

# Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

<b>Question</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. The allocation of Speech-Language Pathologists (S-LP) units has not been increased within the Education system for at least 17 years, yet government has increased the number of S-LP units allocated to Health at least twice within that same time frame. This has created an obvious recruitment and retention issue. How will you lobby government to increase the number of S-LP units with the education system?	.... <b>2</b>
2. NLTA supports inclusion practices in the school system. We are continuing to hear of problems with the current model. In your opinion, what should the NLTA do to further advocate for greater resources?	.... <b>4</b>
3. Do you believe there is a problem with membership engagement within the NLTA and, if so, under your leadership how would you encourage and/or promote membership engagement?	.... <b>6</b>
4. Given that bullying and violence towards teachers is occurring frequently in some of our schools, what would be the role of the NLTA, under your leadership, in addressing this issue?	.... <b>8</b>
5. In order of priority, identify the top five issues you would wish to address if elected.	.. <b>10</b>

# Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

(Note: Edited only for typographical errors.)

## 1. The allocation of Speech-Language Pathologists (S-LP) units has not been increased within the Education system for at least 17 years, yet government has increased the number of S-LP units allocated to Health at least twice within that same time frame. This has created an obvious recruitment and retention issue. How will you lobby government to increase the number of S-LP units with the education system?

### William Chaisson

We need only to look to the 1986 document produced by S-LPs in this province to find the answer. Over 30 years ago, it was recommended that the S-LP-student ratio be 1:45 (*Guidelines for the Provision of S-LP Services In NL* (1986)). Let us use that as our beginning point to lobby government and ask the question as to why S-LPs doing similar jobs have been treated differently. As well, let us engage S-LPs in a conversation and speak to parents who should be advocating for services by using the legislative power of School Councils to not only expect services, but to place it squarely on government's agenda.

### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

Recruitment and retention of S-LPs in the NL educational system is another example of lack of resourcing and understanding which is evident today. Recently, surveys were conducted requesting info on caseloads. It is suggested by CASLPA the recommended caseload should be between 26-30 clients. S-LPs have no definite prescribed caseloads in the educational setting today. Yet CASLPA (2003) reported that these professionals were stretched where many jobs were unfilled in NL. CASLPA (2003) caseload limits should recognize "...that many S-LPs are working with young children in community settings and their duties are not limited to education." S-LPs also face caseloads which are spread out over large geographical areas. This results in extensive travel and reduced student contact time. This has to be addressed! Advocating for S-LPs to receive comparable pay as their counterparts in Health and others in the educational field would also help the recruitment and retention issue.

### Derek Drover

The status quo is not acceptable; we must continue to press the need for additional S-LPs by continuing to hold government accountable under Article 30.02 of the provincial collective agreement as we move into arbitration and as we continue into provincial negotiations. The caseloads and geographical demands placed on our S-LPs are clearly unsustainable and addressing these issues is vital to remedying recruitment and retention issues. Our Association must work closely with, access the expertise of the SIC representing S-LPs, and support and encourage the SIC's advocacy. Collaboratively, we must continue to proactively avail of advocacy opportunities such as the *Better Together* panel on public education, the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, and direct discussions with government and District personnel to effect the desired

improvements. The need was acknowledged in healthcare; it must be addressed in education.

### Kevin Flynn

The current allocation model of Speech-Language Pathologists (S-LPs) continues to be a significant issue within the province and is simply unacceptable. As an Instructional Resource teacher, I've seen firsthand the lengthy delay in comprehensive assessments and the frustration that this causes for all educational stakeholders. S-LPs are often unavailable because of recruitment, retention, and unmanageable caseloads. The Provincial Executive must make it quite clear to government that the only remedy to recruit and retain S-LP units in this province is to align S-LP allocations within the Education system to the same S-LP allocations of the Healthcare system. This increase in allocation will help recruit and retain S-LP units in both urban and rural areas while simultaneously expediting the comprehensive assessment process.

### Craig Hicks

Even with the increase of Speech-Language Pathologists in Health Care and their work with pre-school children, it still has not helped to decrease the workload for SLPs in the Education system. Educational SLPs' unrealistic caseload and extensive travels certainly amplifies the benefits of working in Health Care. I feel that the best way to rectify the recruitment issue is through collective bargaining. Through negotiations, changes could be made to Article 30 involving caseload maximums and Article 50 to include a bonus/allowance formula for SLPs that would reflect the recommendation of the Canadian Association of Speech Pathologists and Audiologists.

### Jamie Jenkins

By increasing allocations of S-LPs in Health, government acknowledges an increased need for S-LPs in our province. Unfortunately, the same steps have not been taken in the Education system where the demand is also high. The allocation model being used does not address the needs of students.

We need to continue to work with and support the S-LP SIC to address this issue. Likewise, we need to continue to lobby government to change allocations based on the needs of schools and students. We need to align with the Federation of School Councils, Learning Disabilities of NL and Child Youth Family Services to stand with us to fight for improvements.

Lastly, we need to continue to use campaigns such as "Teachers Change Lives" and "Inside the Classroom" to bring public

attention to these issues. With the added support from the public we may be able to influence changes to the allocation model.

