional work. The Conference Planning Team generously volunteers their time and talents to plan and organize this event, and their outstanding efforts are greatly appreciated;

- Regularly coordinate monthly OCEA board meetings;
- Continuously, supporting Cooperative Education teachers and community partners across our province of Ontario;
- Provided support on the updating of the Trades handbook (English and Francophone);
- Contributing articles and stories for the publications;
- Actively recruiting new members, board members, conference workshops, sponsors and exhibitors, articles, resources and more;
- OCEA continues to recognize the outstanding contributions to Cooperative Education teachers by honouring deserving nominees at our Annual OCEA Professional Awards' Banquet. Many nominations were received this year for the "S. J. (Jack) Ulan Professional Contribution Award" and the "George King" professional award of Excellence. Thank you to the nominators for recognizing and nominating their colleagues and thank you to the OCEA Awards Committee for planning and organizing this year's event.

On a consistent basis we collaborate with the Ministries of Education and Labour, Immigration and Skills Development, educators and organizations to strengthen relationships throughout the province. On an ongoing basis, OCEA adds updated innovative resources to our website. These initiatives are benefiting Cooperative Education and teachers using experiential learning as part of the province-wide work with OCEA.

We strive and continue to bring teachers involved in Cooperative Education from English and Francophone boards to collaborate and share their knowledge and experiences and positively become more involved. I encourage everyone to consider a more rewarding role and to experience involvement with OCEA.

A special thank you to Carol Madsen, OCEA's Administrative Executive Assistant, for all that she does for OCEA. Her guidance, commitment, and tireless work over the past 29 years ensures that OCEA stays on track and runs smoothly.

To our membership, thank you for your passion and commitment to your students and for your continued support of OCEA. We hope that you enjoy your time at the conference, reconnecting with old acquaintances and forming new ones. As you approach the end of another busy school year, we wish you all the best and hope that you take some time to unwind and rejuvenate during the summer break.

It is my pleasure to serve in the role of OCEA Chair!

Prepared April 18, 2025

Rebecca Gauthier, OCEA Vice-Chair Report 2024-2025

I am honoured to have served as the 2024-2025 Vice Chair for the Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA) organization this past year. This is my 3rd year sitting on the Board and it continues to be a time of continued growth for myself in all aspects of the world of Co-operative Education in Ontario.

As Vice Chair, I support our Chair - Pat Piro, in guiding the board's direction, assisting with various tasks and conversations when needed, mentoring newer board members, and contributing to our work around program development and outreach.

Over the past year, I have contributed in a variety of capacities including:

- 2024 Virtual OCEA Fall Symposium - **Collaborate – Integrate – Innovate!** co-presenter;
- 2025 In-person OCEA Spring Conference - **“Where tomorrow begins: Empowering future ready students”** - leading the Elections at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM), assisting the CPT with any assistance they required, and presenting at a workshop;
- Actively participating in monthly virtual and in-person Board meetings;
- Acting as a resource to Cooperative Education teachers and community partners;
- Assisted in the role of Secretary, when needed;
- Continually looking for ways to attract new members to OCEA and to fill roles such as becoming a Regional Rep;
- And fulfilling any other duties to help my fellow Board members.

We are continually working with educators, Board leads, and organizations to strengthen and broaden our relationships throughout the province. We are consistently looking for ways to encourage our 'new-to-Co-op' teachers and our veteran, experienced Co-op teachers to expand upon their own classroom teachings, initiatives, and learnings.

I would encourage anyone interested in becoming involved with OCEA in either a Provincial Representative or a Board member role to do so! I am glad I took the initiative to join OCEA and have not only gained an incredible amount of resources, but have also gained valuable connections with fellow Board members and Co-op teachers throughout the province. For me, it is a pleasure to continue my work in the position of Vice-Chair.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Administrative Executive Assistant - Carol Madsen, for her outstanding contributions to OCEA. Her dedication, knowledge, and all-around amazing support keep things running like clockwork and I don't know what we would do without her! From keeping us all organized to handling all the behind-the-scenes work, she does it all with such professionalism and care. Thank you Carol for being such a key part of our OCEA team—you are truly appreciated!

