

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

T H E

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bulletin

WE HAVE LIFT OFF...



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Up Front

from the President



Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth. ~ Helen Caldicott

I don't know if you have had the chance to visit the NLTA website and check out the *Teachers Change Lives Every Day* link (teacherschangelives.ca), but you should – especially if you're feeling deflated at the end of a hard day at school and feel as though you are having little or no impact on the lives of your students. The stories are uplifting, poignant, and inspirational. They attest not only to the important role teachers play in the lives of students, but also to the high regard in which teachers are held by society.

Our *Teachers Change Lives Every Day* public awareness campaign captures the essence of what it means to be a teacher and the reason we enter this profession. It also confirms what surveys in the past have told us. Public opinion is positive towards, and the public supportive of, teachers. Teachers seem to have trouble believing it.

I have no such trouble. As President of our Association I have the opportunity to meet the many exceptional teachers who daily bring learning to life in their classrooms. I know why teachers make such a difference for our students. I see it every time I visit a school.

In February I attended the opening of the Learning Commons at Topsail Elementary. It was a project of teachers Amy Pennell and Melanie White who, with the support of their colleagues, took the initiative to create a bright and vibrant learning space that promoted inquiry and collaboration. They even enlisted the talents of a parent to detail the walls with curriculum-related paintings. Three months prior to this, in December 2015, I was at the same school to attend an assembly organized by teachers and students for music teacher, Jackie Cooke, who was retiring after an impressive 41-year career dedicated to her students.

In December I attended the annual community breakfast at Holy Cross Junior High School. Organized by teachers, parents and

community partners, the breakfast is an opportunity for the school community to come together and showcase the talent of students. Also in December I was privileged to attend the Christmas Suite organized by the NLTA Music Special Interest Council and hear the many talented choirs and bands from across the province taught by our teachers.

In January I had the pleasure to be one of the guest readers for Readers Day at St. Edward's Elementary School in Kelligrews. It's my third time participating in this annual event organized by teachers to promote a love of reading in their students. This year I read to Ms. Lawlor's Grade 2 class. It's a whole different experience from teaching English at the high school level, and I never tire of it.

In the early part of February I visited Valmont Academy in King's Point. Principal Ryan Kelly took time out of his busy day to give me a tour of the school. His pride in his school, his teachers and his students was evident. The teachers had cultivated a strong partnership with the parents and the community in general. For a small school it was able to optimize the learning experience for its students through a variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities.

I also took the opportunity while in Central Newfoundland to visit Long Island Academy and H.L. Strong Academy and meet teachers Dwayne Hackett and Jason Earle. They are two of many fine young educators who have taken on the responsibility of being sole charge teachers in their respective schools.

Since September I have attended Kids Eat Smart Breakfast launches at six different schools. They are just a few of the approximately 240 schools in the province where parents, the Kids Eat Smart Foundation, the community and teachers partner to ensure that students begin their school day with

nourishment. For teachers, these breakfast programs help create a sense of belonging and inclusion for their students, encourage socialization, and help ensure all children have an equal chance of succeeding at school.

It was natural, therefore, that the theme of this year's Education Week was "Teachers Change Lives Every Day". The week began on Sunday, February 14 with a St. John's Ice Caps Teacher Appreciation game, and I shared the honour of the official puck drop with Linda Budgell and Tolson Barrington, two of our teachers featured in our *Teachers Change Lives Every Day* advertisements. I also had the pleasure of attending the opening ceremonies the following morning at St. Bernard's Elementary School in Witless Bay. As is the case with any of our schools, the hospitality was exceptional and the teachers went above and beyond to make the event special for all in attendance.

These are just some stories of the remarkable professionals who teach in our schools and influence the lives of the young people in their care. They, like the 6000 plus teachers in our province, are driven by pride in their profession and a desire to provide the best education possible for their students. And like their colleagues throughout our province, they do what they do without any expectation of recognition. The reward for teachers is seeing their students succeed in life. That's commitment to the future.

I'll leave the final word to a parent who left the following tribute to teachers: "To other teachers, thank you and never forget or underestimate that you have such a gift of an opportunity to make lives so much better." May we all learn to appreciate that gift.