### **Kelly Loch**

It is important to gather statistics for the number of students receiving SL-P supports when they enter Kinderstart. We need a commitment from Government that students who qualify for services during preschool years under SL-P carry those services forward into their school years until the issue has been remediated. This will necessitate the provision of extra SL-Ps in the school system. The Kinderstart teacher will also be able to use the Early Years Evaluation tool to help identify students with speech and language needs and intervene with the in-school SL-P to provide programming to be completed at home. This type of early intervention is beneficial to a child and promotes an early partnership between home and school. There needs to be a team approach to early interventions within the community of the school.

### **Donna Reddick**

The ability to communicate is critical to the quality of life for our children. Speech-Language Pathologists share a common frustration with other professionals: an overwhelming workload. I believe that it is vitally important to continue to advocate for a lower S-LP-student ratio. The allocation formula as it currently exists is not working! We need to advocate for the recommended S-LP-student ratio, 1-45, as suggested by the Association of Speech-Language Pathologists. Furthermore, it is important to work in conjunction with parents, school councils and other interest groups to put pressure on government to make changes. Equally important is the need to promote awareness that emphasizes the long-term benefits of receiving services – improvements in literacy, written language, socialization, the ability to follow classroom rules and the de-stigmatization of students.

### **Gabriel Ryan**

To begin with, the allocation formula for S-LPs is flawed in that it does not provide for enough SL-Ps in our school system. NLTA needs to continue to work with its SL-P Special Interest Council to glean accurate anecdotal and statistical information from the field, then use it to inform sought after contractual gains during negotiations. Provincial Executive has previously welcomed presentations from SICs during regular Executive meetings. This is a very good and direct manner to hear the concerns of SICs and to develop lobbying strategies. Additionally, SL-Ps are experts in their fields, so inviting them to an Executive meeting to present supporting data, that we can then take to Government, is a sensible step in seeking improvements. NLTA also needs to continue its campaigns to educate the public, thereby increasing our lobbying efforts. With an informed and motivated public on side, government is more likely to listen.

### **Joseph Santos**

The need for speech-language pathologists has increased over the years, which is supported by the government's increase of S-LP units in the healthcare profession. It would be reasonable to assume that many of the language issues would be of school-age children. Given that we are in an inclusive system, the students'

speech language issues will need supports in the school system. Therefore, it would stand to reason that we would need more S-LPs in our education system. In order for any inclusive system to work, there must be a team-based approach. This would therefore be education S-LPs working in conjunction with their counterparts in health.

### **Colin Short**

Speech-Language Pathologists are a unique group in the NLTA. I was very pleased to review their proposal as chair of the Professional Issues Committee for their own SIC and subsequently present and argue their case for approval at the Executive table.

If government has increased the number of SLP units to Health in the past 17 years, then we have a strong precedent upon which to argue our case. In the past, we have used the collective bargaining venue to establish committees to review such allotments. Lobbying works best when we have partners and support. The Federation of School Councils can assist in this lobby and we have a newly elected school board and it too, may be supportive and willing to participate in this lobby as well.

### **Sean Weir**

S-LPs play a vital role in the diagnosis and delivery of speech-language services in our school system. This is true more so today than it was 17 years ago. In terms of recruitment and retention of our current number of S-LPs it may be time for the NLTA to explore developing a recruitment/retention bonus system with government similar to what currently exists for teachers in coastal Labrador. This was done outside of the Collective Agreement. In terms of increasing the number of S-LP units within our province, which would be subject to the collective bargaining process, I would have no problem writing letters to the Minister to lobby for satisfactory changes to this allocation. Of course, I see this issue as being part of the bigger issue of properly resourcing our system for inclusive education, and any NLTA lobby efforts to improve the system would involve improvements to S-LP allocations.

### **Chesley West**

In my conversations with S-LPs, I have learned their primary issue is with number of student contacts, especially in larger centers, followed closely by lack of adequate teaching spaces, and technology. My plan to lobby government would be to gather all available data related to these challenges and their effect on student learning and development. From there, I would work with the S-LPs, parents, and other stakeholders to clearly illustrate to government that if we are to follow society's demand for equal opportunities for all, we need to ensure student needs are met. Further to that, I would argue that S-LPs are not only educators but, rather, are an integral part of the healthcare continuum that ensures a healthier living and wellbeing for the student. Effective communication is key to a child getting what they need to be happy and healthy – we cannot fail in this regard.

## 2. NLTA supports inclusion practices in the school system. We are continuing to hear of problems with the current model. In your opinion, what should the NLTA do to further advocate for greater resources?

### William Chaisson

As an Association, we have supported the philosophy of Inclusion. We are continually advocating for more resources at every level. Further advocacy must include parents, school councils, and advocacy groups such as the Autism Society, NACL etc., and all stakeholders. We must also send a message that this is about more than simply resources. We need to be clear that in too many incidences, we are dealing with issues outside of our scope of practice. It is necessary to engage all parties, parents, educators, health care workers and social services in a dialogue to make recommendations which will make the system work for both teachers and students.

### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

The Inclusionary Model that we are working with in Newfoundland and Labrador in theory is a good one. Without the proper resourcing and understanding, however, we have seen firsthand that it is not working in our classrooms the way it was intended to. Consulting and engaging parents, community groups and other concerned citizens may be an avenue whereby many different voices may get better results. When concerned and engaged individuals better understand the Inclusionary Model and see where it falls short, maybe then government may listen and react. NLTA needs to reach out to all our concerned partners and work together for better resourcing for the Inclusionary Model. Partners such as School Councils, NLESD School Board Trustees and Federation of School Councils, to name a few.

