

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
T H E

bulletin

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Education Week 2006
Celebrate and Participate • Célébration et participation



Up Front from the President



Teaching requires passion and spirit. Those people who are gifted with these qualities very often choose teaching as a career. This enthusiasm for life and learning is what trickles into the classroom through the classroom teacher and, of course, even by osmosis, into the students in our charge. It probably frequently explains why many students, years after their school days are over, remember their teacher rather than the subject.

Maintaining this passion sometimes is a difficult task in the best of circumstances but as more and more demands are placed on teachers the more the enthusiasm gets whittled away. When teachers are required to find the time to develop and uncover additional resources, when they are required to daily prepare several lesson plans or program modifications plans to meet the diverse needs of each individual student, when they have to fund-raise for any number of items, when they volunteer to be responsible for innumerable extracurricular activities, when they are obliged to supervise children before and after school and during recess and lunch, when they are required to frequently meet with parents, attend Individual Student Support Plan meetings, when they must constantly prepare lessons after school hours, and prepare and correct hundreds of papers, tests and assignments, when they have to be conscious of the self-esteem of all students in their charge and deal with all the societal problems that can possibly exist while knowing that both students and parents know their rights and are prepared to exercise them in a heartbeat, when they are expected to assess properly, report and meet with parents and all this before they

even enter a classroom of 30 or 35 students or more for five hours each day, it should become apparent how difficult it can become to maintain the passion and spirit.

In fact many of our new teachers, upon realizing the demands placed upon them, are opting to move to other fields of employment where there is far less stress and much greater pay. This move away from teaching is not without its inherent sadness. Dr. Lynda Younghusband refers to it as the "loss of a dream".

I suspect you could ask any teacher and they will tell you the feedback is best when we see learning take place; when the light comes on. To do this job properly we have to be on top of our game. I frequently say that teachers have to be the healthiest of us all. And when the demands of the job become such that our health is jeopardized it is then that we require the support of all agencies to, as much as possible, create the conditions that would best enable learning to occur. This is the reason that I felt so devastated by the recent actions of the Eastern School District. It appears that instead of hearing the message, the decision was taken to silence the messenger.

There is also a certain freedom that is required to be a good teacher. This freedom should allow us to, according to the popular saying, "think outside the box". The threat of discipline affects us all in a way because it places a cloud over our collective heads and takes away the enthusiasm of wanting to make things better.

My wish for you is that you keep your enthusiasm and maintain the passion with which you entered this profession.

THE bulletin

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Features

- 8 Your Collective Agreement**
Evidence of Previous Incidents Inadmissible
by Stefanie Tuff
- 9 Your Collective Agreement**
Substitute Teachers Questions & Answers: School Closure and Salary Issues
by Perry Downey
- 10 Living Well**
Live Abundantly... While Managing Loss
by Claudette E.S. Coombs
- 12 Research**
Teacher Stress and Perceptions of Associated Loss
by Dr. Lynda Younghusband
- 14 In the Classroom**
Mondialogo Intercultural Dialogue and Exchange
by Keith Samuelson
- 17 Beginning Teachers**
Becoming
by Beverley Park
- 18 Viewpoint**
Nostalgia and Great Moments
by Beverley Park
- 19 Virtual Teacher Centre**
Why a Virtual Teacher Centre?
by Alex Hickey
- 20 For Your Information**
Bullying.org: A Learning Journey
by Bill Belsey
- 22 Money Matters**
Your RRSP: A Performance Evaluation
by Pat Hogan

Departments

<i>Up Front from the President</i>	2
<i>On Location News</i>	4
<i>In Memoriam</i>	7
<i>Calendar</i>	back cover



British Columbia Teachers Hardship FUND

(A Project of the Canadian Teachers' Federation)

The following letter of thanks was sent to Dr. Julius Buski, Secretary General of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) by a teacher in British Columbia who received money from the BC Teachers' Hardship Fund. The fund was set up by the CTF to provide financial relief to members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation during their illegal strike this past fall. Several schools and individual teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador contributed to the fund. This letter reflects the appreciation felt by the teachers in British Columbia.

Dear Julius,

I can't tell you how much the \$500 fund meant to my family – especially when an unexpected event happens. In spite of the financial hardship, I'm proud I took a stand out of conviction against an unjust "law" imposed by the Campbell Government. My children, Grade 6 and Grade 8, also participated in the job action and asked a lot of questions. My wife was in tears when I told her of your generous donation as this has never happened to us before! Some bills are paid etc. and there's extra for food etc. Once again, I'm eternally grateful. God bless. In solidarity,

Ella Manuel Award • Ella Manuel Award

Attn: Principals and Guidance Counsellors The Ella Manuel Award for 2006

The Ella Manuel Award will be presented in 2006 to assist a young woman in this province to pursue a professional career requiring post-secondary education in science, engineering, environmental studies or medicine. **One award of \$1,500** will be made in memory of Ella Manuel, Newfoundland writer, broadcaster, feminist, and peace activist.

Applicants expecting to graduate this year from Newfoundland and Labrador schools are asked to submit through their school principal, a two-page description of their interests, ambitions and plans for further studies. This must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from the principal, including a school phone number in case additional information should be required. The principal's letter should describe the applicant's academic record, financial need and general qualifications, such as leadership capacity, and interest in the fields covered by the award. Copies of the transcripts of marks for Grade 10, 11 and 12 are also required. Only one application from each school will be accepted. Preference will be given to applicants from rural areas.

Completed applications must be received by **April 1, 2006**, by:
Professional Development Division,
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association,
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL
NEWS

ST. LAWRENCE

School promotes literacy program

Staff at St. Lawrence Academy, in the community of St. Lawrence on the Burin Peninsula, are promoting a literacy program with their students. A school parade was organized to launch the program earlier this year. Led by a police car and the School Cadet Corps, students, teachers and the principal marched, all wearing their train engineer hats. "All Aboard for Reading Across Canada" encourages students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 to read, logging their titles for credits.

Teachers commend their students for their participation and when the necessary credits are submitted, students add a train car to the school reading train. When they have two train cars, the students are invited to take part in a special activity determined by the administration and K-6 staff. The train departed from Nunavut and is travelling across Canada with progress being recorded on an outlined wall map. Each area of our country is colored in as train cars are added to the train. As well, when a train whistle blows each morning over the school speaker system everyone stops to read.



Students and staff at St. Lawrence Academy wear engineer hats during their "All Aboard for Reading Across Canada" program.

The cooperation of students, parents and teachers ensures that a program such as this is successful. "Judging by the length of the train winding around the corridors of St. Lawrence Academy, the program

is working VERY well," said Laura Pike, a primary teacher at St. Lawrence Academy. "When all parties are ABOARD, we will continue to read and succeed."

The staff at St. Lawrence Academy would also like to send a special thank you to their friends at Tricentia Academy in Arnold's Cove for helping their students "take reading to new places".

LEWISPORTE

Workshops for parents a great success

Two very successful workshops for parents were held recently at Lewisporte Academy. On October 27, KinderStart parents attended a workshop conducted by Flo Cahill Bursey, Curriculum Support Teacher, on how children learn to read and how parents can support early literacy practices. There was a demonstration on how to read with your child.

To celebrate Canadian Book Week the Grade 1 students came to school on November 4 with flashlights and dressed in pajamas prepared for a reading pajama party to be held that afternoon. While the children were engaged in various reading activities in their classrooms – peer reading, read-a-louds, and reading by flashlight – the parents attended a workshop in the school library on how children learn to read and what parents can do to support their children.



Parents attend workshop at Lewisporte Academy.

At the end of the workshop each child was presented with a book donated by the TD Group through the Children's Book Center of Canada. The parents and children then proceeded to the gym where mats were laid out on the floor. Parents and children sat on the mats and a large "Read In" was held for about 20 minutes with parents reading to the children. With the support of the Grade One teachers this workshop was conducted by the curriculum support teacher.



Students at Lewisporte Academy take part in a reading pajama party to celebrate Canada Book Week.

