

# bulletin

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January/February 2015



**KEEP THE  
PROMISE**

**TENIR la  
PROMESSE**

Let's end child poverty for good.  
Des enfants pauvres... plus jamais!



# THE bulletin

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## *Up Front* from the President



*The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.*

~ Deitrich Bonhoeffer

In November while in Ottawa for CTF board meetings I had the opportunity to attend a national student Town Hall meeting on child poverty. I met the Newfoundland and Labrador delegation from Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips – Grade 5 teacher Sam Paterson and his students Rohith McKim and Lucas Osborne. Sam has submitted an article for this Bulletin. It's worth a read.

The Town Hall was part of a national student summit in Ottawa on child poverty convened by Keep the Promise. Approximately 55 Grade 5-9 students and their teachers (another 30) from across Canada participated in educational workshops and a Town Hall which was attended by several MPs and Senators. Students gave presentations and had the opportunity to ask invited MPs about child poverty and what they plan to do to end it. Sadly, the Conservatives were the only party that chose not to participate.

The quality of presentations and questions, the level of engagement in this democratic process, and the commitment of these young people to this issue was truly inspirational. It's what makes teaching so rewarding. These young people offer hope for a better world and an example for us to follow.

In a recent Canadian Teachers' Federation National Teacher Survey, 92.7% of teachers told the CTF to advocate for the elimination of child poverty. To do this the CTF plans to liaise with and lobby all federal political parties and partner with other national organizations, unions, and groups such as the Canadian Home and School Federation, the CLC and even groups like the Conference Board of Canada.

With federal and provincial elections on the horizon, the opportunity for the CTF to influence government policy is now. If the Canadian Teachers' Federation is to make real change it will need the support of its nearly 200,000 members (that's you and me) to do so.

Take the time to read my other article on child poverty and the article by Sam Paterson. Hopefully you will find a way to mobilise you, your colleagues and your students to act.

We know that the students we teach do better when their families do better. I believe that as teachers we have the skill set, knowledge and passion to create real change in the lives of our vulnerable students and their families. I am under no illusion that childhood poverty can be eliminated overnight, but I believe that our collective voice has the power to influence our political leaders to take the necessary steps to end child poverty. It's about investing in the future of our province, our country, and our children. It's the right thing to do!



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## Committee Member Sought for NLTA Group Insurance Committee

The Group Insurance Committee, which oversees the NLTA Group Insurance Program, is seeking expressions of interest from teachers who would be interested in serving as a Trustee for 2015-16. This committee has province-wide representation and consists of seven members – six active teachers in good standing with the Association and a representative appointed by the Retired Teachers' Association of NL. NLTA Policy does permit a teacher to serve as a Trustee for a maximum of seven consecutive years, if appointed each year. Committee members are chosen each year in June by the Provincial Executive Council following a recommendation from the President.

If you are interested in serving as a Trustee, please contact GERALYN Costello, Executive Assistant, Governance at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 222 or email [gcostello@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:gcostello@nlta.nl.ca) by **May 15, 2015**. Please include in your message your name, address, email address and telephone contact number(s).

**Please note:** A request for volunteers for the remaining NLTA committees operating during 2015-16 will be included in the May/June edition of *The Bulletin*.



## NLTA Membership Cards

If you require an NLTA membership card, please visit the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca), click on the membership card icon and follow the instructions. Cards will be mailed to the home address we have on file for you. If you have had a recent address change, please update your current address.



### For further information please contact:

Linda Babstock, Database Manager  
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Tel: 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 256

**Note:** You may need your NLTA membership card to access discounts from the NLTA Teacher Discount List which can be found on the NLTA members-only website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca).

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

# NEWS

## ST. JOHN'S

## Brother Rice raises awareness and funds for Prostate Cancer

One in eight men will be diagnosed with Prostate Cancer at some point in their lives. If detected early enough and treated, many lives can be saved around the world. This past November, Brother Rice Junior High School in St. John's participated in the Movember Campaign to raise awareness and funds in support of Prostate Cancer under the leadership of Jon Bennett, Math Department Head.

A number of the male staff and former staff grew mustaches and joined the official site with Movember Canada to raise funds. Donations were collected through donation boxes, friends, family and local businesses to help aid in the cause. A Movember dance and a Movember Mustache Day were also held wherein students and staff were encouraged to wear their best fake mustaches. Students also participated in a Movember Pledge initiative where they asked a significant male in their life to pledge to take preventative action against Prostate Cancer. In return, their

name was entered for a chance to win from a large selection of prizes.

The results of this campaign raised over \$3,400 this year. In the past three years the school has raised just shy of \$10,000 in support of Prostate Cancer, as well as raising significant awareness about Prostate Cancer and men's health throughout the Brother Rice community.

## MDJH Student Council busy helping others

This is the third consecutive year that Macdonald Drive Junior High (MDJH) in St. John's has had a student council elected by their peers. With a president and vice president, 29 homeroom representatives, and a group of grade 9 students who attended the Canadian Student Leadership Conference 2014 in Kelowna, BC in September, they are a group of 36 students. "With a group of young leaders there are always many ideas presented at meetings," says Collette Quann, French Immersion Teacher at MDJH. "This year students had a number of ideas, all of which centered around helping others. It was decided we would take on a number of initiatives where each grade level was responsible for a different project."

All of the initiatives undertaken at MDJH were part of the Green Apple Alliance. The Green Apple Alliance is a partnership of all the groups and individuals in the MDJH school community working together through their individual endeavours to build a positive and respectful school culture. The Alliance depends on the collaboration of all the partners working together and the branding of all the individual initiatives with the Green Apple logo. "The logo acts as a visible symbol linking all the various positive initiatives, thereby creating the effect on one collaborative effort to build the culture we want within the MDJH school community," explains Ms. Quann.

Grade 7 homerooms collected items for Ronald McDonald House, which assists families in our province during a difficult time by providing the simple things that put some joy and normalcy back into fam-



Students and staff of Brother Rice Junior High pose with a symbolic cheque of the money raised during their Movember Campaign.

ilies' lives. Ronald McDonald House Newfoundland and Labrador truly is a place to heal better and together. Thanks are extended to all students and parents who donated a wish list item. MDJH collected many items such as garbage bags, gloves, batteries, gift cards, stationary supplies and toys. Items were delivered to Ronald McDonald House before the Christmas break on December 18.



Grade 7 students display items collected for Ronald McDonald House.

On behalf of the Student Council, each grade 8 homeroom collected items for Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. The shoeboxes are delivered to children in some of the most destitute parts of the world. Homeroom reps coordinated donations within his or her homeroom. Items included school supplies (pencils, crayons), hygiene items (comb, toothbrush), toys (dinkies, small stuffed toys), clothes/accessories (hair clips, socks, bracelets). Additionally, monetary donations were made to cover shipping costs. With ten grade 8 homerooms participating in this project, MDJH filled 22 shoeboxes.



Grade 8 students surround shoeboxes filled for Operation Christmas Child.

Grade 9 homerooms adopted seniors in the spirit of giving during the Christmas season. "Seniors are a group who are too often forgotten this time of year," says Ms. Quann. "Sadly, there are many seniors in homes in our city who have no family to visit them

*(continued on page 6)*

[www.ExploreCurioCity.org/Energy4Travel](http://www.ExploreCurioCity.org/Energy4Travel)

# REGISTER YOUR CLASS FOR CURIOCITY'S ENERGY4TRAVEL ACTION PROJECT

↓ ↓ ↓  
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PROJECTS**



**CURIOCITY**  
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let's talk  science



and no one to give them anything at Christmas.” With 10 grade 9 homerooms, MDJH provided 12 seniors with gifts. Gifts were delivered to St. Patrick’s Mercy Home on December 16.



Grade 9 students collect gifts to deliver to seniors at St. Patrick’s Mercy Home.

In the spirit of the holiday season, student council also sold candy grams raising \$250 to donate to needy families in their school community.

## NLTA Scholarship Winner

Sarah Bannister from St. John’s has been named the 2014-15 recipient of the NLTA Scholarship.

Both of Sarah’s parents are teachers and she says she has been an aspiring teacher from a young age. “Since I was about ten years old I have had experience helping my mother in many of her primary classes. I continue to visit her and help her out as much as possible.” Sarah recently completed her internship at Vanier Elementary in St. John’s. “It was an unbelievable experience with many wonderful people,” says Sarah. “I am so grateful for all of these opportunities which only reaffirmed my passion for teaching.”

In the spring of 2013 Sarah obtained a Bachelor of Arts (French major, English minor) from Memorial University. She is looking forward to graduating with her Education degree this spring and beginning her teaching career in Newfoundland and Labrador. “I am confident that I was meant to teach and am overwhelmed by the constant support and encouragement that I have received throughout my education journey,” says Sarah.

The NLTA Scholarship is awarded annually on the basis of academic excellence and character to a senior student enrolled in the Faculty of Education. The scholarship, valued at \$540, is awarded annually by the MUN Senate Committee on Scholarships, acting on the recommendation of the Dean of Education.



Sarah Bannister

## NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

### Kids Eat Smart Club Start Up... we are here to help

For many parents and caregivers, trying to ensure children receive a balanced daily diet can be challenging and expensive. Children often do not eat in the mornings for many reasons including long bus rides, busy households and no food at home.

The hallmark of a Kids Eat Smart (KES) Club is the focus on providing nutritious foods. Menus are developed using the School Food Guidelines and Canada’s Food Guide focusing on the importance of a well balanced diet. A registered dietitian and KES Regional Coordinators work with KES Club Coordinators to ensure the guidelines are followed and help with menu selection and preparation.

