

**2012-2013 OCUFA TEACHING AND
ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS
CITATION FOR WINNER PROFESSOR CATHERINE BRUCE**

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CITATION FOR PROFESSOR CATHERINE BRUCE

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“Outstanding.” “Innovative.” “Gifted.” “Valued.” These are words used by students, alumni and colleagues to describe Dr. Catherine Bruce, Associate Professor in the School of Education and Professional Learning at Trent University. But of all the words used to describe this caring and impactful educator, perhaps no word is used more frequently – or more justly - than “transformative.”

Quite simply, Dr. Bruce has transformed students and in turn, mathematics education in the Ontario elementary school system. This is no small feat. Consider, for example, that many of Dr. Bruce’s students not only dislike mathematics, they are downright afraid of it. I challenge any educator to contemplate, for just a moment, what it would be like if students arrived at your classroom on Day One, knowing that they were probably going to dislike anything and everything you were going to teach them, and by extension, probably dislike you. This is what Dr. Bruce is up against in teaching her students to become math teachers.

Now that we have determined that Dr. Bruce is like a salmon swimming upstream, that she teaches what her nominator described as “high stakes” courses – “those that are often problematic to students, but essential in the teaching profession,” we have the context in which to fully appreciate the following quotes from students and alumni, and which clearly illustrate the transformative nature of her teaching.



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“She inspired us to look at math in a way that we’d never thought to. Her positive spirit was contagious. A weak math student in my elementary years, I was personally inspired to become a math teacher, and to teach it in a way that made my students truly enjoy math. Cathy had ignited a flame inside of me that made me excited to help and inspire my own students.”

“Cathy inspired me to change the trajectory of my career, and has made mathematics education a life-long passion.”

“As a child, I loved mathematics but through high school and university I loathed the subject. It was not until I sat in front of Cathy Bruce did my spark and love for mathematics come back to life. Professor Bruce was inspirational, thought-provoking and challenged the way our entire class thought mathematics should be taught, by paper and pencil drills. She opened the world of exploration, inquiry-based problems, collaboration, technology and conceptual understandings in mathematics.”

This last quote highlights Dr. Bruce’s many innovations in teaching, including developing new materials and teaching practices using technology such as Interactive White Boards and iPads. Her students speak highly of their experiences in her classroom, in which they feel safe to participate because of the atmosphere of trust, inclusivity and mutual respect. Beyond the classroom, Dr. Bruce has also conducted studies on university teaching, and has published her research on mathematics teaching and learning widely in textbooks, journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters, and research monographs.

The OCUFA Teaching and Librarianship Awards Committee is privileged to vet truly outstanding applications. The fact that Dr. Bruce stood out as a leader in a field in which many



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students are afraid of the content illustrates her unparalleled dedication to her field. Even her Master's and PhD degrees focused on teaching and learning in mathematics!

I would like to finish with Dr. Bruce's own words, drawn from her Teaching Philosophy, and in which she states that she hopes students remember her as someone who... "ignited their passion for teaching math; helped them prepare to be effective math teachers; had high expectations for learning; had a high level of subject expertise; and cared about them as learners." Although I have never had the good fortune of taking one of Dr. Bruce's courses, it is clear from the many letters submitted in support of her application, that a 'tick mark' can be confidently drawn beside each of these points. It is clear why one former student enthusiastically stated, "If I can be half the teacher that Professor Cathy Bruce is, I know I can make a difference."

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Catherine Bruce, a 2012-2013 OCUFA Teaching Award recipient, an honour for which she is exceptionally deserving.