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR

Exploits Valley Branch scholarship winner announced

Andrew Blanchard of Grand Falls-Windsor has been awarded the 2004-05 Exploits Valley NLTA Branch Scholarship. It is an annual award of \$500 awarded to the Level III student with the highest overall academic average in the branch. The recipient has to be a son or daughter of an Exploits Valley NLTA member. The award money is collected (voluntarily) from teachers in the branch. Andrew is the son of Gerald Blanchard, Vice-Principal of Exploits Valley High.



l-r: Ford Butler, Chairperson, Scholarship Selection Committee, Scholarship winner Andrew Blanchard, Rick Duffy, President, Exploits Valley Branch.

CANADA

Become a member of the CCGE

Become a member of the Canadian Council for Geographic Education (CCGE) by filling out the application form on their website at www.ccgge.org/ccge/english/whoWeAre/join_us.asp. If you provide an email address you will be automatically signed up to GeoSources, the CCGE members electronic newsletter, once your membership application has been approved.

By becoming a member you will receive the CCGE newsletter and useful teaching resource materials, find out about professional development opportunities in your region, learn about programs and resources that could be used in your classroom, and have access to the CCGE Internet listserve to keep up-to-date and informed. Join today. Membership in the CCGE is free.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR-QUEBEC

Students embark on six-month exchange program

On January 14, 2006, nine high school students left for Quebec to spend 12 weeks living with francophone families and attending Quebec high schools. St. Kevin's High School (Goulds), Marystown Central High School, Elwood High School (Deer Lake), and Exploits Valley High (Grand Falls), all have students participating in the Newfoundland and Labrador-Quebec Six-Month Exchange Program during the 2005-06 school year.

During the next three months, the NL students are participating in the second phase of this six-month exchange program as they live and attend school, experience francophone culture and improve their French second language skills in areas of Quebec such as Thetford Mines, Lac Mégantic, LaMalbaie, and Sherbrooke. On December 3, 2005, their francophone twins returned to Quebec after a very rewarding three months in Newfoundland living with their host families, experiencing our culture and improving their English language skills.

The Department of Education is in the third year of this reciprocal exchange program with the Department of Education in Quebec. In 2003-04, seven students from communities on the Burin Peninsula were the first to participate in this exciting program. The following year, two students from Dunne Memorial Academy in St. Mary's had

the opportunity to participate. The Department of Education is keenly interested in the expansion of this opportunity in all school districts.

Francophone students from Quebec live with families in Newfoundland and Labrador for three months during the fall and attend school. Similarly, from January to April, Anglophone students from our province live with their Quebec families and attend a francophone high school. The host families adopt the exchange students for the three-month period, thus the costs associated with this program are assured by the reciprocity of the exchange. The Department of Education pays for the return travel of each participant to Quebec. Recognizing that homesickness and cultural differences may create initial concerns, the Department of Education makes an effort to ensure that students feel comfortable in their new family and school environment. The Department of Education arranges for a chaperone to accompany students to and from Quebec as well as organizes a mid-exchange visit.

This experience offers a unique opportunity for students in our province to improve their French language skills and learn about the French Canadian culture. It also offers them the opportunity to experience a new school system. Careful preparation is important as plans are put in place to enable students to spend three months away. School administrations, teacher liaisons and participating families work with the students to ensure that their experience is both successful and rewarding.

Planning each student's academic program is integral to success and begins once they are accepted for the exchange program during the spring of their Level I year. Administrators, teachers, guidance personnel, and the liaison teacher work with students to ensure their academic progress. Timetabling arrangements may be necessary. Advanced preparation helps ensure that students do not have to do make-up assignments after their return home. While in Quebec, they will have a full program in the Quebec school. Time in Quebec is devoted to participation and involvement in their francophone families, schools, and communities. The academic program in Quebec is chosen to maximize student success in this exchange program. Past experience shows that with careful planning and school support, students committed to this exchange program progress normally through Level II.

The Newfoundland and Labrador-Quebec Six-Month Exchange Program is open to French Immersion and Core French high school students who wish to participate in their Level II year. Information packages and applications for this exchange program are available from the Department of Education, P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6.

ANNA C. MATCHIM, 1946 – 2005



I am the husband of a teacher and not a teacher myself. I can only guess about the details of the teaching profession, but I know first hand how teachers care about making a difference to their students and how hard that task can be at times. It requires dedication, hard work and caring. I can safely say that Anna, my wife of 37 years, had all of these attributes and more. She loved her work.

Anna graduated in the late 1960s and went to work using her Elementary Procedures training at Holy Cross School in St. John's. From there she taught at St. Kevin's in the Goulds until we met and were married in 1968. We left the province as a young couple and Anna began teaching at Robert Service School in Dawson, Yukon Territory. We had a great adventure in a place as far away from home as we could go and still be within the country. From there we transferred to Halifax where Anna taught at Herring Cove Elementary just outside the city.

We returned home in 1975 and it wasn't easy to find a teaching job at that time, and combined with the arrival of our son, Anna never taught full-time until much later. She worked hard with our family and with studies to upgrade her education, culminating in her earning a Master's Degree in Learning Resources. Anna substituted as well, mainly at Roncalli Elementary, St. Matthew's Elementary, and MacDonald Dr. Elementary in St. John's until she acquired a full-time position between St. Agnes in Pouch Cove and St. Francis in Outer Cove. This last position for her was one full-time position, two full-time jobs. She worked diligently day and night. Anna spent her remaining years at St. Francis, a school she loved for the children she influenced and in turn, influenced her, the people with whom she worked and the involvement and help she got from caring parents.

Our son, Stephen, and I miss our hard-working, professional and caring wife, mother and teacher. She made a difference.

(Submitted by Doug Matchim)

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For further information contact:
donnamills@gov.nl.ca

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Evidence of Previous Incidents Inadmissible

by STEFANIE TUFF

A recent arbitration decision has reaffirmed the importance and effect of the Collective Agreement provisions which require the removal and destruction of disciplinary records from teacher personal files after a certain period of time. In this case, a teacher's employment had been terminated by a school board due to a finding of gross misconduct related to inappropriate conduct with students. The teacher grieved the termination and the matter proceeded to arbitration. The termination was ultimately upheld but, during the arbitration, counsel for the School Board sought to introduce evidence regarding two incidents that occurred prior to the conduct which gave rise to the dismissal. The teacher was dismissed in December 2002 but the evidence sought to be introduced by the School Board related to incidents which occurred in 1994 and 1996 respectively. The only record of the 1994 incident was in a file kept at the school by the school principal. There was no record in the school board's current files regarding the 1996 incident.

Article 10 of the Collective Agreement addresses the issue of discipline. In particular, clause 10.04(a) reads as follows: *Any document which may at any time be used against a teacher in any case of suspension, dismissal or disciplinary action shall be removed from the personal file and destroyed after the expiration of two (2) years provided there has not been a recurrence of a similar incident during that time, in which case it shall be removed two (2) years after the recurrence.*

The School Board argued that the information regarding the 1994 and 1996 allegations could be admitted as 'similar fact evidence' and could be used to show the propensity of the grievor to behave in a certain way. It was also argued that evidence of a past record of similar conduct would be relevant to the issue of mitigation of penalty. In response, NLTA argued that the Collective Agreement provision requiring that prior disciplinary records be removed and destroyed should be given its proper effect, meaning that such prior information was not relevant to the current arbitration.

The arbitrator ruled that, when documents regarding a teacher's previous disciplinary record "... may not be admitted as the result of a collective agreement bar, the evidence of the underlying incident is also not admissible. To admit such evidence would defeat the purpose of the bar." The arbitrator also commented that, given the amount of time that had passed since the alleged incidents occurred, the prejudicial effect of admitting this evidence would outweigh its probative value. This reasoning was found to apply even when the evidence is sought to be used as "similar fact" evidence.

However, the arbitrator went on to find that, should the NLTA, in arguing for mitigation of penalty, present evidence to establish: that the grievor had a previously good disciplinary record; that the grievor's future prospects for good behaviour were good, or other mitigating factors; such testimony might have the effect of placing an issue before the Arbitration Board that was not raised by the school board in presenting its case. In this event, such a move by the NLTA would amount to a waiver of the time bar under the Collective Agreement. With such a waiver, the school board could then be permitted to call rebuttal evidence, including evidence that would ordinarily be subject to a time-bar limitation (i.e. evidence regarding the grievor's previous disciplinary incidents from 1994 and 1996).