With the help of 6000 volunteers and generous funding partners, KES currently operate Kids Eat Smart Clubs in almost 88 per cent of our province’s schools. Their goal is to operate KES Clubs in 100 per cent of schools so that every school-aged child in our province has access to nutritious food.

For schools that do not have a Kids Eat Smart Club, the KES Registered Dietitian, in consultation with a Regional Coordinator in your area, would be happy to speak with you regarding starting a KES Club for your school.

If you are thinking of starting a KES Club, here are some key points that you may wish to consider:

- The Principal must support the start up of your KES Club.
- There is interest by a parent, grandparent, teacher or community member who is willing to take on the role of KES Club Coordinator.
- You agree and the Principal agrees to complete financial reporting required by the Foundation.
- Access to school cafeteria and kitchen is an asset, but not a requirement.
- Your KES Club must follow menu guidelines approved by KES and NLESD School Food Nutrition Policy.

Kids Eat Smart has heard from many principals, teachers and parents that starting a KES Club in their school was one of the best decisions they ever made for their students. For more information on starting a KES Club at your school please visit [www.kidseat-smart.ca](http://www.kidseat-smart.ca) or call 1-877-722-1996 or local in the St. John’s area at 722-1996 and speak to the Kids Eat Smart Registered Dietitian, Kristin Hedges.

## CANADA

## Improving school climate through disability awareness programs

The Rick Hansen School Program is a comprehensive set of free resources for administrators, teachers and students. The two key aspects of the program that support the development of a positive school climate are:

- **Disability awareness.** Disability awareness programs promote key characteristics of a positive school climate, such as equity, fairness, caring and sensitivity. They dispel myths and improve knowledge, reduce bullying and create more favorable attitudes towards people with disabilities. Moreover, the impact of disability awareness programs goes beyond people with disabilities. By supporting acceptance of diversity, respect and understanding of differences, disability awareness programs encourage positive interactions among all students.

- **Encouraging students to create positive change.** Students learn to set goals, support others, and take leadership. Students develop and apply knowledge, skills and attitudes to become informed, responsible citizens and improve schools and communities through social action projects.

Current research shows that a positive climate that emphasizes high expectations for caring relationships and respectful interactions plays a key role in effective schools and academic success. Investing time and effort in creating positive school climates leads to positive outcomes for all students and school communities. Programs such as the Rick Hansen School Program are an excellent way to support a positive school climate by promoting understanding of disabilities, differences and inclusion, and encouraging students to become responsible citizens, creating positive outcomes for all.

Ninety-nine percent of teachers and administrators who responded to a recent survey reported that the Program has made a positive difference in their school. Program materials align with provincial curriculum expectations. Materials are available online at [www.rickhansen.com/schools](http://www.rickhansen.com/schools).

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Join us on this journey of self-discovery and build understanding and resilience towards negative messaging in students and in the schoolyard. *Beyond Images* meets students where they're at and takes them further.

Developed by the National Eating Disorder Information Centre ([www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca))  
*Beyond Images* is generously supported by the Dove Self-Esteem Project

nedic





# Poverty, What is It?

by JAMES DINN

A casual survey of our province and it is easy to see the signs of prosperity everywhere. It's easy to forget that prosperity has not embraced everyone and it is tempting to blame those who have not thrived for their own misfortune. However, increasing property values and rent, the difficulty of finding decent and affordable accommodations, combined with rising utility rates and food prices have intensified the financial challenges facing many of us and pushed more people to the margins of society.

In my other life I sit on the board of directors for the Gathering Place. I also serve as president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We help those in need through distribution of monthly food hampers, financial assistance and advocacy. Recently we distributed 350 Christmas Hampers to those in need. Many of those we help are people new to our country, seniors using a food bank for the first time and families with children. The problem is more widespread than we might think.

According to the 2014 Hunger Count (conducted by Food Banks Canada), 841,191 Canadians use food banks monthly – up 1% from 2013 and 25% higher than in 2008. One out of every six households who use food banks have employment income. Seventy percent of households that receive social assistance are food insecure; 30% are severely food insecure. The Hunger Count estimates that another 4,308,140 meals and snacks are served monthly by soup kitchens, shelters and school breakfast programs.

The 2013 *Report Card on Child and Family Poverty* in Canada states that 1,168,000 of the nearly 7 million children in Canada live in poverty. The 2014 Hunger Count estimates that 37% (1/3) of people helped by food banks are children. Almost half (45%) of the households helped are families of children, and 1/2 of these are two parent families.

Childhood poverty, according to the 2014 Hunger Count report, particularly in the early years has a profound effect on the physical, mental and economic outcomes of those who experience it once they reach adulthood. There is a significant amount of research to corroborate the far-reaching negative effects of childhood poverty.

But I don't need to tell you this. As teachers, we

are already quite familiar with the consequences of poverty. We see its effects on children daily in our classrooms and schools. We understand how it impacts their ability to pay attention, attendance, participation in extra curricular activities, academic performance and success in school.

We know the importance of stimulating learning environments and parental involvement to a student's success in school. But how do parents (or a parent) do this when it is a struggle just to pay rent or put food on the table?

Being teachers, we do what teachers do best. We act.

We initiate school breakfast programs and lunch programs so our students will not have to go hungry. I had the opportunity to attend the inauguration of one such program at a local school this past November.

Some high schools recognising the prohibitive cost of hosting graduation ceremonies at local hotels and convention centres have taken steps to make graduations more affordable – and more inclusive.

For many teachers, helping students who experience poverty is personal and they often use their own money to do so. In some cases, teachers have taken the step of being a foster parent for children who live in precarious situations.

However, real change for children experiencing poverty requires commitment at the political level. As teachers, we have an opportunity to improve the lives of families and children within our province and across our country. More importantly, we have a number of avenues in which to make our voice heard.

The provincial government, to its credit, is reaffirming its commitment to reducing poverty in our province and is currently seeking public input on the development of a new Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan. We have an opportunity as teachers to add our voice in shaping this new action plan. While the deadline for this feedback was January 19, it is still possible to send in your feedback before February 6. Send it as a staff or individually. You can submit your thoughts using the online feedback form: <http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/ruralinfo/prs-online-feedback-form> or by email: [povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca](mailto:povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca).

Your Association feels this issue is significant enough to teachers that our submission to the



Provincial Government's pre-budget hearings calls for an end to child poverty so that all children have what they need to thrive. The future of this province and this country depends on the well-being of our children.

The CTF through its Hear My Voice:VOX campaign in partnership with its provincial member organizations such as the NLTA will be making child poverty as one of the key issues in the next federal election which will occur on or before October 2015. As a participant in the VOX campaign the NLTA will, through the Communications and Political Action Committee, develop and coordinate activities and strategies that teachers can use to engage federal parties and influence the federal government to address child poverty.

If you are interested in getting your students to engage other students on this issue and think critically about solutions, check out Imagineaction at [www.imagine-action.ca](http://www.imagine-action.ca). It's the CTF's social justice program and provides resources teachers can use in the classroom. One of the resources is *Poverty, What is it?*, a discussion booklet containing a selection of personal responses of over 200 Grade 5 - 8 students on poverty. When used with the three-part lesson plan developed for use with the booklet it can be a powerful tool in encouraging students to engage in social action projects. You will, of course, have to log on to the Imagineaction site to access these resources.

When you log on to Imagineaction, you'll find a link to the Keep the Promise campaign ([www.keep-thepromise.ca](http://www.keep-thepromise.ca)) mentioned in my *Up Front* article in this issue of *The Bulletin*. Over 25 years ago in 1989 the Canadian Parliament unanimously committed to ending child poverty by the year 2000. Keep the Promise is a two-year campaign to reignite the commitment of Canadians and Government to end child poverty for good. Keep the Promise seeks to engage students and develop their leadership abilities to tackle the issue of child poverty. The site offers ideas you can use with your students.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much. It is whether we provide enough for those who have little." I like to think that as teachers we have a strong sense of social justice, and that true progress is grounded in creating a just society. While we do our best to equip our students with the skills to succeed in life, we also try to instill in them the belief that the welfare of those less fortunate is just as important as their own success. They look to us for guidance. Take the time to explore some of the ideas mentioned above to get your students involved so they can help create a world where we won't need a hunger count.

James Dinn is President of the NLTA.

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# BE A HOTSHOT. SAVE ENERGY.

In partnership with takeCHARGE, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's HotShots initiative is offering a new contest to promote energy conservation.

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**Entries accepted in English and French.**

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**WWW.HOTSHOTNL.CA**



## *Keep the Promise*

# NL Teacher and Students Attend Anti-Poverty Summit

by SAM PATERSON



Lucas Osborne (left) and Rohith McKim with the NL flag at Keep the Promise Summit in Ottawa.

Earlier this fall, I had the opportunity to travel to Ottawa with two of my students – Rohith McKim and Lucas Osborne – as part of the Keep the Promise anti-poverty summit. This summit was organized to coincide with the 25th Anniversary of a multi-lateral agreement to erase child poverty in Canada, originally spearheaded by Ed Broadbent and the federal NDP. The summit was attended by 75+ students from across Canada, and was facilitated and supervised by their teachers and by the staff and volunteers of Keep the Promise and the Canadian Teachers' Federation. The CTF also provided all funding for us to attend.