THE bulletin

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CONTENTS

Features

10 Hats Off!

NL Administrators Named as Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2016

12 Programs and Services

Purchase of Unpaid Leave for Pension Purposes
by Don Ash

13 The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

by Stefanie Tuff

14 Professional Development

Developing Successful Schools 2016: Visible Learning – Evidence to Action!
by George Tucker

15 Programs and Services

Are You Thinking About Retiring? Information You Need to Know

16 The Redundancy/Reassignment and Layoff Process

18 Professional Development

CONTACT 2016

19 Viewpoint

What Does Government Need to Stop Doing?
by James Dinn

20 Contributing Their Fair Share?

by Steve Brooks

22 We can't just let them play all day... can we? Reflecting on the Teacher's Vital Role in Play-based Kindergarten
by Jill LeBlanc

24 Why is it Worth it?: Communication Between Home and School
by Gregory Woolgar

25 Autism Spectrum Disorder

On-Line Training Program
ASD and Behavioural Interventions: An Introduction for School Personnel
by Paulette Jackman

26 Supporting Students with ASD
by Kendra Lane

28 Living Well
Creating a Meaningful Life
by Gail Carroll

30 Tech@Work

Teachers in Action: Engaging Teachers and Students Through Technology
by Karen Goodnough, Craig Adams, Keith Power & Tom Walsh

Departments

Up Front from the President	2
On Location News	4
In Memoriam	9
Calendar	back cover



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 2016-17. 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 Melanie Jaster, Executive Assistant, Programs and Services at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 233 or mjaster@nlta.nl.ca by **May 20, 2016**. Please include in your message your name, address, email address and telephone contact number(s).



PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

LANSE AU LOUP

Labrador school shoots hoops for inclusion

Inclusion and empathy are two things Maisie Groves feels every child should know about. The instructional resource teacher at Labrador Straits Academy in Lanse au Loup used that thought to begin searching for an organization to help her special needs students socialize with others in the school.

She came across Best Buddies Canada, a not-for-profit organization that encourages friendships and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. “I guess I was looking at some way that I could foster that kind of connection,” said Groves.

She found the organization through the Newfoundland and Labrador Autism Society website. When she clicked on the icon, she was excited by what she read. “I said, ‘This sounds fabulous.’”

The intention of Groves’ chapter is to create lasting friendships between her special needs students and others in the school. There are seven active members in the Best Buddies group at Labrador Straits.

The program matches children with disabilities with children that don’t have disabilities. “We do different things, get involved with activities that kids without disabilities often take for granted.”

To some, shooting a basketball with some friends could be something simple. For someone with a disability who may not have someone to play with, they may not have the opportunity to do it. This is one of the events that members of Best Buddies, and students throughout the school with a chapter, can take part in together.

On February 24, the school hosted a “Hooping it Up” fundraiser. This allowed students of all ages and all backgrounds to take part in a free-throw competition. For a small fee, students attempted to sink as many free throws as possible in one minute. Some 150 schools across Canada got to participate, including four in St. John’s. Labrador Straits is the only school outside the capital that is part of the Best Buddies program. Kindergarten to Grade 6 students

could not participate in the official fundraiser, but still got to take part in the event.

Three students between Grade 7 and Level 3 won first place in their categories. Tyler French won the top male prize, Danielle Fowler earned the top female, and Karrie Thomas took home the title of Top Buddy. All three earned movie passes and have had their names submitted for a possible \$500 cash prize from the organization.

The money raised from the event will go towards the school’s Best Buddies chapter, to allow the participants to take part in activities, like skating. The funds will help cover rental fees or added costs they may incur. “Hopefully we can now organize more activities,” Groves said. “We can do things now that we can do as a group.”

It’s been a big game changer at the school, she added, noting the students are enjoying the interaction. “It’s brilliant,” she said. “It’s going super well. I would recommend it to any school.”

Besides the obvious friendships that she can see developing, Groves is also seeing the students gain that empathy and understanding of inclusion that she intended to teach them by signing on to the program.

“For the kids without disabilities, they develop empathy and compassion,” she said. “Sometimes students with a disability don’t have the same opportunities with social connections. This way, (group members) can be friends with each other.”