The distinction between the admissibility of otherwise time-barred evidence (called as part of the school board's case for dismissal) and the admissibility of rebuttal evidence called in response to union evidence of good behaviour by the grievor (in addressing disciplinary penalty) is an important one. An overzealous argument in favour of mitigating a disciplinary penalty could inadvertently resurrect issues and incidents that would otherwise be irrelevant and inadmissible in the arbitration proceedings, thus negating the important protection provided by the time-bar provision in the Collective Agreement.

Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Substitute Teachers Questions & Answers

School Closure and Salary Issues

by PERRY DOWNEY



Q. Does a substitute teacher get paid if school is closed due to weather conditions, lack of heating, or any cause as specified in the Schools Act?

A. If a substitute teacher is contracted to work at a school on a particular day and that school is subsequently closed due to inclement weather, lack of heating, or other cause specified under Section 32 of the Schools Act, then the substitute has been “deemed to have kept school” and therefore **must** receive salary for that period of time. This requirement is effective whether or not the teacher received prior notification of the school closure before leaving for school or arriving at school.

The particular article of the Collective Agreement dealing with this issue is Article 49.04, and it distinguishes between situations when the school is closed for weather or any other cause (under Section 32 of the Schools Act), as compared to situations when the school remains open, but previously contracted substitute services are not required for some other reason.

“This requirement is effective whether or not the teacher received prior notification of the school closure before leaving for school or arriving at school.”

Article 49.04 (a) states that: *For salary purposes, substitute teachers shall be deemed to have kept school on any day or part thereof where the school is closed pursuant to Section 32 of the Schools Act, 1997.* That section of the Schools Act requires that a teacher in a school shall, for the purpose of determining payment of salary, be considered to have taught on a day or any part thereof when the school is closed for any of the reasons contained in that section. These reasons would include: inclement weather, by order of the Minister of Health for health reasons, school repairs, failure of the sewage system or other cause of a similar nature, lack of heat, etc. Thus, if school is closed,

under Section 32 and Article 49.04 (a), previously contracted substitute teachers are “deemed to have kept school” and must receive salary.

Q. When would a substitute not get paid?

A. **If the services of a substitute teacher are not required for reasons other than school closure under Section 32, and the teacher is notified before arriving at the school, then the substitute teacher doesn’t receive pay.** For example, if a substitute teacher was contracted to substitute for another teacher who would be attending a workshop, and the workshop was cancelled, the substitute teacher would not be paid for the day, provided prior notification (i.e. notification prior to reporting for duty) was given.

These latter situations are covered under Article 49.04 (b), which states that: *For salary purposes, substitute teachers shall be deemed to have kept school on any day or part thereof where previously contracted substitute services are not required for any other reason(s), and the substitute teacher is not notified prior to reporting for duty at the school that his or her services are not required.*

Additional information on this issue can be found in the NLTA Infosheet “Substitute Teacher Member and Benefits.” Inquiries on this matter should be directed to the Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Perry Downey is an Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services Division, at the NLTA.



Live Abundantly ... While Managing Loss

by CLAUDETTE E. S. COOMBS

Being alive! What an opportunity filled with endless possibilities! What potential it offers! We can go through life enjoying the blessings of sharing our time with family and friends, seeing the beauty in nature and experiencing the pleasures inherent to our world. We sometimes do this, being completely oblivious to the pain felt by others. We see the joy in life when we are not affected by earthquakes, accidents and cancer, but in a moment that can change. We become part of the community suffering the concomitant ill effects of being alive. Although it may seem so, the world has not changed significantly. However, from our perspective, our tiny segment of the world has changed drastically. Now we are faced with intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual challenges. We must devise a strategy to put the pieces of our world back together – actually long before we are able to plan for recovery, we must accept the loss and believe that we can survive in this new view of normal.

Defining Loss

Losses are cumulative and vary greatly in type and magnitude. In fact, loss has become such a normal part of our daily lives that we may not even recognize many of the losses we encounter. Whether we notice it or not, the collective force can eventually cause significant deterioration to the health of our spirits and our bodies. The impact causes the greatest disruption if the losses are prolonged and affect many aspects of our lives, especially to the stabilizing influences such as our *health, relationships* and *workplace*.

Any challenge to our *health* represents a widespread attack on our capacity to seek additional resources and to recover. We know from experience that if something interferes with our sleep for one night we are more agitated and less tolerant on the following day. If we are dealing with chronic or critical health issues, the impact increases exponentially. Our compromised capacity to negotiate everyday life means that we are less able to maintain balance in

relationships and work and are more susceptible to psychological stress.

A *relationship* challenge takes a different, and possibly more emotional path and may also affect physical health. Whether due to distance, death, divorce or emotional separation, the removal of a significant relationship from our network, will leave us with a gap that requires serious effort for recovery. Each relationship differs from another and often fills a complex assortment of roles. When we suffer from such loss, it is important for us to explore which of these needs is not being met and to identify how we can compensate for those consequent changes. These may be as tangible as companionship or as ambiguous as love, trust and dignity.

Workplace losses are reflected in our ever-changing role within the education system. The teaching climate, facility, location and the staff composition present venues which are vulnerable to change. Losing our job, our familiar position or our respect through mistreatment all have serious implications for the success of our continuous quest to achieve and maintain balance. Enduring verbal abuse by students and parents, insistent demands of an overburdened educational system and frequent changes in duties wreaks havoc with our sense of security. The resulting negative toll of uncertainty accumulates with dangerous potential, unless it is managed and remedied.

How can we prepare?

We can prepare ourselves for the inevitable losses that nature dictates and the losses which occur as a natural part of our life cycle or our environment. We can also prepare for situations which are highly probable, given our specific risk factors. However, there are other situations we cannot reasonably anticipate, therefore our preparation is more general.

Knowledge and understanding are the best tools for effectively handling loss. Knowledge gives us the ability, direction and instruments needed to find the resources for recovery. Understanding allows us

to accept a loss, feel and live through the pain and believe that eventually we will relinquish this hurt for the richness gained through the experience. Don't expect to "forget" the pain or ignore the loss. Not only is this unhealthy, but attempts will be unsuccessful! The pain will surface, maybe triggered by another loss or at a time when you are less able to face the difficulties.

Although we hear of disasters in other countries and feel compassion for those affected, when the loss is personal we are at greater risk of experiencing prolonged difficulty in adjusting to the change and overcoming the pain. Advance preparation and fine-tuning stress management techniques can benefit our healing, since any loss will present a level of stress. Being prepared for the unexpected means cultivating survival skills and maintaining a healthy lifestyle with adequate rest, nutrition, activity, recreation and social contact. We can regularly review our balance in life to ensure that we are in the healthiest state possible. When we recognize gaps, we can improve our condition before being called upon to test our strengths.

How can we manage loss and control its impact?

Damage control is a common strategic planning term when dealing with predictable external crises. If we think of our lives in the same terms we can plan for loss and minimize the impact. By preparing our bodies and minds for trauma we can prevent some of the harm that otherwise would have been caused. Consider the work of engineers in designing a bridge. They don't plan only for normal traffic flow and weather conditions. They calculate the structural challenges of exceptional conditions and build in the extra supports. Likewise, we develop skills and acquire resources to contend with daily stressors. Also, if we are faced with a major, visible loss we usually have access to a great deal of social support, even if it is short term. As friends and colleagues learn of our situation they rally to provide the necessities of daily management in emotional and practical ways. However, if the losses are gradual and almost imperceptible, we are not as likely to automatically receive the same level of encouragement, or if the loss is extreme the available support may seem insufficient. Despite preparation and access to support, we may find that our management process includes a period of time when we are unable to take on normal daily responsibilities. It is then that we must allow others to be part of our recovery. An important note to consider is the difference between individuals who recuperate from adversity and those who succumb to it. Although we each live through various losses in our lifetimes, we respond differently. Some situations

have a greater impact on our daily lives, routines and resources than others. However, we choose how we react. To achieve our maximum quality of life, given our personal limitations and circumstances, we must take mental control over the process. Rather than giving up control so that external events determine how we feel or what we do, we can choose to continue being and doing!