Students from ages 10-13 participated, and represented a wide variety of demographics, backgrounds and languages found in schools across Canada. Every territory and province was represented, and care had also been taken to make sure that an array of urban, rural, affluent, impoverished, immigrant, First Nation, and many other groups were represented. Exposure to other students whose experiences were vastly different from their own was a big eye-opener for the students who attended with me.

Over several days the students met, discussed, debated and learned about poverty in Canada. The focus was on student-led initiatives, and the work

resulted in a number of speeches that were presented at a public Town Hall meeting in Ottawa. The meeting was attended by many social activists, politicians, teachers and family members, as well as the provincial representatives of the CTF. The overall experience was as compelling as it was emotional.

My two students then had an opportunity to meet with federal MPs. We met with Liberal, Green and NDP Members of Parliament, and in each meeting the students presented their concerns and discussed possible strategies. The MPs were very struck by the students' passion and interest and requested that they be kept up to date on what action to alleviate poverty is being taken in their communities and schools later on.

Participation in the conference was the culmination of in-class work we had been doing over the preceding couple of weeks, and is currently being expanded on in our classroom. This work, as well as a grassroots social action initiative spearheaded by students, will be expanding to the school and the community at large later on in the school year. The experiences of the two students who went to the conference have been invaluable in facilitating our discussions and activities in class; the passion they feel about the topic is very real and present, and has made an impression on their classmates, friends and families.

Active participation in civil society is something that I believe all teachers wish for our students, and this was truly a remarkable way to get them involved.

Sam Paterson is a Grade 5 French Immersion teacher at Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Philips.



Meeting with Tyrone Benskin. I-r: Sara Hildebrand, Keep the Promise; Sam Paterson, Rohith McKim; Tyrone Benskin, NDP MP.



# EDGE 2013 Conference Partners Receive National Red Cross Award

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA), the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Faculty of Education at Memorial University have together received a national Red Cross Partners in Humanity Citation for their combined work in designing and hosting the EDGE 2013 conference.

The award is in recognition of their commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable people within their community by assisting the Red Cross to effectively mobilize the power of humanity.

The EDGE 2013 conference, titled *At the Edge: Creating Direction for Peace and Justice*, took place August 21-23, 2013 at Memorial University. The goal of the conference was to bring together people and organizations involved in educating and working with youth who recognize that "in every act of violence and injustice there is a message that needs to be understood" (Jean Vanier, 2008). At the conference, participants listened to and reflected on these messages and committed to personal and organizational change.

Dr. Dorothy Vaandering, assistant professor with the Faculty of Education, was chair of the EDGE 2013 conference. She says that several positive changes in our community have already begun.

"Many initiatives began in those few days that are now being realized," said Dr. Vaandering. "A provincial restorative justice consortium is now a reality and hosted at MUN, the impetus for a provincial Violence Elimination Project recently initiated by the Harris Centre originated as a result of the conference; collaborative relationships amongst organizations for youth were strengthened and now this national recognition of our efforts by the Red Cross indicates that so many at the conference have taken up the challenge to live out a new vision for our world, based on every human person as important, where we commit to changing and becoming the cooperative one, the understanding one, the listening one."

The award presentation took place on December 9, 2014 at the Teaching and Learning Commons on the St. John's campus. Ms. Anna Power, Manager

of Fund Development in the Newfoundland and Labrador region with the Red Cross, presented the awards to each of the partners.

"The EDGE conference was an excellent example of the power of humanity at work in our communities here in Newfoundland and Labrador," said Ms. Power. "The organizers, along with the Canadian Red Cross, had a vision for a conference on social justice with youth as our focus. Red Cross is proud to recognize this very successful collaboration with the Partners in Humanity Citation."

This national award is rarely presented to large public institutions. Past recipients of the award include Kids Help Phone, WestJet, Desjardins and Walmart.



Anna Power of the Red Cross presents the national Red Cross Partners in Humanity Citation to NLTA President James Dinn (left) and NLTA Administrative Officer, George Tucker. (Photo credit: Chris Hammond)



## 2013-14 National Award for Teaching Excellence in Physical Education

**Z**oe Hamilton, a teacher at Carbonear Academy, is the recipient of the 2013-14 National Award for Teaching Excellence in Physical Education. She will be presented this award at the Physical & Health Education (PHE) Canada's National conference in Banff, Alberta in spring 2015. The PHE Canada National Award for Teaching Excellence in Physical Education presented by Wintergreen Phys-Ed, honours Canadian teachers who provide outstanding teaching performance at the elementary, middle or secondary levels, who have an exceptional ability to motivate students to participate in a lifetime of physical activity, and who further Physical Education in Canada. Zoe holds a Bachelor of Physical Education from Acadia University, Master of Physical Education from Memorial University and also a Master of Education in Administration from Memorial.

Zoe has always done a great job of uncovering and utilizing the strengths of all those she leads. She is a strong advocate for a quality physical education program and works tirelessly to meet the needs of her diverse students with a multitude of interests and ability levels. She embraces inclusionary practices varying content and delivery methods in lessons and adapting games and sport equipment so all students can experience the wide diversity of activities her physical education program offers.



Zoe Hamilton enjoys some outdoor fun with her students.

Zoe sees active participation as a top priority, nobody is left out and those who tend to shy away from being involved are reached out to and encouraged.

Zoe is also very passionate about instilling

in young girls a sense of equality, empowerment, self-esteem and positive body image. Her physical education programs and extra-curricular activities encourage girls to get involved in sports and focus on health and fitness. Zoe's classes provide students with an environment that helps them accept and celebrate their bodies and their true selves and those of others. Her classroom/gym becomes a community in which all students are respected, accepted and treated equally and where health and wellness are exemplified.

Developing physical literacy in the youngest students is vital. Zoe works hard with the younger grades to instill a joy for activity by developing fundamental movement skills and attitudes because she believes this will encourage future participation and enjoyment of a wide range of physical activities as the students grow and mature. To the untrained eye sometimes her classes may look chaotic, but once you look closer you will see peer mentoring, ability groupings, individual practice all while she moves about the class giving individual attention to as many students as she can. No matter what is happening in her busy school, Zoe tries her best to ensure no one misses "gym". Her quest for the development of physical literacy carries outside the gymnasium as teachers discuss sportsmanship, responsibility and healthy lifestyles in other subject areas and participate with the students in the school-wide events she often organizes.

Zoe takes on many leadership roles including the development of Family Fun Days, K-1 skating program, special event days and organizing all extracurricular and intramural activities. She also has a gift whereby she can instill in children competitiveness that still fosters being 'good sports'. While they usually play to win, intra and extramural teams are often recognized for their "sportsmanship". This is a reflection of Zoe's modeling and empowerment of student leaders. All of these activities require much help to deliver. Zoe motivates and encourages her co-teachers and parent volunteers to get involved and they always leave an event talking about the fun they had as supervisors and oftentimes, participants themselves.

Along with being highly involved in activities at

her school, Zoe is also always striving to bring school and community together in a way that encourages healthy active lifestyles for all ages. In 2009, Zoe spearheaded a program through Community Health and developed a monthly activity-based program that welcomed both students and their families to get active. These “Family Fun Nights” included physical activity, healthy snacks and opportunities for parents and children to spend time together. In 2012, Zoe was a fundamental part of the Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games organizing committee as registration coordinator. Since 2008, she has helped the local Sea Cadet Corps with fitness training and volunteers as an executive member of their sponsoring body. Zoe also works closely with the community recreation program promoting and participating in their events.

Contributing to the physical education profession, Zoe has served in varying capacities to both the provincial and national organizations for the past 12 years. She is the current president of the provincial NLTA Physical Education Special Interest Council (PESIC), and sits on the Council of Provinces and Territories for PHE Canada. During her first term as President of PESIC, the first Winter PESIC Conference was held in Corner Brook. PESIC felt its province's physical educators would benefit greatly from professional development that could be utilized during the winter months of the school year. Zoe has sat on curriculum development committees at the Department of Education, delivered professional development sessions for the school district and at provincial conferences and she taught a PE course at MUN's School of Human Kinetics and Recreation during summer session. She is well respected and a positive influence on her peers and future PE teachers.

Zoe is the ninth national winner in the last 10 years from Newfoundland and Labrador. Only three awards are presented annually across the country. There are many deserving physical educators in our province and PESIC depends on teachers and administrators to acknowledge their contributions not only to PE, but also to positive school culture and the growth of comprehensive school health. PESIC provides an avenue of recognition through the provincial award program and PHE Canada encompasses a wider program on the national front. Please encourage physical educators by nominating him/her for an award.

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# Financing a Year of Deferred Salary Leave

by STEFANIE TUFF

The Deferred Salary Leave Plan (DSLP) is available to any tenured teacher in a permanent position covered by the NLTA Collective Agreement. The terms of reference and other details of the DSLP are set out in Article 51 of the provincial contract (Article 57 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement). Many teachers find the DSLP an excellent means of financing a year of leave to pursue travel, family time, other employment, further studies, or any interest(s) one might have. Leave under the DSLP is fully credited for purposes of pension, seniority, severance pay, salary increments, and sick leave. The plan is registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), which does not allow the year of leave to be taken as the last year before retirement. **The deadline to apply for enrolment in the DSLP beginning in September is April 30 of the previous school year.** So, a teacher wanting to start paying in to a DSLP in September 2015 would have to submit his/her application to the school district by the end of April 2015. Application forms can be accessed on the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca). Click on "Forms" and scroll down to "D".