Note: This story by Melissa Jenkins, Editor of the Northern Pen, has been reprinted with permission. It was originally published in the Northern Pen on February 29, 2016.



The Best Buddies group at Labrador Straits Academy has a lot of fun taking part in the “Hooping it Up” event.

Global Play Day at Labrador Straits Academy

February 3, 2016 saw parents, teachers and primary children at Labrador Straits Academy in Lanse au Loup come together for a global play date that was 'out of this world'! Parents and children spent a few hours playing in a setting that offered games, puzzles, building area, a reading corner, bean bag toss, jump rope and an art wall. "The squeals of laughter, tumbling blocks, jump rope rhymes, and general 'chit chat' filled the air and was so wonderful to witness," said Donna O'Brien, Grade 1 and 2 teacher at Labrador Straits Academy. One parent commented that she thoroughly enjoyed it, saying she couldn't remember when she had last jumped rope and played 'snakes and ladders'. The art wall was also a hit as many parents and their children became budding artists. A wonderful time was had by *all* involved!



Teachers, parents and primary students enjoy Global Play Day at Labrador Straits Academy.

Participation Nation unplugged at Labrador Straits Academy

Students at Labrador Straits Academy have become 'unplugged' every Wednesday afternoon for an hour of physical activity and social interaction. The Grade 3-6 students enjoy playing dodgeball, soccer baseball, soccer as well as many warm-up activities like 'Charlie Wants a Home', tag and parachute games. "The students thoroughly enjoy the activities and look forward to the weekly get together which ends with a nutritional snack," said Donna O'Brien, Grade 1 and 2 teacher at Labrador Straits Academy who runs the Participation Nation (PN) program at the school. Many thanks are extended to School Sports NL for their sponsorship and dedication to this program which enables *all* children the opportunity to become involved in a non-competitive 'get together'.



Students at Labrador Straits Academy enjoy some physical activity as part of the Participation Nation program.

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR

"Pi" Fun at Exploits Valley Intermediate

The Grade 7 students at Exploits Valley Intermediate in Grand Falls-Windsor began learning about circles recently in math class and the significance of Pi, an irrational number with a never ending set of digits. Mrs. Krista Simms asked her 7-104 and 7-105 math classes if they thought they could remember the first 100 digits of Pi. Several students rose to the challenge and on Friday, February 5 three of those students were successful. After standing in front of their peers and reciting all 100 digits they got the opportunity to "pie" their teacher in the face. The 7-104 science teacher, Mr. Thomas Caines, the vice principal, Mr. Darren Woolridge, and the principal, Mr. John Antle, all volunteered to be "pied" and the students had a wonderful afternoon. What an awesome display of school spirit!



Teachers and administrators at Exploits Valley Intermediate display their school spirit while being pied by students.

PARADISE

Holy Family Elementary celebrate Technology Day with 3D printer demonstration

Assistant Professor David Gill, former teacher with the NLESD, visited École Holy Family Elementary in Paradise for Technology Day on February 15 to showcase 3D printing for Grade 5 and 6 students. Mr. Gill used the analogy of sliced bread to explain how a 3D printer builds upon successive layers to create three-dimensional designs. Both students and teachers alike were completely awestruck by the entire concept. Mr. Gill, along with some of his technology education students, hope to return to the school later in the spring for some teacher professional development.



Grade 5 and 6 students at École Holy Family Elementary are wowed by 3D printing technology.

GOULDS

Students at St. Kevin's High learn valuable lessons at The Gathering Place

Several students at St. Kevin's High School in the Goulds spent a day at The Gathering Place in downtown St. John's on February 25. During their visit they had the opportunity to meet and talk with several patrons of the facility. As well, the students served 210 meals, washed dishes, sorted clothing, registered patrons, waited on tables, and served coffee.

According to its webpage, The Gathering Place is a service centre committed to building community, promoting equality and providing nourishment. It exists to meet the needs of people whom society has

failed. The programs and services of The Gathering Place target people who have complex issues ranging from physical illness and mental health problems to learning disabilities and addictions. Guests are victims of abuse, income support recipients, or are low income earners. Guests are male and female, young and old, street people, and people falling through the cracks. The Guests of The Gathering Place come from all parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The visit was organized by teachers Patricia Brazil and Craig Halliday. The 30 students also took it upon themselves to donate \$250 and an assortment of personal care items. Mr. Hodge's class prepared blessing bags which contained not only personal care items, but also written words of inspiration.