All around us we see and feel the resonance of loss. It is up to us to monitor that impact on our lives, collecting the necessary resources and initiating changes to avoid weighing down our spirits. We have so much to celebrate, so many blessings for which to be thankful ... even in the midst of loss and despair! If we choose not to enjoy life because loss and sadness exist, we lose not only what is beyond our control but we also unnecessarily lose the gifts within our reach.

Claudette Coombs is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Claudette Coombs (ext. 242) or Marie Wall (ext. 265).



Teacher Stress and Perceptions of Associated Loss

by DR. LYNDA YOUNGHUSBAND

A fairly extensive research base, spanning several decades, characterizes teaching as a high-stress occupation. During the past decade the major causes of teacher stress have been attributed to workload, the inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms, and behaviour problems. Recently, my own research, focusing on high school teachers here in Newfoundland and Labrador, supported these findings and further contributed to our understanding of the causes of stress in the workplace. Teachers in this study emphasized the importance of administrative and collegial support, the importance of effective communication, the necessity of adequate resources and professional development, and the need to recognize the excessive workload and the associated stress that teachers are feeling.

I asked each participant why he/she had chosen to become a teacher. The reasons were varied but all of them recalled being highly motivated to be a “good” teacher when they began their careers. However, school reorganization and consolidation in Newfoundland and Labrador has caused the incremental downloading of additional duties, unreasonable demands concerning inclusion and the Pathways initiative, and has frequently resulted in larger class sizes. Increasing behaviour problems and fears of violence were cited as a direct result of some of the changes and were perceived as a major source of stress. Changes, described as being developed far from the realities of the classroom and implemented without adequate supports and resources, were perceived by study participants as having contributed greatly to the stress levels of high school teachers.

Other than three who had taken stress leave, participants reported that they had not spoken to anyone about their stress levels for fear of being seen as “weak” or “unable to do the job.” After conducting many interviews in which these study participants discussed attempting to be an effective teacher in an environment where they felt unsupported, faced a shortage of resources, and feared speaking out about the stress they were experiencing, I was struck by the sense of loss that they were feeling.

Almost nothing has been noted regarding the link between teacher stress and the sense of loss experienced when teachers perceive that they have failed to reach the goals they set for themselves when they began their profession. I explored teacher participants feelings of loss associated with changes in the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador and associated stress. A spectrum of feelings from sadness and anger to depression and helplessness described their sense of loss.

The high level of stress felt by these teachers was perceived to have taken a toll on their lives and their sense of loss was referred to over and over. They related a loss of personal, family, and social time, a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence, a loss of health, and perhaps most strongly, the loss of their professional dreams. One teacher said that over the years she felt she had “missed out on a lot of things that I would loved to have done.” Others had similar feelings: “Just always, always, always on the run ... and feeling on edge and trying to fit everything in. Time wise, there is no time for one’s self and it’s just being pulled in all directions. There was no personal time, none whatsoever, none. The lack of personal time is phenomenal”; “In some ways I hate Sundays because if I haven’t done the work on Saturday I’ve got to think about preparing or getting (pause) spending an afternoon, even if it’s a nice afternoon, catching up on the work, preparation or correction, or whatever else ... The weekend is not my own.”

One of the major stressors identified was the lack of control teachers feel, a feeling of powerlessness. They reported feeling helpless to make the changes they saw necessary and helpless to stop the changes being imposed upon them, which they often felt were inappropriate. They felt accountable without any power and thus, frustrated, angry and depersonalized. This teacher described being made redundant and being moved to another school and her resulting feeling of loss of control over her life. “I had no control ... I felt that no matter how dedicated I was or how committed I was, things were completely out of my

hands; I had no say ... I was not involved with decisions that were being made about my life and that would affect my life and so that was very difficult, very difficult."

Most of the participants spoke about the loss of self-esteem and self-confidence they experienced. Some questioned whether they were good teachers and whether they should stay in the profession. In some cases it was a lack of training which contributed to the loss of confidence, in others it was a perception that the necessary administrative support was not there.

"In my first year of teaching about a third or half the class were behavioural problems, really severe. Some of them had learning disabilities and I had not trained in anything like that. I never got any information on it, in fact ... I knew I should be doing more but not having the skills or ways or time to find out. It was very stressful." Another participant said, "I like doing a good job ... However, I get the feeling that maybe I am doing, I feel a disquieting feeling that maybe I am doing a half-assed job, you know. Teachers, I think we doubt ourselves quite a bit ... there is always that sense of insecurity or self-doubt or self-deprecation."

One teacher, who had been off on stress leave, reported that for the first two months she was off, her loss of confidence and self-esteem were so great that she was sure she would quit teaching. Another also felt she might quit: "A couple of times I actually thought I was going to quit ... I felt like I had failed my profession." One teacher expressed the link between stress and the loss of self-esteem in this way: "I think stress is an emotional thing ... it goes against your self-esteem because you define yourself by who you are and what you do in certain ways." Another said, "I started to question whether I could teach, whether I was a good teacher."

The loss of physical and emotional health was felt keenly by all study participants. They reported many physical problems: insomnia, backache, headache, high blood pressure, chest pain, loss of energy, and weight gain or loss, all attributed to stress by their doctors: "I've woken up at 5 o'clock in the morning (pause) sometimes the cold sweats. I can't get back to sleep." Another teacher experienced pressure to the point he thought he would "explode." His doctor diagnosed high blood pressure due to stress.

In addition, these teachers suffered emotional pain: anxiety, anger, depression, frustration, sadness, fear etc., perceived to be due to the stress of their job. One teacher expressed her concern this way: "I think the lifestyle of a teacher makes, or made me ignore my emotional needs completely. I never really addressed the emotional needs that I had and I think that's eventually why I kind of broke down." Some reported panic attacks or anxiety attacks. Another teacher described

feelings of depression: "Stress certainly led to ... it was a depression. I would come to tears more often than not."

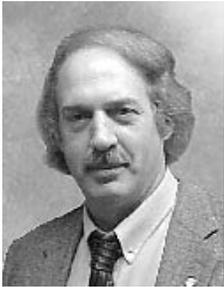
Recess and lunch periods were often non-existent, meaning there was hardly a break in the day. These teachers found themselves meeting with students, photocopying, serving corridor duty, or in meetings instead of relaxing for a few minutes and having a nutrition break, hardly a healthy way to work.

This study provided new insights into the working environment in which teachers are employed, in particular, the multiple demands and pressures facing them, the hectic pace at which they work and the personal losses incurred. Change was necessary but it has come at considerable cost in terms of time, stress, and lifestyle to these teachers. A sense of loss associated with stress was felt keenly by all the study participants. However, the stigma associated with stress prevented them from speaking out.

Stakeholders need to become more aware of the realities of teaching. Understanding these realities could lead to working relationships and policy changes that would support teachers to be effective in the classroom and to feel confident in their abilities. As well, if the realities of a high school teacher's working day were better understood, their unmet needs could be identified and perhaps their sense of loss would not be as great. It is reasonable to think that when teachers are feeling stress their students are affected too and perhaps they experience feelings of loss as well. Therefore, the best environment in which to facilitate effective teaching and learning is surely the goal of all stakeholders.

Our job as teachers, counsellors, and administrators is to educate. We have done a fine job with students but perhaps we have neglected to educate other stakeholders: parents, the community, school boards, and the government, about the realities of the classroom today. It is not too late; we can start today by speaking out. Together, we can play a leading role in the process of building a better understanding of the demands of teaching, thus helping reduce teachers' feelings of stress and associated perceptions of loss.

Dr. Lynda Younghusband is a retired school counselor, a former teacher and before that, a nurse. Lynda has been a sessional lecturer at Memorial University since 1999. She can be contacted at ybnb@nfld.net.



Mondialogo Intercultural Dialogue and Exchange

by KEITH SAMUELSON

The Mondialogo School Contest provides an opportunity for students around the world to demonstrate their commitment to openness, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. Along with their peers in 30 different countries, students at Prince of Wales Collegiate (PWC) celebrated “Mondialogo Day” to mark the start of the second round of this contest. The first round, initiated by DaimlerChrysler and UNESCO in 2003-04, involved 25,000 students from 126 countries, making it the largest international event of its kind.