### Derek Drover

While DEECD's website defines the philosophy of inclusion as promoting "the right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality programming" and as promoting "a continuum of supports and services...respecting the dignity of the child", the current inclusive model falls far short of meeting students' needs. While appropriate for NLTA to continue to advocate through the media of communication, direct communications with Department and District officials, and through Article 30.02 of the provincial collective agreement, NLTA must also further its partnership with school councils whose stated purpose in the *Schools Act*, 1997 Section 26(1), is "to develop, encourage and promote policies, practices and activities to enhance the quality of school programs and the levels of student achievement in the school." The Supreme Court of Canada decision *Moore vs BC (Education)* and the most recent BCTF Supreme Court decision are also to be considered.

### Kevin Flynn

Inclusion can work; unfortunately, the right supports are not currently available. The inclusionary model has created an environment plagued with frustration for all educational stakeholders and has revealed an environment that is neither safe, nor conducive to learning for students and teachers. In order for

the inclusionary model to properly function, there are a number of key issues that NLTA must pursue. Some of the key issues include: to continue to lobby government for additional IRT units, to advocate for the provision of time during the instructional day for collaboration between IRT and classroom teachers, and to lobby government to decrease the student-teacher ratio in classes which are comprised of students with IEPs and ISSPs. To help remedy these and other issues surrounding inclusion, the NLTA must continue to lobby government to change the inclusionary allocation to a needs-based formula rather than a budget-based formula.

### Craig Hicks

Classroom composition, CAP size, reduction on teaching units and unrealistic workload has all contributed to the turmoil surrounding the inclusion model. Our Association must continue to advocate for more teaching units to meet the classroom needs of the inclusion initiative. There must be an increase in Instructional Resources Teachers, Educational Psychologists, Guidance Counsellors, Speech-Language Pathologists and Administrators. The catalyst to the success of the inclusionary model is the need for designated collaboration time during the instructional day for classroom teachers and IRTs. Article 30.02 in the Collective Agreement provides the avenue that the NLTA can address the issues and conduct a review of resourcing the Inclusive Schools Initiative. However, the Department of Education has baulked in fulfilling their commitment to the agreement causing our Association to file a grievance which at this time remains unresolved.

### Jamie Jenkins

We must continue to lobby Government to increase the allocation of teachers in all areas of Education. We can utilize public support to pressure Government to change its thought process and allocate resources based on the needs of schools and students and not simply as a budgetary-based approach.

We also must continue to pressure Government not only to allocate teachers based solely on numbers, but to also consider class size and composition in the allocation model. Without considering this, our classrooms will not be adequately resourced for inclusive education.

As well, we must further cooperate with outside agencies such as the Autism Society and the Mental Health Association to use their influence and expertise to advocate for required resources to allow the inclusion practice to work to its full potential.

### Kelly Loch

We need to show examples of situations where providing teaching units is an absolute necessity to our students. Inclusion practices need to identify students who need one-on-one or small group instruction to cope with their exceptionality in order to get the best education possible. We need to stress the rights of classroom students to receive an education in a safe and

caring environment. Inclusion isn't about keeping all students in the classroom at all times, no matter what their behavior. Teachers need clear guidelines as to how to deal with certain circumstances when they arise in their classroom. We need to review the Criteria Units Model we had in the past and explore how we can incorporate this type of model within the scope of the inclusionary model. Mandatory PD for all teachers is needed when there is a change that will affect all teachers and students.

### **Donna Reddick**

Inclusion – *Inside the Classroom* gave the public an opportunity to hear the reality of today's classrooms, and it also provided a catalyst upon which further discussions must take place. We need to continue to lobby for more resources and inservice for our teachers. However, resources by themselves are not going to fix the situation. We need more training for our preservice teachers so they are better equipped to handle the demands of the class. There must be a recognition that we are being asked to work outside our scope of practice when we are dealing with needs that should be dealt with by other professionals. Therefore, we need to lobby for a multifaceted approach involving all agencies on a consistent basis. Education is a basic human right. The organization UNICEF recognizes the provision of a "good quality education" system as a basic standard that all children are entitled to.

### **Gabriel Ryan**

On November 10th, 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation in their battle to get more teachers back in the system. This means 2100+ new hires for September 2017. The situation in NL is analogous to that of BC. We *know* we lack the necessary human resources to effectively deliver curricula in an inclusive classroom setting. Inclusion in NL schools relates more to the physical presence of students with diverse needs than to the resources available to help them reach their educational zenith. NLTA has been sounding the same alarm as our BC counterparts. NLTA must continue to liaise with Educational Psychologists, Guidance Counselors, various specialists, teachers and administrators and the public at large to lobby Government to properly resource inclusive classrooms. *All* students, regardless of programming needs, deserve the opportunity to succeed. That truism should inform all future lobbying efforts.

### **Joseph Santos**

The biggest problem with our current inclusionary model is that we don't actually have a needs-based approach but a budget-based approach. The NLTA therefore, has to advocate for greater resources that are actually needs based. Perhaps a different formula for how teacher allocation can be determined. Instead of a numbers-based formula, it should be calculated with the needs of the students in mind. The needs of the student should also be taken into account when calculating the number of students in a classroom. Perhaps a mathematical formula can be used to determine the maximum size for a classroom based on the needs within the classroom. Therefore, a classroom with a larger number of students with specific needs would have a smaller total number of students in the classroom.