While the DSLP provides an excellent opportunity for personal and professional rejuvenation, it is important to understand the economic realities of taking a deferred leave. NLTA Administrative Officers in Programs and Services are often asked what the "difference" is in take-home pay while participating in the DSLP. We cannot provide specific financial details or advice to members because each individual's situation is different and all financial matters, such as salary levels, income tax rates, CPP and EI contribution rates, etc. are subject to change. Accordingly, the information provided herein contains rough estimates only.

The following comparisons of net salary for a teacher on full salary versus the various DSLP options are rough calculations for illustrative purposes only. Each individual teacher's situation will be different. The estimates are based on the salaries

that were in effect as of September 2014 as per the new collective agreements that were recently ratified. Taxes deducted vary for each teacher and they are approximations only, based on information provided by Teacher Payroll. EI and CPP deductions are based on 2015 formulae. All estimated figures are rounded to the nearest dollar. Teachers participating in the DSLP continue to pay pension premiums based on the full, unreduced salary. EI premiums are paid on the full salary, but are not paid during the year of leave. Therefore, teachers may not be eligible for EI benefits in the year following the year of deferred salary leave, which may have implications for those wishing to take maternity leave right after a deferred salary leave.

Any further questions on the Deferred Salary Leave Plan should be directed to an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599. Email inquiries sent to [mail@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.nl.ca) will be directed to appropriate Programs and Services staff for a response.

Full Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	68,341	79,156	89,548
Estimated Tax	12,949	16,290	19,569
Estimated EI	931	931	931
Estimated CPP	2,480	2,480	2,480
NLTA Fees	854	989	1,119
Pension Deduction	6,390	7,401	8,373
<b>Estimated Net*</b>	<b>44,737</b>	<b>51,065</b>	<b>57,076</b>

\* Estimated Net does not include an individual's insurances and other deductions.



2/3 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	45,561	52,771	59,699
Estimated Tax	5,722	7,305	9,321
Estimated EI	931	931	931
Estimated CPP	2,082	2,439	2,480
NLTA Fees	570	660	746
Pension Deduction	6,390	7,401	8,373
<b>Estimated Net*</b>	<b>29,866</b>	<b>34,035</b>	<b>37,848</b>

\* Estimated Net does not include an individual's insurances and other deductions.

3/4 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	51,256	59,367	67,161
Estimated Tax	7,188	9,540	11,863
Estimated EI	931	931	931
Estimated CPP	2,364	2,480	2,480
NLTA Fees	641	742	840
Pension Deduction	6,390	7,401	8,373
<b>Estimated Net*</b>	<b>33,742</b>	<b>38,273</b>	<b>42,674</b>

\* Estimated Net does not include an individual's insurances and other deductions.

4/5 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	54,673	63,325	71,638
Estimated Tax	8,292	10,892	13,388
Estimated EI	931	931	931
Estimated CPP	2,480	2,480	2,480
NLTA Fees	683	792	895
Pension Deduction	6,390	7,401	8,373
<b>Estimated Net*</b>	<b>35,897</b>	<b>40,829</b>	<b>45,571</b>

\* Estimated Net does not include an individual's insurances and other deductions.

Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.

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## *Arbitration Ruling*

# An Interpretation of Clause 10.06

by STEVE BROOKS

On January 6, 2015, the Association received the Arbitrator's report concerning a case the Association brought to arbitration in 2013. The case involved a number of connected grievances that had been filed by a teacher in the course of a disciplinary process. The teacher in question had initially been suspended with pay while allegations were being investigated, as is the practice under Clause 10.06 of the Provincial Collective Agreement. However, the Employer moved the process further, suspending the teacher without pay and eventually terminating the employment relationship. As a result of these actions, three grievances were filed by the teacher. The first dealt with the decision of the employer to suspend without pay. The second dealt with the employer's inappropriate delay in administering discipline while the teacher was on unpaid suspension, and the third grievance was with regards to the termination of the teacher's employment.

The Arbitration report, provided by arbitrator John Roil, upheld the initial grievance, and the teacher was awarded compensation for the period of unpaid suspension. As a result, the second grievance was considered to be addressed since the teacher should not have been suspended without pay. The third grievance was denied and the termination of the teacher's employment was upheld.

This was a complicated case and, as Arbitrator Roil pointed out in his decision: *This dispute involves a series of related grievances in a somewhat convoluted fact situation involving incidents and disciplinary steps which occurred over a period of 5/6 years.*

While the ultimate decision regarding the teacher's employment status is not what the Association was hoping for, the ruling in relation to the interpretation of Clause 10.06 is significant and favourable for teachers. Clause 10.06 states:

*Teachers under investigation or charged will not automatically lose pay or benefits while under a period of suspension prior to the determination of guilt or innocence. If upon investigation, the School Board feels that disciplinary action is necessary, such action shall be taken in accordance with the provisions of the Collective*

*Agreement. In situations where the School Board is unable to investigate the matter to its satisfaction, but where the Board feels that the teacher should be removed from his or her current assignment on an interim basis, the teacher shall not lose pay or benefits.*

This is an important clause in the Agreement since it protects teachers from being automatically suspended without pay while the employer investigates alleged inappropriate behaviour. It should be noted that Clause 10.06 did not exist prior to 1993 and, up until then, if a teacher was accused of a serious offence, it was standard practice for the Employer to automatically suspend the teacher immediately without pay or benefits. If a teacher found themselves facing criminal charges and a lengthy trial they could be without income for a considerable period of time. If a teacher was exonerated they would receive compensation in the form of back wages and benefits. In 1993, the Association successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding that created what is, in effect, what we have today in Clause 10.06.

In his decision, Arbitrator Roil observed that, while Clause 10.06 does use the term "suspend", it is really a "leave with pay" and, in this case: *No determination on blameworthiness was available or intended. (The teacher) was entitled in the courts to the presumption of innocence and under the Collective Agreement, (the teacher) was entitled to the same presumption in (his/her) employment.*

In fact, it was determined through the course of the arbitration proceedings that a teacher could not be disciplined without the Employer having concluded that just cause existed. Suspension without pay is a form of discipline and this was acknowledged by the Employer during cross examination.

Arbitrator Roil goes on to further clarify what Clause 10.06 is meant to achieve: *What really happens when a teacher is removed from duties pending an investigation is that he/she is effectively on a form of leave with pay and benefits. It is not strictly speaking a suspension in the sense that Article 10.01 uses that word. In the end, in this Collective Agreement, until the*

*Employer is able to investigate the situation to its “satisfaction”, the teacher is to remain on pay and benefits. Those are the negotiated terms.*

This is a clear ruling on the interpretation and application of Clause 10.06 and the protection that teachers have from disciplinary action without proper and due process. Should a teacher be notified that they are being placed on a Clause 10.06 leave of absence they should immediately contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services.

*Steve Brooks is Assistant Executive Director of the NLTA.*

# The Schools Act and Responsibility of Teachers

by STEFANIE TUFF

**Q.** What does the *Schools Act* say about the duties of teachers?

**A.** The *Schools Act, 1997* (the Act) is the main piece of legislation governing the provincial K-12 public education system. As such, it addresses many different topics and issues but, with respect to the duties of teachers, section 33 of the Act reads as follows:

33. A teacher's responsibilities shall include  
 (a) providing instruction to students and encouraging and fostering student learning;  
 (b) promoting goals and standards applicable to the provision of education approved under this Act;  
 (c) teaching the courses of study and education programs that are prescribed or approved under this Act;  
 (d) regularly evaluating students and periodically reporting the results of the evaluation to the student and his or her parent;  
 (d.1) promoting a safe and caring learning environment;  
 (e) under the direction of the principal, maintaining and supervising order and discipline among the students while they are in the school or on the school grounds and while they are attending or participating in activities that are determined by the principal, with the teachers of the school, to be school activities;

(f) where the teacher is employed in a French first language school, promoting cultural identity and French language in the school; and

(g) carrying out those duties that are assigned to the teacher by the principal or the board.

It is fair to say that the language of section 33 is quite general and the responsibilities described therein would not come as a surprise to any teacher. All the various aspects of teachers' day-to-day professional lives would fall under one or more of the categories set out in sub-sections (a) to (f). However, section 33 is not a detailed job description, nor is it a list of every single thing that teachers do over the course of a school year. Sub-section (g) captures this approach by referencing the responsibility of teachers to carry out the duties assigned to them by their principal or the school board.

That being said, sub-section 33(g) does not give school administrators or school districts the authority to assign tasks to teachers that fall outside of the types of responsibilities described in sub-sections (a)-(f), or to direct teachers in a manner that is not permitted by the Collective Agreement. For example, while a teacher can be directed to supervise students during the lunch period, as per sub-section 33(e), a school principal cannot direct a teacher to travel to school in the morning on the school bus, or in any other vehicle, in order to supervise students. Teachers can be assigned responsibility for completing student report cards, which falls under sub-section 33(d); however, teachers cannot be directed by their principal to lead/coach an after school activity or sports team as Clause 29.02 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Clause 17.02 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement) states that teachers' participation in extra-curricular activities is voluntary.

It is not possible here to address every potential scenario that might arise regarding the duties that can be assigned to teachers. Any teacher who has questions regarding this topic should contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.

*Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer with Programs and Services at the NLTA.*





# Building Collective Capacity Through Professional Learning

by GEORGE TUCKER

As an Administrative Officer at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, I am required to attend a myriad of meetings. These encounters are generally informative with a useful exchange of ideas and resources being the norm. At a recent seminar I learned that the Division of Program Development, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, has developed a website, [www.k12pl.nl.ca](http://www.k12pl.nl.ca), that is a repository of exceptional useful resources that may be used by teachers to enhance their professional learning.

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**“[www.k12pl.nl.ca](http://www.k12pl.nl.ca)...is a repository of exceptional useful resources that may be used by teachers to enhance their professional learning.”**

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Extensive professional reading and personal experience over nearly 35 years as an educator in the Newfoundland and Labrador K-12 education system has taught me that teachers are expected to be highly trained, highly motivated, and therefore highly effective as they meet the challenges associated with increasingly diverse student populations. Students need refined literacy, learning and innovation, and life and career skills which will enable them to successfully navigate their world. Having the ability to help students develop these skills requires that teachers develop their own knowledge, skills and instructional practices to meet their own, and students' evolving needs. Research findings, as espoused by current literature, indicates that professional learning should focus on student achievement. Subsequently, student achievement has become a prime focus as teachers identify areas for their own learning, including tasks associated with teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation, and reflection.

In recent years, I have noticed that teacher profes-

sional learning in Newfoundland and Labrador has moved from a “one-size-fits-all” model, to one where teacher learning is guided by three principles which state that professional learning:

- occurs in collaborative, reflective communities where: a shared vision, mission, and goals create high expectations for all; collective responsibility is developed through collaboration, feedback and support; individual responsibility is developed through data analysis, inquiry, and reflection
- is guided by student and teacher learning needs where: data is examined to determine areas of need for students and teachers; authentic learning experiences are designed to address needs; new strategies are used and reflected upon to determine impact on student learning
- is designed to foster change in practice where: a differentiated learning experience is available to teachers through application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; a variety of settings offer authentic opportunities for active engagement and collaborative learning; sustained learning and reflection is the norm.

These guiding principles describe essential elements of effective professional learning for all teachers as they successfully implement new teaching strategies and behaviours. Whether teachers are building on the quality of instruction in a current curriculum area or they are preparing to implement new curriculum, teachers need high-quality professional learning that will lead to positive change.

During the time that I have spent on the [www.k12pl.nl.ca](http://www.k12pl.nl.ca) website, it has become clear to me that the professional learning opportunities for new course implementations follow a Professional Learning Model which is guided by these principles. The model supports a focused, yet self-directed route towards professional learning that is ongoing and collaborative, embedded in daily practice, and tailored to meet specific student and teacher learning needs. It is a flexible approach to professional learning, which includes three modules: **Orientation**, **Exploration**, and **Investigation**. The modules are

connected and build on each other. As teachers participate in this process, the content of successive modules is tailored to meet individual needs.

**Orientation (Module 1)** – provides a thorough overview of the new curriculum. During Orientation, time is provided for teachers to focus on curriculum guides, student and teacher resources, and instructional planning. This module also introduces fundamental pedagogy, supported by practical classroom examples. To support this stage of professional learning, the Division of Program Development creates online multimedia content located at [www.k12pl.nl.ca](http://www.k12pl.nl.ca). This site is a repository of professional learning information. As participants reflect on the information, they are encouraged to forward questions to their district program specialists. This module may be completed individually or in small groups in May, prior to a fall implementation.

**Exploration (Module 2)** – provides teachers with an opportunity to clarify information or discuss questions arising from the Orientation session; further explore new concepts and instructional strategies; become more familiar with course outcomes; and reflect on their own teaching and learning strengths and needs. This module gives teachers opportunities to collaboratively engage in discussion and activities to prepare for instruction. It is facilitated by a curriculum leader (e.g., *grade level lead teacher, department head, program specialist*) where participants meet in a face-to-face or virtual setting in June, prior to a fall implementation.

**Investigation (Module 3)** – provides teachers with an opportunity to ask questions related to the Exploration module, further examine outcomes, concepts, and instructional strategies, and plan for course delivery. Teachers are actively engaged with the new content, pedagogy, and resources. This module is facilitated by curriculum leaders, usually in a larger group setting, early in the school year of implementation. Participants continue to engage as colleagues within a professional learning community focused on increasing knowledge and refining skills.

It is important to note that with any professional learning designed within the guiding principles framework, the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for success does not end after the completion of one, two, or three sessions. Rather, teachers will continue to evolve and hone their skills over the duration of their teaching careers. No longer is there one recipe or one prescription for every teacher. It is obvious that sustained and substantial professional learning will grow and change as our education system evolves. It seems to me that there is great potential for the school system as a whole to continue

to build the collective capacity necessary for more focused teacher learning and for lasting success.

As I understand it, the Division of Program Development, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, plans to continue to support and refine the Orientation, Exploration, and Investigation model of professional learning. With ever evolving technology, future plans include a more dynamic and interactive Orientation. Stronger connections between teachers, curriculum specialists and resources will have powerful impacts on classroom practice. To check out the potential of the online multimedia content for yourself, visit [www.k12pl.nl.ca](http://www.k12pl.nl.ca).

If you have any questions, concerns or feedback re the article presented, please contact me at your convenience. I may be reached at [gtucker@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:gtucker@nlta.nl.ca). I look forward to hearing from you.

*George Tucker is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*

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# Educational Leave — New Realities

by BEVERLEY PARK

It is a fact that when teachers graduate from university and become certified to teach, their learning is far from being complete. They will learn much from their experiences of daily life as a teacher. However, most teachers also pursue formal studies, and are encouraged to do so. Not only does it ensure that you are current as a professional, it is also a way to give yourself a raise as you move up the levels of certification. The challenge is often to find the time; it is not easy to juggle all the demands of an already busy life, let alone take time for study. If you have five years of experience in Newfoundland and Labrador, you are eligible to apply for educational leave.

The purpose of this article is to inform those who have applied, or who may apply in the future, of the new reality which affects the supply and demand of educational leave. Obtaining educational leave was always a competitive process with fewer leaves available than applications received. For those of you who have applied for Educational Leave for this year be aware that for the next two years or while this current collective agreement is in effect, it will become even more so. For those governed by the “provincial” agreement – the island of Newfoundland and Southern and Eastern Labrador – the number of leaves available is now half what they were. (For those governed by the Labrador West agreement there is no change; three leaves are available per year for teachers in Labrador West.) Since the number of applications has been consistently high, this reduction in leaves means that there will be a lot of disappointed teachers when decisions are made in March.

While the criteria for awarding leaves are noted on the application, the biggest factor is the district’s recommendations or rankings. This is done considering the needs of the district and whether or not a teacher’s job is in jeopardy should he or she not complete their studies. In only rare cases would the committee overrule the district’s suggestions. For example, if a teacher was granted leave in the recent

past, and the district ranked him or her high enough to be granted leave for 2015-16, the committee would not, in all likelihood, grant the leave. This is in an attempt to be fair and equitable in the distribution of a scarce resource.

If you were one of those fortunate to be granted leave, please inform the Department of Education immediately of your intention to take the leave. This also gives your district and your school time to plan for your absence. If circumstances have changed between the time you applied and the granting of the leave such that you are now unable to go to school as planned, please make this known as well. As you can appreciate, many teachers will be waitlisted, and the sooner we can re-allocate an unused leave, the easier it is for a colleague to make plans for time off for study.

The district deadline for applications to be received was January 16. They are now being reviewed by district personnel who will forward them to the Department of Education. In March the provincial Educational Leave Committee, made up of representatives from the districts, the NLTA and the Department of Education, will meet to make decisions. Notices will be sent to all applicants shortly thereafter.

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*Beverley Park is Senior Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA.*





## **THE ELLA MANUEL SCHOLARSHIP 2015**

The Ella Manuel Scholarship is being offered in 2015 to assist a young **woman** from Newfoundland and Labrador to further her education in topics related to social, cultural and environmental well-being of the province. Valued at **\$3000**, the award is in memory of Ella Manuel, Newfoundland writer, broadcaster, feminist, and peace activist.

Applicants expecting to graduate this year from high schools in Newfoundland and Labrador are asked to submit through their school Principal a **two-page essay** (*1000 words maximum*) describing how their interests and ambitions relate to environmental and social issues in their communities. This must be accompanied by the Principal's Recommendation Form, duly signed and completed. This can be found at the Trust website.

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 may be given to applicants from rural areas.

The Ella Manuel Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of Suncor Foundation and individual donors.

Completed applications must be received by **April 30, 2015** and sent to:

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1

Fax: 726-4302 or toll-free 1-877-711-6582

scardoulis@nlta.nl.ca

**For more information see [www.EllaManuelTrust.ca](http://www.EllaManuelTrust.ca)**





# Entitled

by BEVERLEY PARK

Other than a strong belief in being entitled to human rights and freedoms, generally I am disturbed by the concept of entitlement. Opportunities, privileges, goods and services should be equally accessible to all. While that sounds rather socialistic, I am not promoting some political or social system – just commenting on the man in seat 13D on a recent flight from Halifax whose inflated ego and overgrown sense of self-worth fed his sense of entitlement.

He boards the plane just ahead of me, talking way more loudly than necessary on his cell phone. He seems to subscribe to the belief that if he talks louder, he and what he has to say gains importance. Wrong. He cuts in line nearly taking out an eye as he slings his overstuffed computer case onto his back. He's also dragging a bag that should definitely be checked luggage. I surmise that there are two possible reasons he didn't check it: Either he thinks his time is so important he couldn't possibly wait five minutes at a luggage carousel or he's too cheap to pay the \$25.