On “Mondialogo Day” previous participants celebrate with presentations, concerts, plays, games, poster displays and photo exhibitions. “Mondialogo Junior Ambassadors” present their project work and discuss their expectations for the upcoming contest. After registration for the Mondialogo School Contest, participating schools are matched with a partner team from another country. Teams contact each other, agree on a joint project topic and work together in a process of mutual exchange. From this dialogue between cultures, a joint creative project result emerges: music, plays, collages, photo documentaries, sculptures or web pages – there are no limits. The Internet Portal in five languages at www.mondialogo.org provides the main dialogue medium for the contest.

Students and teachers from particularly committed schools will be invited to Mexico in November 2006 for the international Mondialogo Symposium, where the partner teams get to meet each other for the first time. After several days of workshops and joint activities, the three most outstanding partner teams will be given prizes at a festive award ceremony.

On October 21, 2005 Prince of Wales Collegiate celebrated the cultural diversity of St. John's with guest speakers from different countries which have contributed to the multicultural mosaic of contemporary Newfoundland and Labrador. Special guest speakers for our “Celebration of Cultural Diversity” included former United Nations World Youth Landmines Ambassador Ajmal Pashtonyar from Afghanistan and former Ugandan refugee Paska Orach and her family,

all of whom spoke eloquently about their experiences in their countries of origin, how they were welcomed into our local community and how they have contributed and continue to contribute to both. These model global citizens described the actions they are taking on behalf of the world community and how students can celebrate cultural diversity by becoming activists for humanitarian causes that have a deep impact on young people all over the world.



Paska Orach speaks to students at Prince of Wales Collegiate.

Complex global issues such as landmines and child soldiers defy simple explanations. Extended inquiry is prerequisite to even basic understanding, so we decided to have pre- and post- Mondialogo Day events to enrich our “Celebration of Cultural Diversity” and provide an opportunity to take specific actions on behalf of world youth.

Our pre-Mondialogo Day main event took place on October 5 when Gabrielle White, Program Officer for Mines Action Canada (MAC) in Ottawa, spoke to student groups at PWC about anti-personnel landmines, the mine ban treaty and the clearing of landmines. Gabrielle also presented part of MAC's new documentary film *Disarm* (www.disarmfilm.com) and invited students to the film's debut screening at Memorial University of Newfoundland that evening.

MAC is the Canadian affiliate of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. Gabrielle was undertaking a cross-

country tour called *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Impact* to engage the public on the issue and to profile the extraordinary work of Canadian non-government organizations (NGO's) and individuals in the mine ban movement. Our pre-Mondialogo Day event was a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn more about the international mine ban movement and what they could do as a group or individual to help eradicate landmines around the world.

On October 21, Prince of Wales Collegiate welcomed people who came here not only from Afghanistan and Uganda, but also from India, Kosovo and Colombia, to become part of the multicultural mosaic of our province. Special guest speakers Remzi Cej from our local branch of Amnesty International, Bill Hynd from Oxfam Canada, Ivan Morgan from the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission, Jose Rivera from the Refugee-Immigrant Advisory Council, Swati Sharan from the Newfoundland and Labrador Multicultural Association and Richard Neron from the Newfoundland and Labrador AIDS Association, presented on a variety of global issues including AIDS, Fair Trade, Cultural Sensitivity, Immigration and Human Rights. Their audiences included English, French, Spanish, Social Studies, Economics, Mathematics and Physics classes, thus nurturing a transdisciplinary approach recommended by UNESCO. A whole-school assembly maximized awareness and involved all students in our celebration.

"Mondialogo Day at PWC: An Exploration of Cultural Diversity" was organized by our Official Mondialogo Junior Ambassadors – Amanda Borg, Janine Crane, Jaleesa Hawco, Melissa Hoskins and Emma Morgan, along with our Mondialogo Day Committee – Danielle McNicholas, Rebecca Ginn, Kera Hunt, Jessica Inkpen and Allison House – in partnership with student leadership groups including the Youth Action Committee, Student Council, Key Club and Asper Foundation Group. The Mondialogo project team presented a full day of activities with guest speakers from a number of different countries represented in our community. They flew the Mondialogo flag over the school, decorated the corridors and classrooms, gave an overview of the project to the entire student body, arranged for guest speakers from different countries and local community organizations to present on a variety of multicultural issues during regularly scheduled classes throughout the day, prepared a special lunch for guests and staff, and explained how our school will participate in the 2005-06 Mondialogo World Project with a multimedia presentation for the entire school during the last period at the end of the day.

(continued on page 16)

Following the Mondialogo Junior Ambassadors' presentation, Ajmal Pashtoonyar and Paska Orach spoke to the entire student body about their experiences in our province and internationally. Mr. James Orach, Mrs. Paska Orach and their teenaged daughter Isabel, a grade 9 student at Brother Rice Junior High School, had already presented to different classes all day; Mr. Orach on "The Northern Uganda Peace Process and the Culture of the Acholi People", Mrs. Orach on "African Immigrants and Child Soldiers" and Isabel on "The Effects of War on the Children of Northern Uganda". As a result, many students became more educated about the Gulu region's "night commuters" and child victims of Joseph Kony's brutal Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the Gulu region of Northern Uganda. In closing our Friday afternoon assembly, Allison House urged students to show solidarity and take action the very next day by participating in Saturday's Gulu Walk (www.guluwalk.com) along with students and teachers from Macdonald Drive Junior High School in support of the children of Northern Uganda and their plight to survive the bloody civil war that has been raging for 20 years.

The impact of such powerful presentations as Mrs. Orach's is evident in the journal entries from some of my English 1201 students:

"Mrs. Orach's presentation fits in well with our theme of children, even though what we had been studying before was much less graphic and distressing. Short poems and stories cannot compare with human experience and suffering. She taught us about a man of extra-ordinary evil, Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA. After learning how he kidnaps children, often forcing them to shoot their own parents, I tried to think of what kind of life he could have possibly led to have made him so twisted." – Bethany King

"This presentation is what's needed to urge other countries to help the people of Uganda. Unfortunately, in the real world, logic and common sense don't have enough emotional value for something that needs to be stopped. The fact is that the Ugandan conflict hasn't really touched any other nation besides Uganda itself, so very little is being done about it, even if it is more bloody and vicious than other, more well-known conflicts going on elsewhere. What could be keeping help from arriving for children being randomly abducted, raped and killed? The sooner the world realizes the severity of the situation in Uganda, the better chance that the people, especially the youth, have to survive and live in peace." – Brian Fagan

The presence of "Faith and little Daniel", the Orach toddlers, added a special dimension to our Mondialogo Day presentations. A level of empathy was developed far beyond what could have been

achieved had these children not been there. The horrors of Gulu were no longer theoretical; they were real events that could have happened to these same children, and are happening to children just like them every day. Matthew Nolan, one of my English 1201 students, wrote in his journal: *"I have a little sister the same age as Faith. Looking at that beautiful little girl playing while her mother was presenting and thinking about what could have happened to her broke my heart. It also made me realize the importance of what we were learning."*

Responses from other students, teachers and guests have been overwhelmingly positive. Participation in the Mondialogo Contest will enrich our intercultural dialogue throughout the 2005-06 academic year. As part of our post-Mondialogo Day activities, and out of respect for what we have learned together, students in over a dozen classes made 1,000 origami cranes for peace. These cranes were displayed during our November 11th Remembrance Day Assembly and are being sent to Hiroshima Commercial High School as a gift from the students of Prince of Wales Collegiate.



Students at PWC create origami cranes for peace.

To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I made arrangements with Akemi Handa from Tokyo's Keizai Koho Centre to present a thousand paper cranes to the staff and students at the high school in Hiroshima which I visited as a Keizai Koho Fellow in July 2004.

I am sure many exciting opportunities will arise for other students and teachers who become involved as "Intercultural Dialogue and Exchange" expands throughout the new year. Those who are interested in participating may log on to the Mondialogo website (www.mondialogo.org) or contact me at keithsamuelson@esdnl.ca.

Keith Samuelson teaches at Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's.

Becoming

by BEVERLEY PARK

Quite often when talking to teachers I have used this quote as an anchor: “You teach some by what you say; You teach more by how you say it; You teach most by who you are.” I say it because I believe it. I have seen the evidence time and time again, in my own classes, including the numerous workshop sessions, and in observing my colleagues. “Who we are” is so significant to how we do our jobs. As I write this, it occurs to me that this is likely true for any profession or job, but perhaps more so than most for teachers because of the influence we have on our students.