### **Colin Short**

The inclusion model has always been a great idea in theory, but I feel that it has never experienced widespread success because it has never been properly resourced with human resources – both classroom and IRTs.

The NLTA has supported it and we were even able to negotiate a joint committee to address our concerns. Unfortunately, their report was never completed and we now find ourselves in grievance. The NLTA must continue to use every avenue to push for additional human resources to support inclusion. This should be done during regular meetings with school board and Department of Education officials.

The current formula for Instructional Resource Teachers does not work, as students with more complex exceptionalities are filling our classrooms and require specific supports. This must continue to be a collective bargaining issue.

### **Sean Weir**

First of all, I have to say that I do support the philosophy of inclusive education. However, with that being said, I cannot say that I support the inclusive practices that are being utilized in many of our schools as they currently exist. From diagnosis to delivery of services for students, there is, presently, a myriad of problems within our system. To be frank, our system is broken, and teachers are left trying to hold it together. I feel that the *Inside the Classroom* series was a very good start as it certainly highlighted the problems teachers face on a daily basis to the general public. I think that continuing to raise public awareness is the key, whether that be through public rallies, the media, or public speaking engagements by our president.

### **Chesley West**

Inclusion, though a single word, carries interpretations as diverse as the students we teach. Not long ago, models of multi-intelligences and diverse learning were noted as key to reaching more students. For me, this model holds great validity because we all recognize that we learn differently, relative to our environment and the subject matter in front of us. In my view, the inclusion model quite often goes against the diversity model as it is applied as a "one size fits all" but, in practice, those students' needs are even more diverse and require a broader range of supports and paths to success that respond to those needs. I think the NLTA should approach inclusion in this manner. To focus on the fact that diversity of learning and inclusion must be given equal value and resource them as such.

### 3. Do you believe there is a problem with membership engagement within the NLTA and, if so, under your leadership how would you encourage and/or promote membership engagement?

#### William Chaisson

I am not sure if there is as large an issue with membership engagement as we sometimes believe. Instead, I believe we need to clearly define what engagement looks like in 2017. In short, we need to peel back the layers of engagement and realize that engagement does not mean the same thing for every member. For some, it may mean reading an article, attending a meeting, running for office or SIC involvement. We need to first determine if members are satisfied with their level of engagement by asking them. If the answer is negative, I suggest two things. First, actively ask others to participate in the process. Second, I have advocated for a series of town halls and I would like to see town halls held by the president and executive on the topic of membership engagement if it is an issue.

#### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

Membership engagement is individual and different for each and every one of us. I believe that with the ever-increasing capabilities of technology that teachers are engaged at different levels depending on their job description, location and level of interest. Direct communication with teachers has afforded us the ability to act, react and gather support very quickly. This was evident when the call was made to contact the Minister of Finance, submissions to the Panel on Education, various surveys and the Premier's Task Force. Teachers responded and made their voices heard! Teachers also want to have face-to-face contact but are finding it increasingly difficult to do so with the daily demands placed upon them. We need to continue to seek ways to incorporate membership engagement into the workday. Promoting and planning fun activities for members and their families can also have a positive effect on membership engagement.

#### Derek Drover

Whether it be demonstrating at Confederation building, appearing at NLTA town hall meetings, lobbying government members via e-mails and letter campaigns, participating in panel discussions and focus groups, we have stood proudly together with one loud voice of solidarity. We must continue to be progressive and innovative, building on our membership engagement action plan and *Teachers Change Lives* campaign. We must always engage in a process of self-reflection and assessment by asking the membership directly, on a regular basis, for feedback on the efficacy of our programs and services to identify areas for improvement and to enhance awareness of available programs and services. Furthering our collaboration and communication with our Branches and Special Interest Councils will provide invaluable expertise, advocacy, awareness, and engagement as we move forward through some turbulent times. Reaching out to fellow teacher organizations across the country to identify best membership engagement practices is also an option.

#### Kevin Flynn

Membership engagement remains a concern. Many teachers feel overwhelmed with the daily demands of teaching to become involved with Association activities. However, when teachers see the need to become involved, membership engagement has shown improvement. There have been occasions where membership engagement was quite evident such as: 93% of teachers who voted to ratify the last Collective Agreement and a number of teachers who submitted a letter to their local MHA to replace the current Education Minister. Under my leadership, the Association must continue to look for opportunities to encourage members to take an active role in the decisions that directly affect them. This can be implemented by the Provincial Executive to provide clear and consistent communication to and from the membership. The Association can only speak for members when specific needs and desires are identified by the membership. This communication will help solve members' issues and strengthen membership engagement.

#### Craig Hicks

The strength of our Association depends on teacher involvement. It goes without saying that Teacher Engagement is a concern to the NLTA. In 2016, a standing committee was formed to address Membership Engagement and promote the NLTA and its benefits to the membership. No doubt, the busy lives and family schedules affect Branch meetings attendance. The NLTA App, Facebook and Twitter accounts are the alternative that many may be using to communicate and receive Association information. The 2017 Convention Bulletin indicates a combination of nine Branches and SICs will not be represented at this BGM. I feel that the lack of attendance at BGMs is becoming a trend. To ensure future BGMs are fully attended and successful we need to revisit and explore options such as dates and the agenda of Convention. As a member of the 2017-2019 Provincial Executive I would welcome input from teachers regarding membership engagement.