Some time back I taught junior high math, which included basic calculations on dimensions and volume. I know that most 13-year-olds were able to grasp the concept of what size items can and cannot fit into a given size of container. As he tried to stuff his impossibly sized "shouldn't-be-a-carry-on in the first place" bag into the bin, he holds up the rest of us who are waiting to take our seats in the rows further back. Worse, he starts to remove items placed in the bin by others – a young family with a child who had boarded earlier. He shuffles their items with total disregard as to whether they might be fragile or perhaps something that they might need in flight.

No amount of the tenacity (which he probably boasts as a secret of his success [in some world]) will make the case fit. Finally, after an over-indulgent amount of time, the flight attendant confirms what the rest of us know and suggests that he place it under the seat "if we can wedge it in there." He is absolutely appalled at the idea as that would leave him somewhat cramped with no place to stretch his feet. Duh! So, she agrees to take it to the front and store it in the closet in business class. He smiles –

another "win." Why do I find this so frustrating? Because more than once I have seen passengers chastised for doing what he just did and forced to have luggage sky-checked or sent back to baggage. For some reason this guy was not. He wore his sense of entitlement like some kind of badge which said "untouchable, treat me special."

He finally takes his place which allows the rest of us to board. All the while he continues his business conversation with his phone wedged between his neck and chin while he straps in – oblivious, or worse, aware but with zero regard, for the effect of his actions on others.

You have likely heard the expression "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." I think in this case it might be a little money or a little power. At some time someone somewhere conveyed to him that he was above others, that his needs came first and that he somehow was entitled to more than the rest of us.

I believe strongly in displaying confidence; but there is a not-so-fine line between confidence which impels you to stand up for yourself and arrogance which propels one to expect more than his/her fair share or to believe that indeed their fair share is more than everyone else's. No one is more entitled than any other to courtesy, kindness and respect.

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**"No one is more entitled than any other to courtesy, kindness and respect."**

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In many instances, as teachers, we find ourselves in positions where we could take the upper hand. We have the privilege of position or knowledge or authority. We should always be mindful of the effects of our behaviours on others, on how we are perceived.

That man, that day, in 13D, was wearing a coat with a company logo. The same logo was on his briefcase. He became, for me, the image of that company. I suspect the same is true for the many others who were on that flight and who witnessed his behaviour that day. It reminded me that I am the

NLTA, just like you are the NLTA. Whether or not we wear a logo; whether or not we are in a professional setting, each of us is a teacher and in the eyes of those around you – whether it be at the corner store or the cinema or on the beach – we represent teachers. This can sometimes feel like a burden – but it is also a privilege.

---

**“...we represent teachers.  
This can sometimes feel like a burden –  
but it is also a privilege.”**

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I will end this with one of the many, many lessons I learned from my mother. With little formal education, she was more knowledgeable than I will ever be ... a lesson in itself. She was masterful at observing human behaviour; she treated everyone with respect; she never once displayed a sense of entitlement. As I took my seat on the plane, I thought about mom. She would have observed the whole scene and hoped that I had taken my blood pressure meds. Then, she would have turned to me with a kind of all-knowing simile and said: “My dear, that fellow in 13D – if you could buy him for what he’s worth and sell him for what he thinks he’s worth, you’d make a fortune!”

That’s my opinion, and I’m entitled to it!

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*Beverley Park is Senior Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*

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# The Magic of Elder Mediation

by JUDY BERANGER

*I thought we were a close family – until Mom needed care. Of six children, two of us were doing the lion's share. Our other siblings didn't even want to discuss how they might help. On the Doctor's recommendation our family participated in mediation and two of my other sisters who had been very reluctant at first, committed to sharing some of the load.*

Elder Mediation, also called mediation with age related issues, is a form of mediation that is concerned specifically with age-related issues at home, in the community or in the workplace. Traditionally it was utilized by families and organizations with regard to health care, estate and other later life concerns, but today it is also utilized in the workplace arena for age-related situations. Elder Mediation is a process where a trained mediator creates a safe and respectful environment to facilitate conversations with a focus on heightening quality of life for all involved. The myriad of changes and stresses that occur are addressed and plans are put in place to best direct available and willing energy and resources. The conversations are initiated as a result of a direct concern, a brewing conflict or in response to anticipated changes. If distance is a problem, participation in the mediation can be through telephone or other internet-based communication methods (e.g. Skype, Facetime, etc.)

## Supporting Each Other When Times Are Difficult

Teachers are not exempt from the stresses that can occur as a result of being the older person on staff or as a result of supporting older family members. A Certified Elder Mediator is sensitized to the importance of empathy and to the nuances that present with the occurrence of age-related issues. A skilled mediator can support all involved to engage in constructive, essential conversations when expectations are high or when conflict may be present. The mediation process can help preserve, improve, and sometimes even restore relationships.

*I can retire at any time but will continue working. I love teaching and I am not the retiring type. I was frustrated with the jokes about my age along with subtle pressure to free up my position. I talked with my principal about what felt like harassment. He suggested media-*

*tion and asked the others to participate. I was amazed at how quickly we were able to talk. One of the three actually apologized! After the mediation, I felt less anxious. The ageist jokes and disrespectful comments decreased.*

Elder Mediation can accommodate either small or larger numbers of participants who are interested in making a difference. Present strengths and common values are explored. When work related, all who were involved with the situation, or just the two or three who were directly involved, may be in attendance. If desired, it is not uncommon to include appropriate professionals and service providers. When it is family related it can include the family and others the family knows who are willing to give support or share expertise.

*We invited Mom's sister and Dad's brother to the mediation to talk about supporting Mom with Dad's care since breaking his hip. The stress had really escalated in our family with Mom's daily calls and demands. The mediation helped in getting all of us more involved. I can actually concentrate on school for a change. With the extra support I didn't feel guilty anymore and didn't have to be on the run the minute I left school. My brothers, who rarely did anything in the past, are helping more. They realized I was at the breaking point. Even though we have escalating needs and demands in regard to my parents it seems like we are stronger as a family.*

Elder Mediation presents an opportunity for heightened understanding and a challenge to release old stereotypes. It is not uncommon for at least one of the participants to be unaware that something is wrong, while another feels overwhelmed by present expectations. When the mediation is family related it allows for one to experience relatives in the present day context – not seeing them in the roles remembered from the past. If you enjoyed your family time together as children and were always there for each other, you are more able to respond to new challenges. Alternatively, if the growing up years were difficult you may be harboring sadness, biases and assumptions that may or may not represent reality in today's adult world. Families frequently report that most members – regardless of their earlier role in the family – are moved by the Elder Mediation process to provide more cooperative support.

Attitudinal barriers can also create havoc, both in family and work settings. Ageism, considered to be one of the most “accepted” forms of discrimination, is rampant. Age discrimination claims are on the rise in Canada and HR departments are promoting heightened respect and elimination of ageist language and jokes. Human Rights Tribunals are moving to zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviours and comments related to age. It is not uncommon to use Elder Mediation in those situations.

*Shawna was avoiding conversations with her colleagues. She had endured endless comments about her age, about being behind the times, set in her ways, being technically illiterate, taking up a good job and numerous ageist jokes all “said in jest”. In mediation she told her colleagues how very hurtful and ageist this was. As it turned out the colleagues didn’t realize how disrespectful they were and agreed to stop.*

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**“Mediation builds trust in the workplace and is known to reduce disrespect and bullying.”**

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Mediation builds trust in the workplace and is known to reduce disrespect and bullying. As in the above case, when ageism is reduced, conflict lessens and productivity increases. Elder Mediation is also becoming recognized as an important step on the continuum of care for older family members – often reducing conflict, promoting wellness, developing prevention strategies and enhancing quality of life. The focus is on addressing identified concerns and issues, while maintaining and strengthening the myriad of relationships critical to overall well-being. Issues that are addressed include financial, retirement, job related transfers, promotions, relationships, health care, intergenerational, caregiving, estate planning – any issue that may create or has created conflict.

*Our son doesn’t want anyone to find out that we were attending elder mediation and said he felt ashamed. He is studying in the medical field and wants us all to present as the perfect little family. His talk with the elder mediator before the sessions helped him understand what this was. He decided to attend and to let go of the perfect family image.*

Witnessing resilience is common in Elder Mediation. Relationships are often strengthened, confidence grows, close bonds are established, and in some situations are re-established.

*We were going in circles for three years. Decisions were being dragged out and painful. Even though my*

*anxiety was high I spent my entire summer holidays looking after Dad. It took a few sessions but we were all surprised at how participating in elder mediation changed things for us in good ways. As a result of most of us chipping in, we were able to keep Dad in his own home – his deepest wish.*

Research has demonstrated that the Elder Mediation process can reduce the overall stress in systems, enhances the functionality of the support network and heightens interpersonal communications. It has been shown that the appropriate application of Mediation to age-related issues appears to result in significant cost savings to families, to organizations and to government. Research from such organizations as the *Respite and Relief Elder Mediation Program* in Cornwall, Ontario, is but one example of many research initiatives that is reporting these promising outcomes.