There is, I think, a logical progression in the “what-how-who” sequence. When we start out we first concern ourselves with the “what”, with outcomes and policies, deadlines and expectations. We move from that to the “how”, the lesson plans and the classroom and school’s routines and procedures. In those two phases we draw heavily on handbooks, guides, policy books, etc. It takes us a while to move to a level of professional comfort, to confidently go beyond the external and let “who we are” begin to significantly influence or define the way we do our job. This is a big step. And it’s different for each of us because we are all different.

There is, however, something about this process which is similar for everyone. We are all a little schizophrenic. The dictionary defines a schizophrenic as “characterized by the coexistence of disparate or antagonistic elements.” If you think I am kidding, how is this for evidence of disparate elements? By instinct, and also because we are often taught it, we equate “fair” treatment with consistency and “sameness” and will often use that as our basis for defending our application of classroom or school rules. Then, we are faced with the exceptions that glaringly demonstrate the unfairness of treating everyone alike and call upon us to act otherwise. Or we believe in encouraging students to be inquisitive and curious, social and interactive, yet, we feel most comfortable when they work silently and alone. Yet another example, as young teachers starting out, we want and need to be seen to be the leader in the class, to develop our own self-confidence and confidence of others in us, but we know that to teach leadership

to our students we have to sometimes relinquish the reins of control. Finally, we have the responsibility of reassuring students that we’re there for them, to catch them when they fall, but we have also to be challenging them to step out on their own, to risk and to be responsible for themselves. Teaching effectively means constantly having to juggle paradoxes like these.

For the more experienced teachers shifting between these apparent contradictions is something of which you may not even be conscious. To use the analogy of driving an automobile, the novice driver has to make very conscious and deliberate decisions about what to do in a very step-by-step fashion, especially if there are hazardous conditions or obstacles on the path, whereas the experienced motorist now makes these decisions instinctively, knowing what’s right for the particular circumstances.

For the new teacher, maintaining an appropriate balance is very taxing. You constantly feel the tug and pull of the two sides. So how do you do it? First of all, you must acknowledge that there is never just one way of doing anything. The job would be terribly boring if there were a recipe book! The “how you do it” would be taken care of, but the “who” likely wouldn’t matter. Secondly, you need to accept that the choices you make today may not be the choices you will make tomorrow or next week or next month. You’ll become adept at reading situations and reacting more “from who you are” with confidence. And thirdly, you have to accept that you are on an incredibly steep learning curve – and to continue the driving analogy, if you’re driving a standard stick shift, then it’s going to be challenging, you can expect to roll backwards a bit before you surge on up the hill!

Here’s a challenge for you: Take a scenario out of your school day this week – it could be a learning situation you have planned, an encounter with a student while on supervision duty, a snapshot moment of your interaction in the staff room, or a formal meeting with parents. Ask yourself how you might have reacted in September. How did you respond to the situation this week? No matter how good you were back then (and I bet you were good!), I know you’re better now – because you are closer to teaching from “who you are”. Recognize and appreciate your own growth. This early phase of your career is a wonderful and wonder-filled time of you creating the teacher you will be. Enjoy each success and every good day. Value each lesson learned through error and every challenge. You’re becoming!

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Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.



Nostalgia and Great Moments

by BEVERLEY PARK

Picture the scene – a tree half decorated, Santas and snowmen peeking over the rims of storage containers, a half eaten box of chocolates on a table beside the CD case of Christmas favourites. As you created that image in your mind, I wonder if there had been a calendar hanging on the wall in your view, would you have seen the month as December or January? When you think about it, the scenes are just about the same whether you are pre-Christmas or post-Christmas. In the one instance things are being constructed, and in the other, dismantled. Though the scene is the same, the feelings are very different.

December: Setting aside the occasional bout of bad humour as you realize that the lights that worked perfectly when you put them away last year somehow magically got broken while laying undisturbed in storage, the feelings are anticipation, excitement and merry making.

January: Setting aside the occasional bout of bad humour as we realize that the new pants we got for Christmas aren't fitting as well as we'd like, or that when someone practised their "regifting" you ended up with what you had given *them* last year, the feelings are of nostalgia and memories and resolution making.

Let me say from the beginning that this is NOT an article about the glass being half empty or half full – it is about our perspective and the attitudes that sustain us, even when the demands on us are at their peak.

In September when we go into things, whether it's a new school year, work on a new committee, teaching a new course, a new classroom or a new grade assignment, it is like that pre-Christmas phase of setting everything up. For the holidays, there's a certain set of things that make up the scene... the tree, the manger scene, the Dickens village. For "our" scene, too, there are key pieces. It could be the schedule or the lesson plans. At Christmas we deal with the frustrations of the glitches – lights that don't work, or cookies that get burnt because we're overdoing it on the multi-tasking. In our case it might be the computer access we do not

have or figuring out a new course because we haven't had the benefit of inservice. On the one hand there are the deadlines from Canada Post for the parcels to the Mainland and, not to forget, the writing of letters to Santa. On the other hand, we have the deadlines of reporting to and conferencing with parents and the endless tasks of preparation, delivery and assessment. What is so amazing is that no matter how heavy the demands, teachers usually get that "looking forward to it" mindset each new school year.

During the actual "season", our school year, despite all the planning, there are always the unexpected events, comparable to the Christmas surprises – like the mummies or the minister dropping in (both wanting a drink!), someone announcing an engagement, or a break-up.

Each of us would be able to fill in any number of things in our school day and year that interrupt our carefully designed plans. Just as mom does at Christmas, adjusting the number of place settings at the table or throwing a few more potatoes in the pot, we make the adjustments and we make it work!

We all know how the twelve days of Christmas go by in a blur, with each day a few more needles falling off the tree, the tinsel looking a bit less manicured and only chocolates with the orange centers left in the box (Does *anyone* like the orange centers?). So too, our school year goes in a flash. Before we know it, we're packing up! Like our houses feel a little empty in January when the partygoers have gone home and the music has stopped, the classroom in June feels empty without the students. Things may be a bit frayed (including our nerves!), but in the end it all was worth it, and hopefully our feelings are those of nostalgia and the good memories we have created for and with those who have honoured us passing through our doors.

Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.

Why a Virtual Teacher Centre?

by Alex Hickey

Why a Virtual Teacher Centre? The question is often asked – and often answered. Simply put, the Virtual Teacher Centre is another professional online resource for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador delivered through the PD Division of the NLTA. Its mandate is to provide teachers with access to professional learning opportunities, research into education, web resources created by others and curriculum support. In addition, the Virtual Teacher Centre (or VTC) partners with the Department of Education through the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) to provide teachers involved in working groups, piloting and implementation of new programs access to resources and opportunities to interact with other teachers.

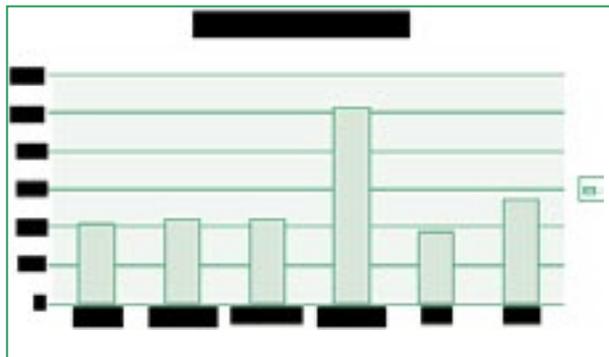
The VTC works with groups of interested teachers who wish to interact online for professional purposes. This is done through discussion forums and web conferencing using a tool called Elluminate Live – a service of CDLI. Research and development of innovative methods of using the Internet for learning is also part of its mandate. This involves designing instructional models for online learning and working with teachers to test them out. Currently, a model is being developed in collaboration with e-teachers to provide them online learning opportunities in the area of teaching strategies for the online environment.