#### Jamie Jenkins

I believe there is an issue with teacher engagement. Firstly, we need to consult with teachers as to what they want and need from the Association. Also, the NLTA should more extensively promote the programs and services and engagement opportunities that are currently available for teachers.

One of the most common reasons you hear from teachers as to why they do not become involved is "there is not enough time" or "I'm too busy". Perhaps to alleviate these concerns we should seek, through collective bargaining, additional release time for teachers conducting NLTA business.

Lastly, we could also seek additional release time for branch executives to personally visit their schools. This personal contact will promote the NLTA and hopefully translate into more teacher engagement.

## Kelly Loch

We need to develop an email list and send all information directly to our membership, rather than relying on third party relaying information. This would make teachers feel like they are an important part of the process rather than passive receivers of information once decisions are made. Teachers are engaged with each other on a daily basis regarding a multitude of issues. Membership engagement within the Association happens when there is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed with the voice of all teachers in this province. Teachers will engage in supporting a cause when asked to by our Association. We have seen this in the past and will continue to see this in the future. We support each other through our Association by our interactions with colleagues. When teachers can get together for a social and talk issues, we start to feel as one – united.

## Donna Reddick

There are many levels of engagement, i.e., reading an article in *The Bulletin*, Branch involvement or attending CONTACT. The NLTA has identified membership engagement as an ongoing priority. Many initiatives are currently taking place, i.e., improvements to the website and the *Teachers Change Lives* campaign. I believe that social media plays a powerful role in connecting with our membership, particularly our young teachers. This is an area in which we must continue to improve. Furthermore, I maintain that if you want to engage someone, then approach them and have a conversation – personal connections are important! I also believe that the NLTA should continue to offer quality PD sessions to schools on a variety of topics as we attempt to make the Association more relevant to the daily lives of teachers.

## Gabriel Ryan

I agree that membership engagement within NLTA has been an important and recurring topic of discussion during my 10 years on Provincial Executive Council. It has been the focal point of many conversations around the Executive table as well as many Joint Councils. However, around those same tables, we have heard of teacher burn-out, unreasonable expectations from overwhelming workloads and increased demands in delivering multi-layered curricula to “inclusive” classrooms with diverse needs. Notwithstanding, as an Executive member, I continue to encourage teachers, when possible, to become involved in our NLTA. In fact, many delegates and funded alternates to BGM 2017 are participating due to encouragement from others, including myself. Recently, when called upon to be vocal in our support of our NLTA, teachers answered the call. So, if we learn to say “NO” and nod our heads less, we will have more time to be engaged in our Association.

## Joseph Santos

I believe there is a problem with membership engagement. The major problem simply is that a large majority of our members do not actually know what our Association does for them. That is not to say that the NLTA does not promote what they do. It has more to do with teachers feeling that becoming more involved in their membership would be another extra that they would have to do. I also know that any member that has attended meetings comes away with a different appreciation of the NLTA. Engaging

younger teachers in NLTA sponsored events and professional development would help with membership engagement. Holding an event, similar to a job fair or convention, where all teachers could be invited to participate and learn more about what the NLTA has to offer, could be a possibility. This could be held on a weekend or perhaps a board close out day.

## Colin Short

I believe that we have made great strides in the past two years to increase the profile of and participation in the Association; however, membership engagement continues to be an issue. There are 49 active branches and we have three new SICs. The rallies to promote public education, the Panel on the Status of Public Education and CBC's *Inside the Classroom* have all been well-received by members.

We must continue to do more. There are standing and ad hoc committees established and chaired by executive members. Currently, there is a 90 km rule for teachers to participate in these committees. This should be changed, as we sometimes have areas of the province without executive representation, and consequently teachers in these areas may not have the opportunity to participate.

I would also promote NLTA awards as the number of nominees for these prestigious recognitions have decreased in recent years.

## Sean Weir

At one time, I did feel that there was a problem with membership engagement due to low turnouts at some NLTA functions that I attended. However, teacher participation in the *Inside the Classroom* series, teacher submissions to both the President's Panel on Education and the Premier's Task Force, and the tremendous participation in various letter writing campaigns to provincial MHAs over the last few years would certainly indicate otherwise. In hindsight, I think that low turnout at NLTA functions, like branch meetings, may speak to the fact that teachers are trying to protect their personal time which has been eroded over the last decade due to workload issues. At my last branch meeting, those in attendance felt that it may be time to explore using technology, like Polycom or Skype, to conduct branch business during the work week instead of on the weekend when people need time to relax.

## Chesley West

Currently, I do feel that there is some issue with membership engagement though, over the past couple of years, through working with the Membership Engagement Committee, I have witnessed a strongly-renewed interest in the NLTA from members. I believe the key to membership engagement is through offering more opportunities for teachers to get together to share their challenges and success and support each other as they do. We do this effectively in Town Halls, General Meetings, and Joint Council but I think we can go deeper by creating opportunities for all School Reps to get together (perhaps annually) to speak directly with the NLTA staff and Executive about what they are experiencing in their schools. Not to disregard the strength of our existing communication chain, but teachers want to be heard directly. They prefer they tell their story, themselves. We should work to give them a place to do so.