Students spoke of the many amenities The Gathering Place offered the patrons that go far beyond a warm meal. The patrons were from all walks of life and there for many different reasons. Some frequented The Gathering Place because there was no money left over after paying bills to buy food. Others visited there to simply meet with others for conversation and company. All had different life situations that brought them together.

Students also spoke of the many interesting people they spoke with including a retired pilot, several retired teachers and an artist. "It was eye opening. I never knew that The Gathering Place served people other than the homeless. It gave me a new perspective," said one student.

The emotionally exhausting day left students feeling a deep sense of contributing to and participating in something very enriching and fulfilling. They felt they had been part of something very important.

No doubt, activities which raise awareness of societal issues are an invaluable lesson. The hands on approach allows students to develop a greater sense of citizenship that does not lend itself to a textbook and classroom environment.



Students from St. Kevin's High spend a fulfilling day at The Gathering Place in St. John's.

ST. JOHN'S

Holy Cross Junior High students produce their own CD!

This past fall, all of the grade 7 students at Holy Cross Junior High in St. John's worked with singer/songwriter Ray Lake and their teachers Ray Abbott, Lisa Saunders, Darren Colombe and Jill Dawe to produce their very own CD of original songs. This was a cross-curricular ArtsSmarts project for language arts, social studies, art, and music.

Students became interested in the topic of fairies after studying *Catch Me Once, Catch Me Twice* by Janet McNaughton which has in its plot, encounters with a fairy. The story is set in St. John's during WWII. This is a time when fairy beliefs permeated society, particularly in rural NL.

Some very creative scheduling allowed students to work collaboratively as a whole group with Ray Lake as well as with their teachers in class between sessions. They learned the process of taking everyone's ideas from the original brainstorming session to a finished final product. This involved research, writing and rewriting, drawing, exploring several styles of music before deciding on the style they preferred and then the many aspects of recording. The band room at Holy Cross Junior High was transformed into a recording studio!



Students at Holy Cross Junior High produce their own CD.

"These students had an opportunity to feel like professional artists as they witnessed their work come to life in song and visual artwork for the CD cover and even a video for their title song," said teacher Lisa Saunders. They were inspired to do a second original Christmas song as they prepared for their CD launch in December. The highlight of this project was the live performance in front of the whole school community including Ms. Janet McNaughton who came to hear how students had

interpreted her novel in song. "This was an amazing experience for these grade 7 students who now have their very own CD to bring back the memories for years to come."

Check out their video made by teacher Stephen Tizzard which tells the story of their project at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfUQlhrTi1Q.

Waterford Valley Branch NLTA scholarship winners

The 2015 Waterford Valley Branch NLTA Scholarships were awarded to Matthew King and Liam Gregory on January 26, 2016 at O'Donel High School in Mount Pearl. Each of these two \$500 scholarships were awarded to a Grade 12 graduate (June 2015) with a parent who teaches in a Waterford Valley Branch school and who has achieved the Highest Academic Average (as provided by the Department of Education). Matthew, a graduate of Prince of Wales Collegiate, is the son of Diane Troke-King, a teacher at Hazelwood Elementary. Liam, also a graduate of Prince of Wales Collegiate, is the son of Ruth Mandville, a teacher at Hazelwood Elementary.



Matthew King accepts his scholarship from Joe Santos, President of Waterford Valley Branch.



Ruth Mandville (Liam's Mom) accepts the scholarship on his behalf from Joe Santos, President of Waterford Valley Branch.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Education Week 2016

Education Week 2016 took place in schools around the province from February 14-20. This year's theme, *Teachers Change Lives Every Day*, was selected to coincide with the public awareness campaign that is currently running in print, television and on social media to celebrate the important role teachers play in the lives of our students here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As our NLTA President, James Dinn, referenced in his *Up Front* article, the week kicked off on Sunday, February 14, with a "Teacher Appreciation Night" at the St. John's Ice Caps game at Mile One Stadium in St. John's. The event included an official puck drop by NLTA President James Dinn, accompanied by Linda Budgell and Tolson Barrington, two of the teachers featured in the current *Teachers Change Lives Every Day* advertisements. Teachers were recognized at the opening of the game and other teachers had an opportunity to participate in the on-ice intermission.