There is a tale from the Middle East that captures the essence of mediation. A father gave 17 camels to his three sons – 1/2 to his eldest, 1/3 to his middle son and 1/9 to his youngest. The sons were delighted with the gift but it didn’t take long for conflict to erupt. “How can I take 1/2 of 17 camels?” the eldest asked. The others agreed. Not knowing how to do the proper split they decided to consult a wise elder in the village. She advised them to resolve this issue on their own and to assist in the outcome, she gave them one of her camels so they would have 18. The 3 sons went away to try again. The eldest son took his 1/2 of the 18 camels (9), the middle son took his 1/3 (6), and the youngest son took his 1/9th share (2). After taking their share there was still 1 camel left – which they returned to the wise elder! Supporting people to find that “18th camel” is part of the magic of Elder Mediation.

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*Judy is a Wellness and Employee Assistance Coordinator with the EAP for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Judy Beranger (ext. 265) or Gail Carroll (ext. 242).*



# “GRiT” – Girls Revelling in Technology

by LAUN SHOEMAKER

Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s has held sessions for the Boys Undercover Reading Program (BURP) for five years now. The goal of the BURP project is to inspire a passion for reading in boys. The premise of the program is that by offering boys literature specific to their interests in a social and shared way, boys will begin to change their perceptions of reading; instead of a solitary and sedentary activity, reading can be active, focus discussion and create energy. The program functions very effectively and for the past several years, boys have proclaimed an enthusiastic “YES” when they see BURP noted on the daily schedule. BURP takes place in our Learning Resource Centre, and for one 40-minute session each week boys are escorted to the library for this stimulating literacy activity. During this session, girls have remained in the classroom and worked on a variety of educational projects. A unique opportunity to have a program tailored distinctively for girls presented itself, and many of us wondered what that program might be and how it might work.

In the course of discussions around STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) projects, we noted some gaps between boys’ and girls’ attitudes and receptiveness to science and engineering topics. Girls seemed to be less enthusiastic about these topics, even though their academic performance was largely equal. With a bit more research, further statistics revealed some concerning data; WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) reports that less than 25 percent of the STEM workforce in Canada is women. WISE’s 2014 study, *Career Choices and Influencers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math: An Analysis of the Maritime Provinces*, notes, “students who had engaged in STEM activities were 2.7 times more likely to consider a STEM career.” The report concludes that “the only effective means of increasing the likelihood for girls to consider STEM careers is by engaging them in highly active STEM activities.” This research was compelling and identi-

fied an area that could provide a study area for our girls during the boys’ BURP sessions. Teachers formulated an action plan to formalize and fund a program for the girls.

BURP has a pretty cool and boy-marketed name, and we needed something similarly cool for the girls, so, after we played with acronyms for a while, our principal suggested “GRiT” – Girls Revelling in Technology. The full name encompassed our STEM objectives effectively while the acronym exhibited the persistence and perseverance that is necessary for success in any endeavour. So we had our name.

We felt that challenges that encouraged girls to experience, explore and examine were the type of projects best suited to the STEM endeavour. The research indicated that our projects needed to be hands on and highly engaging. From the perspective of planning, it was also important that the program be easy for teachers to set up and organize. We determined that by basing the hands-on learning portion in a wide variety of commercially available STEM “toys” and by arranging mentor-speakers, GRiT would be exciting for girls and easy to manage for teachers. With a name for the project, an outline for its goals and a plan for GRiT’s programming, what was necessary now was funding.

Newfoundland and Labrador’s Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development offers grants for youth innovation. The guidelines of this funding opportunity appeared to be well matched to our GRiT objectives, and the funding amounts available appeared to be greater than our needs. Significant to the youth innovation proposal is the request for a detailed budget. Conceptually, we knew we wanted STEM kits for the girls to explore and assemble, but practically we had no shopping list prepared. It made sense that the people building and operating these sets would also be the people choosing them, so we asked a small group of Grade 6 girls to participate in building our budget. Armed with a list of websites and catalogues, the team



selected about 60 different experiences. Rather intuitively, they chose these kits from a range of STEM areas. Their close collaboration avoided overlap and ensured that the majority of the group felt that the items chosen would be interesting and engaging for GRiT. The girls brought our budget together quickly and while we didn't alter anything on their list, we did add some management items. Storage containers and Ziploc bags would be necessary to maintain the program over time. We completed and submitted our Youth Innovation proposal.

Our funding application was approved in May of 2014, and GRiT's fall kickoff began in late September after many of our STEM kits rolled in. Girls were engaged in model making of the human body, plaster making of the space shuttle, robotics building, bridge design and construction, electrical circuit design and creating remote controlled vehicles. The projects were many and varied, and the girls were respectful of equipment. At the end of sessions they returned materials cautiously and checked that instruction sheets were replaced consistently. Since this is a critical step in ensuring the longevity of the program, we are grateful for their diligence.

In November, Andrea Scott, an instructor of Mechanical Engineering at the College of the North Atlantic, led Grade 4 GRiT in an engineering activity. Andrea is very familiar with the GRiT objectives, and she noted that she was the only female in her 1996 graduating class. Andrea commented, "At the college today, many of our programs have seen a dramatic increase in the number of females enrolled. The Mechanical Program still has a very small number of female students. The last graduating class had one female and over 30 males." Andrea led the girls through a boat building activity in which the girls were given some tape and a legal-sized sheet of aluminum foil. The girls fashioned a boat from the foil and then tested its buoyancy by filling it with nickels. The range of creative boat designs and unique solutions presented to this problem was phenomenal. The top boat held a cargo of 55 nickels (or 220g as the girls later calculated), and many groups were in the process of tweaking designs when time ran out. Andrea intends to return for another session in the winter term.

In the early part of the New Year, several GRiT sessions will be led by personnel from the WRDC (Women in Resource Development Corporation). These sessions will be modified from the WRDC's high school "GUSTO" initiative and will offer GRiT girls experiences with construction and design. The mentors leading these sessions are women currently employed in skilled trades. They will guide girls

through the construction of a usable home product.

We continue to be on the lookout for more women mentors from our parent and school community. This component of the GRiT project can offer girls exposure to careers and expertise that the STEM kits and teachers can't.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the program, girls have been completing exit cards and dialoguing with teachers. While feedback has been largely favourable, a small contingent of girls have commented that they would like to have reading time or art projects in place of STEM-focussed activities. It will be difficult to address this concern in a manner that satisfies these students and keeps the GRiT program goals foremost. But another identified criticism has been carefully actioned; the level of difficulty involved in projects is sometimes overwhelming. Bit by bit we have been addressing these issues. Teachers are helping girls organize needed parts in advance of construction and reinforcing the ordering of steps. Because some of the kits proposed in our original budget were discontinued, we had some remaining funding to order kits more appropriate to younger grades. A small team of Grade 4 girls helped with decisions on these newer items.

Positive responses to GRiT have been many. One teacher pointed out that several parents of girls in his class shared surprise and enthusiasm for "science-type" kits that appeared on their girls' Christmas wish lists resultant to GRiT experiences. It is pretty exciting to see GRiT school-based activities filter into these girls' leisure time pursuits. The girls' comments themselves have been similarly exciting and encouraging: "I love working in groups and having girl time."; "It's fun and cool, having something just for the girls!"; "I like GRiT because I get to do stuff like make plaster castings, K'nex and make robots. We can do what we like doing."; "I love GRiT...if the boys were here they would take over...it is much more fun than having free time."

The comment "*The bridge we built out of K'nex is awesome*" is truly promising. It hints at the core goals of this program; girls are working together to realize their STEM-based projects, and they are finding pride in the hard work of these accomplishments. Whether GRiT leads to a smaller gap in the disparity between males and females in STEM careers, or simply builds our girls' confidence and competence in STEM learning, the effort has been worthwhile. Collaboration, empowerment and perseverance are at the very heart of GRiT.

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*Laun Shoemaker is a teacher at Beachy Cove Elementary. He can be reached at [LaunShoemaker@nlesd.ca](mailto:LaunShoemaker@nlesd.ca).*



# Supporting Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder

by KENDRA LANE

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V* (DSM V) describes Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnostic criteria as “*persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts; and restricted, repetitive, patterns of behavior, interests or activities*”. With an increasing number of students receiving this diagnosis, it is important that we stop and consider how autism impacts them as learners. What obstacles do these students face on a daily basis? What can we do to guide them through social barriers and help regulate their behavior?

## Structuring Social Interactions

It is a common misconception that students with ASD prefer to spend time alone or are “not interested” in making friends. While this may be true for some individuals, most simply do not understand how to socialize with their peers and build relationships. This is usually the result of challenges with perspective-taking and navigating the complex, unwritten rules of social interaction.

There are many strategies we can use to encourage social learning in students with ASD depending on their level of interest and their comfort zone of social interaction. A young, verbal student who rarely initiates interaction with his classmates may benefit from structure that provides a clear *purpose* for communicating with others. For example, the student could be tasked with gathering information from each of his classmates such as ticking off a lunch order, or asking for a favorite movie or book to make class comparisons. This type of structure allows the student to practice initiating a conversation with peers, while providing visual structure (the list) and a clear purpose, beginning, and end. This activity could grow in complexity and level of interaction as the student gains both confidence and skills in carrying out the task, and facilitates positive interactions between the student and his peers.

Consider another example of an older student who struggles with friendships because her conversations with peers are restricted to her favorite topics.

We can help this student by practicing conversation pacing, such as reciprocating questions and appropriate response detail, or by providing conversation cheat cards with general and appropriate questions to ask a classmate. Students with ASD may not be able to understand another person’s perspective and what is or is not interesting to a classmate, so they often discuss what they find interesting by default. Practicing conversation skills helps students learn what others expect and visual reminders provide structure in times of uncertainty or confusion. The important thing to remember when teaching social skills is to provide instruction on what the student *can do* to be more successful, instead of focusing what they are doing wrong. These students are often trying but are genuinely confused by social nuances and expectations.