#### 4. Given that bullying and violence towards teachers is occurring frequently in some of our schools, what would be the role of the NLTA, under your leadership, in addressing this issue?

##### **William Chaisson**

We need to empower teachers to speak and tell their stories in an honest and accurate account of what is happening. Teachers must be more willing to report to the NLTA, through the website, such abuse and we need to continue to inform teachers of their rights. NLTA staff does a great job, when invited to do so, on informing teachers of their rights around this issue. In addition, teachers must also be willing to exercise those rights without fear. It is frustrating to hear teachers say they have felt threatened yet they have done nothing about it. If the present situation is going to change, teachers must be willing and able to speak out.

##### **Maureen Doyle-Gillingham**

When this type of behavior is occurring in schools, teachers need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities, where they can seek advice, assistance and counselling. The NLTA needs to ensure this is communicated effectively to members. It is paramount that all members are aware of what the teacher's responsibility and what the NLTA's role is when dealing with these situations. Working collaboratively with NLESD would also be in the best interest of all concerned.

The issue of bullying and violence against teachers should not be tolerated. We need to advocate for a stronger approach when dealing with bullies in general. It is in school that we may have the greatest potential for societal changes. Communicate that violence/bullying is not acceptable and it does have consequences. Educate the public with a campaign with posters and such informing that abuse, physical, verbal or otherwise, of employees will not be tolerated!

##### **Derek Drover**

Any bullying and violence directed at teachers is absolutely unacceptable! The safety and wellness of teachers is of paramount importance to effective teaching and learning. We must ensure teachers' rights to a safe working environment under Article 29.06 and Article 58 of the provincial collective agreement are upheld. Furthermore, the provincial safe and caring schools policy states that "all members of the school community are responsible for the positive culture of the school" (p. 4), including parents and students. Thus, an obligation exists to hold parents and students accountable. Addressing any form of school-based bullying and violent behaviour is a shared societal responsibility and raising such awareness is essential. The Association must ensure teachers are fully aware of and supported in exercising their rights via the appropriate policy and legal recourse, including OH&S legislation.

##### **Kevin Flynn**

Bullying and violence within the classroom is a growing concern in both urban and rural areas. This sad reality is partly due to the attack on critical resources within schools. With the recent cut in teacher allocations, teachers are being faced with overcrowded classrooms. Continually, teachers are expected

to do more with less, which is a recipe for disaster for all educational stakeholders. In my opinion, the incoming Provincial Executive need to continue to lobby government to reverse the teaching cuts that took place last year to accommodate full day kindergarten. As well, it is important that the Association continue to encourage members to reach out to services offered such as the EAP Program, when the need arises. Under my leadership, I will continue to advocate these services to teachers and to remind the membership that support is available when a concern such as bullying or violence is identified.

##### **Craig Hicks**

Teachers have the right to be protected from violence and harassment in their work environment. Educators should not have to tolerate actions that threaten their well-being or ability to teach. The NLTA has created a Violent Incident Tracking Form to gather information which may be used during collective bargaining. Article 58 supports a work environment that is free from harassment and to ensure that individuals who do put teacher's safety in jeopardy are dealt with in the appropriate manner. I feel that the NLTA must continue to strongly communicate to the employer that any violence toward teachers will not be tolerated as it is not only affecting the teachers, but will also have an impact on students. Our Association must continue to make the membership aware of the importance to report incidents of harassment. As a member of Provincial Executive I will address this issue at every appropriate opportunity.

##### **Jamie Jenkins**

It is clear that teacher and student stress are linked. As stress levels increase we are seeing more violence against teachers. We need to further advocate on behalf of teachers to the District and Government. We, along with the public and outside agencies, need to push for adequate resourcing, changes to the teacher allocation model, and to consider class diversity. If changes are made, it may alleviate conditions that are currently leading students to act aggressively against teachers.

In the last round of collective bargaining we were able to negotiate improvements, starting with a survey of teachers and a policy on violence. We need to continue to negotiate further improvements.

Most importantly, we need to encourage and support teachers to act on their own behalf. As we empower teachers to speak against issues of behavior and violence, changes will have to be made to ensure safety of teachers and students.

##### **Kelly Loch**

Teachers deserve to have a safe and secure working environment. Teachers cannot be silent anymore. We need to work to ensure that proper protocols are put in place to protect our teachers. We do not know the full picture of bullying and violence towards teachers. We need to encourage and support our colleagues to come forward and tell their stories to our Association and the



employer. We need to survey students and teachers in order to get a true picture as to what types of bullying and violence we are being exposed to. Mandatory professional development should be a requirement for all teachers to learn about strategies in order deal with bullying and violence towards teachers. We also need to educate individuals in our community as to what kind of behaviors are acceptable and what is not acceptable.

### Donna Reddick

According to the Department of Education's Safe and Caring Schools document, "Bullying is typically repeated behaviour that is intended to cause harm to another person(s). A person participates in bullying if he or she directly carries out, assists or encourages the behaviour in any way." The Forum "Inside the Classroom" highlighted some of the concerns re bullying and workplace violence that a number of our colleagues are experiencing. With this in mind, I contend that it is more important than ever to continue to build a culture of respect and acceptance. All teachers should complete violence tracking forms so that incidences can be documented and used as evidence to rally for additional resources. As Chair of the Equity Issues Committee, we are mandated to advise the Executive on areas of equity which affect the teaching profession. I will continue to be a strong advocate, standing up for the rights of others.