NLTA President James Dinn brings greetings at the 2016 Education Week Opening Ceremonies at St. Bernard's Elementary.



Grade 4 student, Ava Power, wows the audience during her performance of "The Sound of Music" at the Education Week Opening Ceremonies.

On Monday, February 15, the opening ceremonies for Education Week were held at St. Bernard's Elementary School in Witless Bay. School principal Alun Young gave a warm welcome to all those in attendance and students Ethan Williams and Heidi Aspell were superb in their roles as Masters of Ceremony. NLTA President James Dinn, the Honourable Dale Kirby, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Mr. Darrin Pike, CEO/Director of Education with the NL English School District, addressed the audience, and students from St. Bernard's Elementary and nearby Mobile High School participated through songs, speeches, cutting of the cake and the reading of the official Education Week proclamation in English and French. The event could be accessed from the main page of the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca for anyone who wished to



Students at St. Bernard's Elementary cut the Education Week cake.

view the festivities. Special thanks are extended to the students and staff of St. Bernard's Elementary for their professionalism and amazing hospitality.

The NLTA has been a proud sponsor of Education Week since 1936.

Kids Eat Smart Gala fundraiser

During this school year Kids Eat Smart (KES) has seen a significant increase in the cost of food and supplies for their Kids Eat Smart Clubs. KES serves 23,000 meals a day and every meal costs an average of \$1. That is why it is so important to increase awareness and fundraising efforts to ensure Kids Eat Smart Clubs are sustained.

KES are currently in the planning phase of their Kids Eat Smart Gala to be held on April 30 at the Delta St. John's. This year's theme is *The Kitchen Party*, and during the evening's festivities they will celebrate the unique culture of our province to benefit the health and well being of our children.

This is Kids Eat Smart's largest fundraising event of the year and they invite you to share this evening with them. Tickets are \$150 per person and include a three course meal, entertainment and a dance with live music by the band, 709! For ticket information call the Kids Eat Smart Foundation at 1-877-722-1996 or you may purchase them online at www.kidseatsmart.ca.

With the continued support of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, corporate, community and individual donors, Kids Eat Smart will ensure every school-aged child in our Province has access to nutritious food so they are well nourished and ready to learn!

2016 NLTA Christmas Card Contest winners announced

Anna Humber, a Grade 4 student at Eric G. Lambert School in Churchill Falls, has been chosen as the winner of the 2016 NLTA Christmas Card Contest. Anna receives a \$100 cash award and a framed copy of her winning entry. Her winning design will appear on the NLTA Christmas card that will be sent to schools, businesses and other groups in December 2016.

The second place cash prize of \$50 was awarded to **Abigail Bellamy**, a Grade 4 student at Morris Academy in Mount Pearl, and the third place cash prize of \$25 was awarded to Grade 4 student **Sharla Coates** of Canon Richards Memorial Academy in Flower's Cove.

Entries are judged on the basis of their creativity, colour and ability to reproduce well.



Anna Humber's winning design for the 2016 NLTA Christmas Card Contest.

ROSANNE M. SWEENEY

Rosanne M. Sweeney passed peacefully away on Saturday, January 10, 2015. Rosanne was born and raised on Bell Island and completed her elementary and high school education at Immaculate Conception and St. Edward's Schools. Rosanne received a B.A. Ed. from MUN in 1975 followed by a diploma in Adult Education. She received her M. Ed. in Psychology in 1986.

Rosanne taught in many places on the island including Burin, Norris Arm, Bishop's Falls and Holy Heart in St. John's. Her longest position was at Brother Rice High School, initially as the business education teacher and eventually at the Junior High as guidance counsellor. It was in this role she experienced the most job satisfaction. Rosanne retired from Brother Rice in 2009. She followed retirement as a trainer for Lion's Quest and the Red Cross among other interests.

Those who knew Rosanne well could attest to her quick wit, her kind heart and her great listening ear. She always had a quiet word of comfort and kindness or a way to see the humorous side of any situation. She seemed to know what you needed and made it her mission to help you find it. Rosanne enjoyed long walks, swimming and curling. She was an avid traveller, a lover of great music and socializing with friends and family.