Please feel free to contact me or any member of the OCEA Board of Directors or Provincial Representatives (<https://oce.a.on.ca/contact-us/>) with any input that will help us in continuing to best serve our members.

We look forward to seeing everyone celebrate with us next year for OCEA's 50th anniversary! It is sure to be a memorable one!

Yours in Cooperative Education

Rebecca Gauthier

OCEA Vice Chair 2024-2025

Cooperative Education Teacher, Rainbow DSB

Thairn Sintic, OCEA Treasurer, 2024-2025

It has been an honor to serve as the Treasurer of the Ontario Cooperative Education Association for 2024-2025. This has been a learning curve for me but the support I have received from the rest of the board has been outstanding. It is a wonderful group of people to work with, I highly recommend this opportunity to all members.

As an organization, we continue to work with Baker Tilly, OCEA's accountants, to ensure timely and current reporting practices are met. OCEA has honoured financial obligations in a timely fashion, operated within a framework of fiscal responsibility, and provided a vision for the financial future of OCEA.

The 2025 OCEA Spring Conference "Where tomorrow begins: Empowering future ready students" will bring us together once again in the spirit of collaboration, sharing, mentorship and personal growth. I look forward to welcoming you all once again!

Highlights from the 2023-2024 Review Engagement will be provided at the Annual Business Meeting. The Review Engagement is an overview and summary of OCEA's financial position as of August 31st, 2024. OCEA is in a solid financial position. This is attributable to the hard work and dedication of the OCEA Board, as well as sound guidance from our bookkeeper and accountants.

Looking forward, OCEA will continue to implement its strategic plan aimed at serving the membership with solid professional development and practical resources, rebuilding attendance at in-person events, monitoring expenses and ensuring the organization's financial stability.

Julia VanderWeerden, OCEA – English: Director-at-Large

During the 2024/2025 year I served as English: Director-at-Large. It is a privilege to continue to serve the OCEA membership and work with the OCEA Board and Provincial Representatives. Furthermore, I continue to promote the benefits of Cooperative Education and Experiential Learning at every opportunity.

Thank you to Carol Madsen, OCEA's Administrative Assistant, for her invaluable assistance. Thank you, Carol, for 29 years of service as OCEA's Executive Administrative Assistant. Your support, guidance, assistance and in-depth knowledge of the association, ensures OCEA is in the best of hands.

This year, I have the privilege of working with the OCEA Board to co-plan the Spring Conference. The 2025 OCEA Spring Conference "*Where Tomorrow Begins; Empowering Future Ready Students*" will bring us together once again in the spirit of collaboration, sharing, mentorship and personal growth. We look forward to welcoming you all once again!

Looking forward, OCEA will continue to implement its strategic plan aimed at serving the membership with solid professional development and practical resources. I look forward to supporting the OCEA Team as we move towards the association's 50th Anniversary in 2026!

I urge you to become involved as a volunteer on a future conference or symposium planning team, as a Provincial Representative, or as an OCEA Board member. Your voice is important to shape the association's future. A former mentor once said, serving on the OCEA Board is the best professional development possible. I could not agree more!

Bilan de l'année scolaire 2024-2025 — Roman Nowak, Directeur français AÉCO

J'ai eu le plaisir d'œuvrer à nouveau en tant que **directeur français** pour l'année scolaire 2024-2025. J'ai eu la chance de collaborer avec une grande équipe de direction engagée de l'**AÉCO**.

Voici quelques-unes des tâches que j'ai entreprises cette année dans le cadre de mon mandat :

- Participer aux rencontres régulières du conseil de direction;
- Partager et faire valoir les besoins des membres francophones;
- Participer à des réunions avec le ministère de l'Éducation et les coordonnateurs des conseils scolaires;
- Faire la promotion des postes vacants auprès des membres francophones de l'association;
- Contribuer à la prise de décision concernant la conférence virtuelle de l'automne et le volet francophone de la conférence du printemps;
- Animer divers ateliers lors des conférences virtuelles et de la conférence du printemps;
- Appuyer la traduction de certaines ressources et communications;
- Participer activement à la promotion de la ressource en français de la composante scolaire de l'éducation coopérative.