### Gabriel Ryan

One of the most frustrating phrases directed towards teachers is "What can *you* do...?" Finish that question as you see fit because those four words can introduce a myriad of expectations placed upon us. Yes, we are professionals. Yes, we are responsible. Yes, we care. But, as I think back to my youth and the respect teachers were shown, even when kids occasionally misbehaved, compared to our reality today, I wonder how we got to this point. Many teachers are harassed and bullied, physically and psychologically, and many of those who choose to abuse do so on social media as well. The CBC's "In The Classroom" series shone a light on this problem and now we must continue to stand for each other to address the emotional fallout of abuse. I would love to work on any NLTA committee that lobbies NLESD and Government to help eradicate teacher abuse.

### Joseph Santos

Bullying and violence is definitely a problem in our system. Teachers need to be aware of their rights under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Teachers are afforded protection under the *Act*. However, teachers are in a unique situation whereby they cannot just walk out of a classroom and leave the student(s) unattended. Teachers have to be more proactive when it comes to violence and bullying. I believe a public awareness campaign should be launched by the NLTA to help combat the violence that students, teachers, and parents are subjected to. We also need to inform people of their rights to refuse unsafe work. Parents of students who are being violent or bullying must also be held accountable. Teachers need to stand up for their rights and education on these rights is the key.

### Colin Short

Bullying and violence towards teachers have increased in some schools. NLTA must continue to support and advocate for members in these instances. Our members must be made aware of their rights of refusal to work in unsafe or threatening situations. Some of these instances are cyber in nature and once again, our members must be educated around use of social media and the types of situations that may leave exposed and what they can do to prevent and protect themselves.

Some violent behaviors occur because inadequate human resources have been deployed to schools to serve the needs of all students. NLTA must continue to lobby and press for additional classroom, IRT, counselling, administrative and student assistant units. If there are gaps in the system, teachers are always called upon to fill them.

Teacher welfare is one of the pillars of our existence and we must keep our members safe.

### Sean Weir

Having gone through a violent situation with a student myself a couple of years ago, I would like to see the NLTA adopt a "zero tolerance" position on this issue. Somehow, over the last decade, punching, hair-pulling, biting, kicking, and spitting by students have become behaviours that teachers must tolerate as part of the workplace. I feel that this is wrong. I think that the time has come that our employer must realize that our members are not self-defence experts and these negative behaviours should have serious consequences just as they would if our members were the ones perpetrating the violence. I think that this is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately and the NLTA should work with the employer to develop protocols (not just OH&S protocols) that must be followed to prevent violent incidents in our schools and support our members once a violent incident has occurred.

### Chesley West

Addressing bullying and violence requires a number of key elements. First, I would ensure teachers understand their rights under their contract and the Criminal Code, and all other related policy. Regardless of their position, teachers need to be assured that dealing with bullying and violence is not part of their job description. Furthermore, I would ensure they understood that working in an environment of violence or abuse would only diminish their ability to be effective educators in meeting student needs as they should. Secondly, I would do everything possible to assure teachers they would be solidly supported by the NLTA when reporting incidents and seeking to be protected going forward. Finally, I would encourage teachers to look to examples of colleagues who have worked and lived through similar events and had the courage to say "no more" and for colleagues to support each other in creating a safe work environment.

## 5. In order of priority, identify the top five issues you would wish to address if elected.

### William Chaisson

1. Workload remains a huge issue for teachers. The demands of teaching continue to increase and teachers are the ones who are making the system work.
2. Teacher wellbeing has come to the forefront in recent years. Stress brought on by increasing demands is taking a toll on both our mental and physical health.
3. Inclusionary education which is not properly resourced and is owned solely by the education system is creating major challenges for teachers.
4. Protecting and building our contract in a time of cutbacks is going to be an issue.
5. Respect for all unionized employees. We are seeing an attack on unions in this province as if we are somehow responsible for all the woes of Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition, there seems to be a lack of respect for the bargaining process.

### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

If elected to the NLTA Provincial Executive, the top five issues that I would like to have addressed are: (1) Teacher Health/Safety; (2) Allocation of Resources/Workload; (3) 21st Century Learning; (4) Collective Agreement; and (5) the Inclusive Education Model.

### Derek Drover

Teacher stress/health/safety and wellness; Workload; Inclusive education resourcing; Class size and composition/multi-grading/combined grades; Membership engagement and awareness.

### Kevin Flynn

The next two years will be a challenge for the new Provincial Executive who will need to face several priorities on behalf of the membership. If elected to the Provincial Executive, the top five issues that I would like addressed are:

1. retention of current benefits within the next Collective Agreement
2. workload
3. mental health of teachers
4. inclusion
5. class size and composition

It is very difficult to narrow down the issues within education to simply five priorities. With that being said, each of the above identified issues cannot be separated from the other. All five of these priorities currently influence the delivery and quality of education. Under my leadership, a message that I will clearly convey to government is that education is an investment, not an expense.

### Craig Hicks

I feel strongly about mental health and the well-being of teachers and will continue to take a proactive stance to ensure teachers are knowledgeable and protected against harassment in the workplace.

Workload is a priority that must be pursued by our Association. It is paramount that every teacher knows their core duties and has a reasonable equitable job assignment that can be accomplished during the instructional day.