Rosanne was predeceased by her mother, Sarah, and her father, Gerald Conway. Left with memories of her caring spirit, generosity and love are her devoted husband Paul; son Shannon (Chantal); sister Geraldine (William) Fleming; brother Bob (Anne Marie Conway); and her brother David. Also left to mourn are her nieces and nephews, members of the Sweeney family, relatives and friends. We will miss her gentle spirit and her warm welcoming smile.

"Sometimes it's not the strength but gentleness that cracks the hardest shells."

(Submitted by sister-in-law Anne Marie Conway)



Rosanne M. Sweeney



NL Administrators Named as Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2016

Three administrators from Newfoundland and Labrador have been named as Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2016 by The Learning Partnership.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association congratulates **Cindy Barker**, Principal of Stephenville Elementary School (Stephenville), **Denise Francis**, Principal of St. James Elementary School (Port aux Basques) and **Kimberly Leonard**, Principal of Mary Queen of Peace School (St. John's) on this prestigious award.

Canada's Outstanding Principals recognizes outstanding contributions of principals in publicly funded schools. It honours principals from every province and territory in Canada who demonstrate innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and who have done something truly remarkable in public education. This year, the 40 principals, nominated by their parents, colleagues, and community members, and chosen by a national selection committee, are being celebrated for demonstrating innovation, having an entrepreneurial spirit and for employing creativity in finding solutions and opportunities.

Cindy Barker is a 'learning leader'. She promotes teacher growth, believing in focused teacher development. Staff participate in a variety of professional

learning activities, emphasizing literacy, mathematics, and now the emphasis has broadened to include all aspects of STEM. She ensures teachers have the resources that highlight evidence-based and effective practices. Cindy believes in "growing student leaders", recognizing their accomplishments in assemblies, announcements, and newsletters. Under her leadership, staff monitor ongoing student progress using a variety of data sets, meeting bi-weekly to develop and track the impact of their interventions and providing supports to increase students' leadership capacity. She has made Character Development a big part of Stephenville Elementary's positive behaviour support program. Under Cindy's leadership, best practices are shared, teachers work collaboratively on nurturing the whole child – academic as well as social-emotional. Stephenville Elementary School is a place of learning and caring, thanks to Cindy's inspirational leadership.

Denise Francis is a transformative leader with extensive experience as a high school and elementary school administrator. Denise places a strong emphasis on tracking student achievement using a variety of data and encourages teachers to systemically use targeted effective practices and interventions to build students' capacity to learn. Currently, over 80% of students in grade 3 score at level 3 in Creative



Cindy Barker



Denise Francis



Kimberly Leonard

Writing and Persuasive Writing. There are similar improvements in students' results for grade 6. She has spearheaded the development and use of a Math Assessment Framework, and has encouraged the sharing of best practices among colleagues. Denise provides the time, support and resources required for staff to grow professionally and her impact on changing culture and practices, while improving outcomes, is evident in all aspects of student life at St. James Elementary.

Kimberly Leonard is an innovator and collaborator focused on a progressive agenda for change. She has formed partnerships among stakeholders to provide a balance between academics and other opportunities to grow the 'whole child'. There has been an increase in student recognition and celebrations, school-wide events, and offerings in physical activities. Kim is introducing 21st century learning at Mary Queen of Peace School, including a focus on increasing technological skills and digital literacy. She encourages analysis of a variety of data sets, including attitudinal surveys, to determine next steps for the School Development Plan, which has included Literacy Blocks, school-wide reading initiatives and a more focused use of assessments in literacy. The positive results are evidence of the impact of these changes. On provincial assessments student results have been impressive and students score above the provincial standards. Kim continues to move the change agenda forward to implement innovative programming to benefit all students.

Cindy, Denise and Kimberly were awarded for their accomplishments at the annual Canada's Outstanding Principals gala on February 23, 2016, at the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel in Toronto. They also benefitted from an exclusive five-day executive leadership training program at one of Canada's top business schools, the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. The program introduced them to leadership and management practices presented by business, government and education leaders as well as Rotman instructors. They also benefitted from a "Changing World of Work" day where they learned about today's workforce from business leaders.