## Coping Strategies

Students with ASD can experience difficulty self-regulating – both physically and emotionally. This challenge is compounded by the natural stressors that exist in the classroom: social pressure, fast-paced communication, and changing sensory stimuli. When these students reach their *boiling point* or have *outbursts*, we must consider the implications of excess stress and poor regulation on behavior. Is this student choosing to misbehave? More often than not, the answer is no; he or she has simply lost the ability to cope with the stressors of the situation.

Obviously it is important to understand the impact of specific stressors on individual students and work to avoid combining too many of them at once. It is just as important, however, to teach students coping skills and assist them in learning how to regulate themselves. An effective approach is to establish an activity that is naturally calming to the student – one that he or she enjoys and gravitates towards by choice. This activity can be made available to the student when he or she is beginning to feel anxious or overwhelmed, allowing the reduction of stress and anxiety to a manageable level once again.

Keep in mind that the purpose of this intervention is to *prevent* escalation, not interrupt a challenging behavior. We are not coupling maladaptive behavior with a preferred item; we are creating a routine of self-regulation. Routine is powerful for students with ASD and this exercise is intended to help the student choose to engage in a coping mechanism rather than experience higher levels of stress and less control. This strategy is applicable to students of any age and ability, the type of activity and how he or she is directed to it will be adjusted accordingly. A 5-year-old may be given a block to build a tower; a 16-year-old may take ten minutes to read a comic.

This routine should be taught in the absence of stress initially, such as a scheduled time during the day so that the student understands he or she does not have to be stressed to participate. Then, if anxiety or stress climbs, the student can be redirected to structure that is calming, preferred, and well understood. When students with ASD are experiencing a heightened level of stress and anxiety, our focus should be on under-reaction and redirection to taught structure, while eliminating unnecessary verbal communication, sensory stimulation, and social pressure.

All students, including those with ASD, want to experience social and academic success at school. They want to be accepted by classmates and encouraged by teachers. To create a supportive learning environment for students on the spectrum we must consider how the characteristics of autism provide both advantages and disadvantages and implement supports to balance the load, allowing students to grow and learn alongside their peers.

*Kendra Lane is Manager, Programs & Services, with the Autism Society, Newfoundland & Labrador. She is a certified TEACCH Practitioner and is completing her graduate work in providing training and education around Autism Spectrum Disorders. Kendra can be contacted at 709-722-2803 or [klane@autism.nf.net](mailto:klane@autism.nf.net).*

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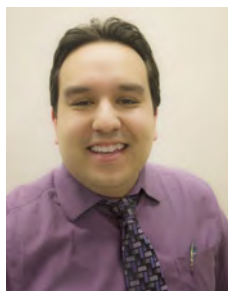
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# *Build It and They Will Learn* Using Minecraft to Inspire Learning

by JASON AUE

**I**t was about two years ago when my 11-year-old nephew, AJ, introduced me to the world of Minecraft. For those who are unfamiliar with Minecraft, it is a video game that has several ways or modes of playing; the most popular of which is creative mode. In creative mode the player is placed in an open environment and can build anything they want with the items the game has to offer. It is similar to a digital version of Lego blocks. In introducing me to Minecraft, my nephew showed me the house he had built, how he planted and harvested crops to eat, and even a roller coaster he had built just for fun. Maybe it was the teacher inside, but I didn't really understand the point. As a teacher I was looking for the next thing to do, the next curriculum outcome to teach. I could hardly cope with being dropped into a world where there were no objectives, no outcomes – just your imagination to run free and play. I had to dig deep to remember the creative kid who played with Lego blocks all those years ago to connect with my nephew. If you recall from our 21st century rainbow, creativity is one of the 4 C's.

Last year I was assigned to teach Grade 7 Social Studies and I sat down to lesson-plan the chapter on World War I. In preparing, I read about how the trenches were built with duckboards to walk on, places to sleep, and a firing step for looking over the parapet towards enemy lines. I thought what a great idea it would be if we could recreate some of that experience in Minecraft where the whole class could be given tasks they needed to carry out to get our side ready for battle. After a little research, a little begging from the administration for money, I was armed with 30 copies of MinecraftEdu, the educational version of Minecraft. MinecraftEdu adds features to make it more teacher-friendly and in retrospect, it saved me hours of learning the technical side of Minecraft and let me focus on the learning.

I downloaded a prebuilt world of a WWI battle-

field. There are literally thousands of these worlds that people have created, as well as ones that have made it to the MinecraftEdu online library. The ones in the library have been vetted by the MinecraftEdu team and are downloadable into the game. I planned my lessons with the help of some students who had to show me a few things. You cannot imagine the response when you ask a student, "Do you know how to make an item in Minecraft?" If they don't know, give them a night and they will have an answer! As for my Grade 7 Social Studies class, four classes were allotted for the project. One class to work out the bugs and have the students play through the tutorial world (a nice introduction for students who don't play Minecraft), two classes for instruction and the actual playing of the game, and one class for a discussion and questions.

I'll admit I was not prepared for the utter chaos that ensued when I let the students into the WWI map in Minecraft. I thanked MinecraftEdu for adding a teacher-friendly "Freeze button" so all the students would be stopped in their place and couldn't do anything until "unfrozen". We had a further conversation about what was acceptable and about working as a group to get the job done. I assigned team leaders. They in turn assigned roles to their group and before long, they were working to get trenches built, barracks made and duckboards laid down. If they got their work completed I allowed them to hollow out the ground and to build an underground bunker complex. Some of the students I let roam to the enemy side of the map. From this, the students learned how to communicate and collaborate together to achieve a goal. Check two more of the 21st century learning skills off!

In the classes after, we discussed and referred back to the Minecraft experience. Students talked about problems with organization and the importance of having a command structure. The issue of making

sure that the teams talked to each other so that the trenches would line up was discussed. Students who got to go to the enemy side of the map talked about the advantage of having the high ground in battle. Do I hear another 21st century learning skill being taught? Check off critical thinking!

Although I do not teach Social Studies anymore, I have transferred my skills in Minecraft to the production module in Technology Education. One of the curriculum outcomes is to trace the evolution of houses. My students used to do a presentation on a certain style of house. Now they research, build, and present all in Minecraft. This year I have added a blueprint component to cover another objective and add another level of depth to the project. The open environment allows students (and teachers) the freedom to use the game as they see fit. Other examples of classroom uses include (worlds are in the MinecraftEdu library):

- HungerCraft – based on *The Hunger Games* trilogy, students are separated into two groups- District 12 and the City. Students in the district mine raw materials for the city and students in the city set the prices for the districts.
- Escape from Everest – students have to balance between growing trees (ecological stability) and using trees as a fuel source (industrial progress).
- Wonderful World of Humanities – a vast map which includes sections of many of the world's ancient civilizations represented. Visit the Egyptian pyramids, Greek ships, and Rome's Colosseum.

Minecraft is a great way to engage students in a virtual environment and explore in a way that is not possible through other means. Having access to an open environment allows teachers to develop situations where students need to be creative, communicate, collaborate and critically think about the virtual situations. As with any technology there is a learning curve and setup time is a factor for custom worlds. Using the MinecraftEdu version however allows teachers to overcome some of the technical hurdles, be cost efficient (it is cheaper than the standard edition), and, through their online library, allows for instant access to pre-made worlds developed by teachers. Most importantly, it is a way to engage students on their own terms and in the words of my nephew, "It's just fun".

*Jason Aue teaches at Brother Rice Junior High School in St. John's and sits on the Technology Education Special Interest Council as the Member-at-Large for the Eastern Region.*

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### 2015 Convention Deadlines

#### February 8, 2015

- All nominations for Provincial Executive for publication in the Convention issue of *The Bulletin* must be postmarked or hand delivered to the NLTA Office.
- Names of elected delegates and alternates to Convention should be forwarded to the NLTA Office for printing in the Convention issue of *The Bulletin*.
- Resolutions to Convention must be received at the NLTA Office.

#### March 8, 2015

Mailing of Convention issue of *The Bulletin*.

#### April 7-10, 2015

Biennial General Meeting.

#### April 9, 2015

Final deadline for receipt of nominations for Provincial Executive.

## TESIC's Technology Innovators Spotlight

is now accepting open nominations.

***If you know a deserving colleague please consider nominating them today!***

**ELIGIBILITY:** Any NLTA and TESIC member (*TESIC membership is free and can be obtained by creating an account on [www.tesic.org](http://www.tesic.org)*)

**DEADLINE:** 2nd Sunday of every month (September - June)

**SUBMISSIONS** Please submit your nominations to David Gill at [david@tesic.org](mailto:david@tesic.org)

**NOTIFICATION:** Successful nominations will be notified by the end of the deadline week.

**For more information visit: <http://goo.gl/blsprW>**

### Dates to Remember

#### February 2015

Feb 13 Janeway Day in the Schools  
Feb 19 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications  
Feb 19 Provincial Executive Meeting  
Feb 20-21 Joint Council Meeting

#### March 2015

Mar 19 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications  
Mar 31 **Deadline:** Centennial Study Award Applications  
Mar 31 **Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year

#### April 2015

Apr 1 **Deadline:** Johnson Bursary Applications  
Apr 15 **Deadline:** Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP  
Apr 16 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications  
Apr 30 **Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications  
Apr 30 **Deadline:** Year-end resignation from contract