I will continue to promote an informed membership that is engaged in the activities of the NLTA.

I will continue to support the efforts of the NLTA to lobby for the necessary human resources required to ensure that the inclusion model in our schools is practical and meets student needs.

I am dedicated to continuing and expanding on projects (i.e. *Teachers Change Lives Campaign*) that create a positive atmosphere around teachers and promote the importance of education to the viability of our Province.

### Jamie Jenkins

The top priority I see is to protect and strengthen our contract during negotiations. Changes to our agreement can help teachers gain control over their work and personal life.

The next three priorities: Workload; Health and Wellness; and Work/Life Balance, are all closely related to each other and collective bargaining. Teachers are inundated with additional work while getting no time to complete it. We need to take a firm stance on workload issues and seek relief from the ever-increasing workload. The pressure felt by teachers is leading to health and wellness issues. This is clearly demonstrated in the use of our LTD and EAP plans. We also need to ensure that teachers are informed of their rights and what services are available to them.

Lastly, we need to look at teacher engagement. We need to find ways to involve teachers in the NLTA from the start of their career.

### Kelly Loch

Priority #1 – The need for the Inclusion Model to be adapted to include teaching unit resources in order to meet the individual needs of our students. We need to evaluate our students and effectively meet their needs! The children need the proper teacher resources in order to succeed to their full capacity.

Priority #2 – Teacher workload. Having the necessary teaching unit resources will lessen the teacher workload of the regular classroom teacher.

Priority #3 – Oversize population. We need support from parents to help show that overpopulated classrooms are detrimental to the overall learning environment for our students.

Priority #4 – The necessity to end bullying and violence towards teachers. We need to support our teachers who are in these situations.

Priority #5 – Teacher wellness and mental health. If all the above issues were addressed, teacher wellness and their mental health would be drastically improved.

### Donna Reddick

The mental wellness of our teachers is our top priority. Recent numbers indicate that between 46-54% of teachers accessed LTD services for mental health disorders; drastically higher than other professionals. Workload follows as a close second. A loss of units, increases in class size, and diversity of classroom composition have created additional stress on an overburdened system. Lack of supports makes Inclusion a monumental task. We need human resources to meet the needs of students in the

inclusionary classroom. Without these supports teachers feel frustrated and defeated. Protecting and building the contract is another important priority. We must stand firm against government in the wake of contract stripping and concessions. Incidents of Bullying/Violence in our schools are not to be underscored. Measures must be taken to safeguard students and teachers from unwarranted attacks which can have a lasting effect on our social, physical and emotional well being.

## Gabriel Ryan

My top five issues all relate to workload.

- Cuts! Education is an investment, not an expense. Give us enough teachers, including IRTs and other specialists.
- Inclusion. NLTA has been a supporter of inclusion from the very start. I support NLTA's position on inclusion, meaning when it is *properly resourced*.
- Class size and composition. Research shows that classes of 22+ students are much less effective teaching and learning environments than smaller classes. Irrefutable, especially in a poorly-resourced inclusive classroom.
- Duty. A waste of professional time. Junior and High School teachers do more than their fair share. Primary and Elementary teachers are on duty or in class most of the day. As David Dibbon reported, "It's about time!"
- Reporting/Meetings. The *Schools Act* requires that we report to parents/guardians on a regular basis. We report electronically 24/7. As for most meetings? Email works!

## Joseph Santos

1. Class sizes.
2. Teacher burnout.
3. Class makeup and ratio of students with exceptionalities compared to overall numbers in the classroom.
4. Teacher safety and security.
5. Making teachers aware that they are not alone, that they do not work in a bubble and that there is a great amount of support through our organisation, not only in times of crisis, but always.

## Colin Short

If I am re-elected, my top five issues to promote are:

1. Workload – all teachers, regardless of school or community should have fair and equitable duties, preparation time, and class size/composition.
2. Member welfare – too many are leaving the profession early, lacking sick leave time or off on LTD.
3. Inclusive education – it is time that this initiative be properly resourced.
4. Professional Development – sessions must be meaningful and timely.
5. Collective Agreement 2016-2020 – it is time to negotiate a fair and equitable agreement, not accept a legislated or dictated one.

## Sean Weir

If elected, the top five issues that I would like to address are:

- a) Teacher allocation formula (needs-based as opposed to numbers-based).
- b) Provision of sufficient, guaranteed preparation time for all teachers.
- c) The lack of sufficient administration time in many schools .
- d) Inclusive Education (more specifically, training, diagnosis/assessments, and human resources).
- e) Violence against teachers.

## Chesley West

1. Teacher safety and wellbeing: This should be the primary concern of every educator as it has a profound effect on teacher and student ability to succeed.
2. Working to deepen the engagement of all members of NLTA: Especially younger members. A strong succession plan at all levels is essential to our strength as an Association.
3. Ensuring the contract is adhered to: We have to protect ourselves from getting "ground down" by basic contract violations such as workload inequity, getting inadequate lunches, and being placed in harm's way.
4. Ongoing and pertinent PD: Simply, if we are to be lifelong teachers, we need to be given the opportunity to be lifelong learners. Our success is our students' success.
5. Ongoing program review: To be effective, programming, such as inclusion, should be developed, implemented and reviewed by teachers in the classroom to ensure it is current and meets intended goals.



2017