The 2016 Canada's Outstanding Principals will join the prestigious ranks of the National Academy of Canada's Outstanding Principals, which now boasts almost 400 members. The National Academy offers principals ongoing networking, mentoring and professional development opportunities so they can constantly enhance their leadership skills.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT



Ditto.



Satellites. No matter where we live, these celestial birds, perpetually orbiting our planet, are indispensable to the world of communications.

And who do innovative companies like Telesat Canada and Xplornet depend on to ensure reliable, secure telecommunications? Talented leaders (or should we say wizards) like Satellite Operations guru, Troy Alexander.

Troy credits College of the North Atlantic for his stellar career success. In particular, CNA's rigorous Electronics Engineering Technology program, and its philosophy of integrating academic theory with practical, hands-on experience, gave him an indispensable competitive edge (and, pardon the pun, helped make him the star he is today).

To watch our alumni tell their own stories, visit CNAstories.ca



Purchase of Unpaid Leave for Pension Purposes

by DON ASH

Teachers who take unpaid leave during a school year should consider purchasing that unpaid leave for pension purposes upon their return to work following that leave. This includes short and long periods, as well as maternity/parental leave.

Effective September 1, 2015, the amount of pension a teacher receives in retirement is calculated as follows:

$(\text{Total Pension Accrual } \%) \times (\text{Best 8 Year Average Pensionable Salary}) = \$ \text{Amount of pension}$

- Total Pension Accrual – a teacher accrues 2% per year for each full year taught during which contributions were made to the Teachers' Pension Plan.
- Best 8 Year Average Pensionable Salary – the average of the best 8 years (80 months) of earnings on which a teacher has paid pension premium.

For example, the pension calculation for a teacher who pays pension premium on his/her full salary for 30 years, and whose 8 year best average earnings is \$80,000 is as follows:

$(30 \text{ years at } 2\% \text{ per year}) \times (\$80,000) = \$48,000 \text{ Pension}$

However, if, for example, the same teacher took a half year of unpaid leave at some point during his/her career, he/she would only accrue 1% for that half year of service instead of 2% for the full year, which would result in a lower pension entitlement, unless he/she purchases that half year period of unpaid leave for pension purposes.

If the request to purchase is made within 180 days of return from unpaid leave, the cost of the purchase is the contributions the teacher would have paid if he/she had been working, which will be matched by government. After 180 days, the cost of purchasing unpaid leave is the full actuarial value, which is much more expensive.

When a teacher takes a period of unpaid leave for less than ten days in a school year, he/she will still be

credited with a full year of pensionable service and accrue 2% for that year. However, since he/she will have paid pension premiums on less than the normal full year salary, the pensionable salary for that year will be lower by the amount of salary attributable to the period of unpaid leave taken. If a short period of unpaid leave (less than ten days) is taken more than eight years prior to retirement, then it is unlikely to have an impact on the average of the teacher's best eight years of pensionable salary and there would be no advantage in purchasing the leave. However, if the short period of unpaid leave is taken within the last eight years prior to retirement, then the average of the teacher's best eight years of pensionable salary will be less than it would be if the unpaid leave were purchased, resulting in a slightly lower pension entitlement. Therefore, any teacher who takes a short period of unpaid leave at any time during the eight years prior to retirement should purchase this leave for pensionable salary purposes. The cost of purchasing a short term unpaid leave that does not add pensionable service is contributions plus any applicable interest, and is matched by government.

It should be noted that, prior to the September 1, 2015 pension changes, the calculation of pension entitlement was based on the average of the teachers' best five years (as opposed to eight) of pensionable salary. Therefore, prior to September 1, 2015, teachers were advised that there was no advantage to purchasing such short periods of leave if the leave was taken more than five years prior to retirement as there would have been no impact on best five-year average earnings or pensionable service. With the recent changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan, pension calculation is now based on the best eight-year average earnings; therefore, teachers are advised to reconsider purchasing short periods of unpaid leave if the leave was taken within eight years prior to retirement. The purchase cost will be contributions plus any applicable interest.