How has the NLTA obtained the resources to fund the work of the VTC? Initially the NLTA received three years of funding from the Federal Government through Industry Canada to get started. During those three years, the VTC was able to acquire additional funding from ACOA, the Provincial Government and Industry Canada to develop 40 modules of professional content which are now available free of charge to all teachers in the province. The NLTA has also struck a partnership with the Department of Education and CDLI. Under this arrangement, The Department (through CDLI) cost shares half of the salaries of the VTC Coordinator and Lead Programmer. In return CDLI and the Department get access to the resources, supports, and consultation, design and programming services of the VTC to assist with its online support for teachers. The NLTA funds its share of the costs of the VTC from

the NLTA Centennial Fund. This fund was created in 1990 (the NLTA's Centennial Year) through a contribution from Johnson Inc. and is used to provide educational opportunities to teachers to enhance knowledge about teaching and learning. NLTA costs for the VTC include the Association's half of the salaries referenced above and some small additional costs for operations and software/hardware.

The VTC is also able to apply for government grants and funding programs because of its not-for-profit status. This is usually done in partnership with groups of teachers, Special Interest Councils, Memorial University or School Districts. This is usually project-based funding aimed at research or developing content for teachers. On occasion, the VTC partners with other jurisdictions such as it has with the New Brunswick Teachers' Association to secure funding for teaching and learning modules, and with the Department of Education in PEI to design and build online learning content in Literacy across the Curriculum. Thus, through a relatively minimal infusion of teacher dollars, the VTC is able to strike creative partnerships to leverage other monies to provide services to teachers.

Who uses the VTC? Teachers at all levels of the school system make use of its resources. The chart below shows how these users are distributed.



So then, why a Virtual Teacher Centre? It is a means to extend teacher professional development opportunities beyond the face-to-face. It is a means to develop and deliver new and innovative ways of assisting teachers to grow in their professionalism. It is a means of making use of technology to overcome the barriers of geography and limited resources. All teachers are encouraged to make use of the VTC as a resource designed with teachers at the centre.

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Alex Hickey is Coordinator of the Virtual Teacher Centre.



Bullying.org: A Learning Journey

by BILL BELSEY

April 20, 1999 was a day that changed my life. It began like many other days, but somewhere along the way, an emotional tsunami overwhelmed me as news emerged of a school shooting at Columbine High School in Middleton, Colorado. Eight days later, a copycat shooting took place at a high school in rural Alberta. This was clearly not a “big city” problem or an “American” problem; it was everyone’s problem, as a Canadian parent and educator, it was very much *my* problem as well.

It became apparent soon afterwards that the young people who committed these heinous acts were relentlessly bullied and teased throughout their young lives.

In response to these deeply disturbing tragedies, I created a web site, www.bullying.org. I decided that the web site would have three goals; first, to help people, especially young people, learn that they are *not* alone in dealing with bullying in their lives, to help them realize that being bullied is *not* their fault and that they *can* do something positive about it.

Bullying.org allows people to connect in a safe, moderated online community where they can share their stories, poetry, drawings, music, animations and videos. A team of volunteer reviewers moderates replies and the original submissions. Visitors to the web site can also use the world’s largest online database of helpful resources on www.bullying.org to find information about bullying.

Bullying.org began to quickly create quite a buzz online through “word-of-mouth” referrals, as it was successfully filling a tremendous need for information and support. Then, on May 21, 2001, I was fortunate enough to do an interview with CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge during which he was generous enough to refer to www.bullying.org as “One of the best web sites in the world for young people”. That night, www.bullying.org was propelled to another level.

The national non-profit educational organization, Bullying.org Canada was created shortly thereafter to help support and expand our national vision.

Bullying.org has since received as many as three quarters of a million visitors and contributors from across Canada and around the world in one month and is listed as one of the top “bullying” referenced web sites in the world by www.google.com and many other Internet search engines. The site has since been chosen for the ChildNet International Award which goes to projects that make the Internet a better place for youth, as well as being a finalist in the Stockholm Challenge Award which has been called the Nobel Prize of the IT (Information Technology) world.

Shortly after the web site’s launch, I realized that something new was being experienced and reported by young people around the world. In response, I created www.cyberbullying.ca, the world’s first web site specifically dedicated to the emerging issue of cyberbullying. www.cyberbullying.ca has often been cited as the first to use this word and define this emerging behaviour.

As I was frequently asked to speak at schools and conferences across Canada about these issues and our work, it became clear that bullying was an issue that was being increasingly discussed from coast to coast to coast.

In 2002 it became obvious to me that we needed something to highlight this issue as an annual, national initiative that would focus on prevention of bullying in our schools and communities through education and awareness. Thus, “National Bullying Awareness Week” was born.

Since I first conceived of this initiative, Bullying.org Canada developed a partnership with Family Channel, a Canadian television programmer that is received in nearly five million homes throughout Canada. Together we have partnered to create a highly effective national anti-bullying “Take the Pledge” campaign. In 2004, well over 100,000 Canadian youth had registered as having “Taken the Pledge”. We created and distributed thousands of Pledge posters to schools across Canada. We also created a number of very effective video Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that can be seen on Family Channel as well as on the [www](http://www.bullying.org).

bullying.org web site. In May of 2005, the Canadian Public Relations Society recognized this campaign with an "Award of Excellence". This November, a DVD with the video PSAs and an accompanying Teachers' Guide was mailed to over 10,000 schools across Canada.

November 13-18, 2006 will mark the fourth year of this annual national initiative. We will focus on the tremendous leadership potential that youth offer with respect to addressing the issue of bullying in their schools and communities. With this in mind, Bullying.org Canada is looking for over 1,000 Canadian youth leaders, ages 13 to 18, who would like to be part of Bullying.org Canada's National Peer Power Network. We will provide registered Peer Power youth presenters with a very engaging, free multimedia presentation that contains research-based information, stories, poems, drawings, music, animations and videos created by young people from across Canada and around the world. The presentation will run approximately 50 minutes in length and is appropriate for ages 8-12. Schools can register to join the National Peer Power Network from January 3 until June 3, 2006. In addition to joining the Peer Power Network of youth presenters during the next National Bullying Awareness Week, we are also hopeful that these same young Canadians will help to provide leadership to address bullying in their schools and communities on an ongoing basis with the support of adults who care about our youth.

We are hopeful that your school would like to have your school's youth leaders join the National Peer Power Network and also participate in other National Bullying Awareness Week activities from November 13 to the 18, 2006.

Teachers can download a free brochure in PDF format that contains many ideas as to how students, teachers and parents can use www.bullying.org as a safe, supportive, free, non-commercial, and deeply engaging, multimedia teaching and learning resource. More information about Bullying.org Canada can be found at www.cyberbullying.ca/pdf/Bullying.org_Canada_Inc._Pamphlet.pdf.

Bill Belsey is a teacher and President of Bullying.org Canada.



Your RRSP: A Performance Evaluation

by PAT HOGAN

Okay. It's mid-year evaluation time... for your RRSP! Let's see how you have been doing and how can you improve your performance going forward. Let's examine several behavioral outcomes against which you can measure your own performance – an exercise in formative evaluation.

The process

- Since you started your RRSP some years ago, you have been in regular [annual or semi-annual] communication with your RRSP provider or financial advisor – not just in February when a reminder arrives to contribute before the deadline date;
- You know what different investments are contained in your RRSP;
- You know your personal “investor profile” [whether you are “aggressive”, “advanced”, “balanced”, “moderate” or “conservative”]; this profile determines your “asset allocation” – the proportion of your investments devoted to fixed-income and equities respectively;
- You have been in the practice of making adjustments or “re-balancing” your investments – with your financial advisor – from time to time;
- You know how your investments have been performing in absolute terms [from your quarterly statements];
- You know that “book value” refers to the original purchase price; and “market value” represents today's price with distributions and growth factored in;
- You know what is available to you [and your spouse] in terms of “unused RRSP contribution room”;
- You have considered [and acted on] setting up a spousal RRSP – if that is appropriate for your situation;
- Your RRSP has a “Beneficiary Designation” named on file;
- You have discussed improving your returns – within your “risk tolerance” – with your financial advisor; even better, your financial advisor has initiated contact with you with some suggestions!
- You know what your investments are costing you in terms of fees and charges [mutual funds have two types of costs: a) purchase/redemption costs

– if applicable and b) annual management fees – expressed as a percentage of the total assets on deposit... called “MER” – management expense ratio];

- You have consolidated your RRSP investments in one or two accounts, rather than holding multiple accounts with several RRSP providers; this simplifies keeping track of your various funds and eliminates a paper flood of quarterly statements.