Cette année, nous avons également travaillé **davantage avec les responsables (leads) en apprentissage par l'expérience** des conseils scolaires. Quatre rencontres ont été organisées pour renforcer les liens et bâtir une collaboration durable. Ce travail nous a permis d'identifier des pistes d'actions concrètes pour mieux soutenir nos élèves et notre personnel. Nous souhaitons **continuer à bâtir cette capacité collective**, mais aussi devenir **des leaders et des innovateurs** dans le domaine de l'apprentissage par l'expérience en Ontario, un mandat important pour l'année prochaine.

De plus, j'ai eu la chance de faire partie du **comité organisateur** de la **conférence du printemps** en tant que **représentant francophone** et d'agir à titre de **maître de cérémonie francophone** tout au long de l'événement et **conférencier** pour quatre ateliers. Cela m'a permis de représenter fièrement la voix francophone et de participer activement à la promotion de notre culture au sein de l'AÉCO.

Ce mandat de deux ans en tant que directeur français a été une expérience professionnelle extrêmement enrichissante. Il est essentiel de continuer à bien représenter les besoins des membres francophones et de faire valoir l'importance de l'éducation coopérative dans toute sa diversité à travers la province. Notre voix francophone doit continuer de résonner afin que nos réalités uniques soient prises en compte lors des processus décisionnels.

Un immense merci à **Carol Madsen** et à toute l'équipe de l'AÉCO pour votre soutien, votre ouverture et votre engagement continu envers l'avancement de l'éducation coopérative en Ontario.

Jenny Garrett, Communications Officer 2024-2025

As a proud member of the Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA), I bring a focus on adult education in the Greater Toronto Area. While experiential learning programs often concentrate on secondary school students, my passion lies in supporting adult learners as they navigate their own career and educational pathways. It's inspiring to see how Cooperative Education continues to evolve—positively impacting learners from elementary school right through to adulthood.

OCEA plays a vital role in equipping all learners—youth and adults alike—with the tools, experiences, and confidence they need to contribute meaningfully to their communities. For many adults, cooperative education is more than a program—it's a turning point. The association remains committed to enhancing Cooperative Education, School-Work Transition, OYAP, and Work Experience programming, while also advancing the professional development of educators across Ontario.

As Communications Officer (2023–2025), I've had the privilege of working closely with Carol Madsen, our Executive Administrative Assistant, the dedicated Board of Directors, Provincial Reps, and other engaged partners. Together, we've championed OCEA's mission and continued to deliver relevant, accessible content and updates that empower educators and promote student success.

Our communications strategy includes OCEA E-NEWS, a growing presence on social media. Through these channels, we share insights, opportunities, and stories that highlight the impact of experiential learning across the province. OCEA also delivers high-quality professional development via our Virtual Fall Symposium and our annual in-person Spring Conference. Members benefit from ongoing access to recorded workshops and curated resources available anytime at www.ocea.on.ca.

The 2025 OCEA Spring Conference will take place April 27–29 at the Sheraton and Best Western Parkway Toronto North Hotel. With the theme *Where tomorrow begins: Empowering future-ready students*, this year's event—led by the York Region School Board Conference Planning Team—promises to be our most engaging yet. Attendees can look forward to 40+ workshops, a robust exhibitor showcase, and countless opportunities for professional growth and collaboration.

OCEA is also proud to celebrate excellence in experiential learning through several initiatives:

- **OCEA E-NEWS:** Regular updates spotlighting programs, innovations, and success stories from across Ontario.
- **Capturing Voice:** A digital journal featuring firsthand accounts from students participating in Cooperative Education, OYAP, SHSM, and other experiential programs—submissions due annually by June 30th.
- **OCEA Professional Awards:** Recognizing educators, partners, and students who make significant contributions to Cooperative Education. Awards are presented during our Spring Conference.

We're always eager to hear from members and expand our circle of passionate educators and advocates. If you're interested in contributing to the work of OCEA—whether as a Board

Member or Provincial Rep—visit us at www.ocea.on.ca or connect with any member of our team. We'd be thrilled to welcome you to the OCEA family!