Did You Know?

- Although RRSPs were originally designed to augment pension income after retirement, they also have added two other uses: a) the Lifelong Learning Plan; and b) the Home Buyers Plan – two programs that allow you to temporarily borrow funds from your RRSP tax-free until they are repaid later.
- RRSPs can be transferred from one financial institution to another by direct transfer with no tax implications; it takes some paperwork and time to make the arrangements. There may also be a “transfer-out” fee charged by the relinquishing institution.

Example: Lois is unhappy with her RRSP at XYZ Bank. The only time she hears from her advisor is in February to remind her that her annual RRSP contribution is due or that her GICs are maturing. [Her RRSP consists only of GICs that are “locked in” at around 2.5% for various durations.] Her friend Charlotte is glowing in her praise of her Certified Financial Planner who calls her every six months and meets with her annually to review and rebalance her investments. These meetings focus on improving performance, lowering costs, monitoring her investor profile and reviewing her total financial picture. She only has mutual funds in her RRSP – none of which are “locked in”. Best of all, Charlotte has an independent advisor who can access mutual funds from many sources, not just the limited “house-brand” offerings of a single bank. In this way, Charlotte has assembled an RRSP of “all-star” mutual funds – the best in the marketplace – packaged in a single account. Lois has decided to follow her friend's example; she will set up a no-cost, initial consultation with Charlotte's advisor.

- You can “cash-in” your RRSP at any time; however, withdrawals are then fully taxed as income.
- You are required by law to collapse your RRSP at age 69, at which point the “accumulation phase” ends. Many retirees then set up a RRIF [Registered Retirement Income Fund] or purchase an annuity, or do both.
- The RRIF or “payout phase” now begins in your 70th year. Even then, only a minimum percentage must be withdrawn annually, leaving the remainder to continue to grow tax-deferred inside the RRIF.

RRSP Content:

Cash and Fixed Income Components

- You can identify the “Fixed Income” components of your RRSP portfolio of investments, i.e. bond and cash side. If you hold GICs, from your quarterly statement you can locate: a) the interest rate paid; b) the maturity date for renewal; and c) you know what options you have as renewal dates for GICs present themselves.
- This side of your RRSP can be diversified among various fixed income securities like federal, provincial and corporate bonds, mortgage funds, etc.
- You know that this side of your RRSP is the “low risk-low reward” side – that is a necessary component in almost every RRSP, even for aggressive investors. Values fluctuate as bond markets move with changing interest rates.
- You know what percentage of your total RRSP is represented on this side – and what percentage is held in equity investments; [**Example:** as a “balanced investor”, Jim has an RRSP composed entirely of mutual funds...60% in equity funds and 40% in bond funds.]
- Since bond funds generally have lower rates of return than equity funds, the fees and charges they carry are more important to examine. [**Example:** from Dec. 1/04 to Nov. 30/05, the median Canadian Equity Fund produced a return of 16.8% with an average cost of 2.68%; the median Canadian Bond Fund produced a return of 5.1% with a cost of 1.97%]. The point is that costs are especially important when selecting bond funds – which only produce modest returns at best.

RRSP Content: the Equity Component

- This side contains the “higher risk-higher reward” side of your RRSP – that is a necessary component of almost every RRSP, even for conservative investors. The values fluctuate each day as stock markets move up or down.
- This side of your RRSP can be diversified among Canadian, US and Global equity funds as recommended by your financial advisor. In past years you were

limited to 30% foreign content in your RRSP; however, in 2005, this “foreign property rule” was repealed.

- There is a wide range of performance among the thousands of equity funds available for purchase. Some fund managers produce consistently satisfying results for their unit holders; others do not. A knowledgeable financial advisor can steer you in the right direction.

So how did you score on our little appraisal? Any “knowledge deficit” can be easily remedied by research or by consulting a nationally accredited Certified Financial Planner. The “CFP” designation is the premier professional designation among Canadian financial advisors – a place to start! Any “action deficit” can just as easily be remedied, but only by you!

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Pat Hogan is a retired teacher/principal and a practicing Certified Financial Planner. He would welcome reaction or inquiries, with no obligation, at 709-754-0413 or email: hogan@nl.rogers.com.



ELEVENTH NATIONAL CONGRESS ON RURAL EDUCATION

March 26-28, 2006

Radisson Hotel, Saskatoon. Sessions include: Dealing with Diversity; Accountability; Sustainability; First Nations Education; Leadership and Change; Finance and Governance; Learning Communities; Site-based Management; Technology in Schools; Community and Parental Involvement. For more information and registration form visit www.usask.ca/education/ruraled.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER WORKSHOP

March 18, 2006

Main Auditorium, Medical School, Health Sciences Centre, St. John's. Autism Spectrum Disorder – a Framework for Understanding Intervention Strategies and a Description of a Range of Interventions is a workshop for parents, teachers and other professionals. Speaker: Dr. Carol Westby, Ph.D., CCC-S-LP, University of New Mexico. Cost: \$75 – teachers, professionals; \$50 – parents (one or two). For more information or a registration form contact Chris Murphy, PPC – Speech-Language Pathology, Chris.Murphy@hccsj.nl.ca, Tel: 709-777-8109.

**SHARING OUR CULTURES/
À LA DÉCOUVERTE DE NOS CULTURES**

March 19-21, 2006

Delta St. John's Hotel. Sharing Our Cultures is an educational and multicultural event

showcasing 25+ countries represented in our schools. Date: March 19 (official public opening); March 20 & 21 (for schools only). Two sessions each day (9:15-11:00 a.m. and 12:15-2:00 p.m.) for elementary, junior and senior high students. On May 7 at the Winter Games Complex in Clarenville and May 8 at Random Island Academy School. Admission is free but space is limited. For more information or to register please email quaicoe@gmail.com.

THE ARTS WORK CONFERENCE

April 5-7, 2006

St. John's. The Arts Work: Create! Learn! Teach! An arts in education conference for the primary/elementary teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador. For more information contact donnamills@gov.nl.ca.

MUSIC SIC CONFERENCE

April 6-7, 2006

The Music Special Interest Council (MSIC), in tandem with the Arts Work Conference, will be sponsoring professional development for K-6 Music teachers on April 6-7, 2006. The MSIC will run a separate professional development day on Friday, April 7 for 7-12 Music educators. The MSIC BGM will be held on the evening of April 6, followed by a social. Details to follow. Contact: Noreen Greene-Fraize, nngreenefraize@hotmail.com, Tel: 709-753-2618.

Find the Compound Word Contest Winner

The winner of the "Find the Compound Word" Contest which ran in the December issue of *The Bulletin* is:

**Linda Hart
Holy Cross Junior High
St. John's**

The correct answer was:

- Part 1: Page #4 – Xavier's Clean and Green Program
- Part 2: Page #14 – Discovering Your Magical Mystery

Linda's name was chosen in a random draw by NLTA President, Kevin Foley. Linda wins an NLTA kit bag.

Congratulations Linda!

Dates to Remember

March 2006

- Mar 5-11 Education Week
- Mar 16 **Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
- Mar 30 NLTA Executive Meeting
- March 31 Joint Council Meeting
- Mar 31 **Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year
- Mar 31 **Deadline:** Centennial Study Award Applications
- Mar 31 **Deadline** (on or before March 31): International Conference Presenters Program Applications

April 2006

- Apr 1 Joint Council Meeting
- Apr 1 **Deadline:** Johnson Bursary Applications
- Apr 15 **Deadline:** Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
- Apr 30 **Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
- Apr 30 **Deadline:** Year-end resignation from contract



SAC Conference

May 31 - June 2, 2006 • Gander Hotel

LEADERSHIP – A RISKY BUSINESS

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Ted Whiteland

PRESENTERS:

Stephanie Boyle, Senior Policy Analyst, RCMP
Dr. Lynda Younghusband, MUN

PRE-CONFERENCE:

Linda Millar, Concerned Childrens' Advertisers
"Media Literacy, Bullying and Healthy Schools"
Wed., May 31 (Open to classroom teachers)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Tel: 709-261-2360