Requests to purchase unpaid leave can be made via email to pensions@gov.nl.ca, providing the last three digits of your SIN and mailing address, and asking for a contract to purchase the relevant period of unpaid leave for pension purposes.

For further information or if you have questions, please e-mail mail@nlta.nl.ca or contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.

Don Ash is Executive Director of the NLTA. He can be reached at dash@nlta.nl.ca.

The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

by STEFANIE TUFF

Pursuant to section 4 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), employers in Newfoundland and Labrador must, within reasonably practical limits, provide a work environment that ensures the health and safety of its employees. NLTA members have the right to refuse to work where they have reasonable grounds to believe that specific work circumstances are dangerous to their health and safety. Pursuant to section 45 of the OHSA, a teacher has the right to refuse unsafe work until:

- (a) the employer has taken remedial action to the teacher's satisfaction;
- (b) the school Occupational Health and Safety Committee/Representative has investigated the matter and advised the teacher to return to work; or
- (c) an officer of the Occupational Health and Safety Branch of Service NL has investigated the matter and advised the teacher to return to work.

The right to refuse unsafe work should be exercised immediately by notifying your principal that you are exercising your right to refuse the work in question. If the employer has not remedied the situation to your satisfaction, you can continue to refuse work until the OHS Committee/Representative has advised you to return to work. If they have not done so, you have the right to continue your work refusal until an officer of the OHS Branch has advised you to return to work.

The OHSA requires the employer to continue to pay you during your work refusal and you can be reassigned to other work during that period of time. The employer cannot assign another teacher to perform the duties you have refused unless they have first advised that other teacher of your refusal and the reasons for it. Advice and assistance from NLTA staff are available whenever an NLTA member has exercised or is considering exercising the right to refuse unsafe work.

Questions regarding the right to refuse may arise in situations involving violence in the workplace. For example, if a student has assaulted you and is threatening to do so again, then you would have reasonable grounds for believing that continuing to work with the student will endanger your health and safety, and

you have the right to refuse to work with that student until one of the three conditions outlined above has been met.

In determining whether the employer has adequately addressed such a situation, it should be noted that the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012* (Regulations) specifically address the issue of violence in the workplace as a health and safety concern. Section 22 of the Regulations defines violence as "the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of physical force to cause injury to a worker, and includes threatening statements or behaviour which gives a worker reason to believe that he or she is at a risk of injury." Where there is risk of violence, or the potential is known to exist, the school district must perform a risk assessment and establish procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risk to workers from violence. Where elimination of the risk to workers is not possible, the employer must establish procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to minimize the risk to workers.

As well, the school district has an obligation to inform teachers and other employees who may be exposed to the risk of violence in the workplace of the following:

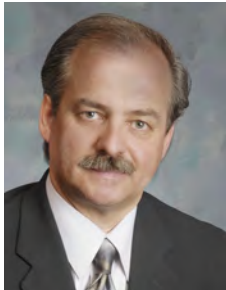
- the nature of the risk;
- the precautions that may be taken; and,
- information related to the risk from persons who have a history of violent behaviour and whom employees are likely to encounter in the course of their work.

While no law or policy can eliminate all risk, schools and school districts should have clear expectations and effective protocols in place for preventing and managing unsafe behaviour that may put employees at risk. Teachers and administrators should be aware of these procedures and policies and apply them consistently. With respect to students who are physically aggressive/violent, school districts have a legal responsibility to ensure that the proper preventive measures, supports and training are in place to enable teachers to work without unreasonable threat to their safety. What is necessary to ensure employee safety is case specific and depends on the nature of the situation.

Teachers who have questions or require assistance with concerns regarding the right to refuse unsafe work, including issues related to violence in the workplace, should contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.



Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA. She can be reached at stuff@nlta.nl.ca.



Developing Successful Schools 2016 “Visible Learning – Evidence to Action!”

by GEORGE TUCKER

Once again this year, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association will be partnering with the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association, the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the Nunavut Teachers' Association to sponsor the Developing Successful Schools (DSS) 2016 Institute. The event will take place at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick on July 5-8, 2016. All educators who are members of the sponsoring organizations are eligible to attend. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association provides funding to ten of its members to cover the onsite expenses (i.e., accommodations, meals and registration). Expenses related to travelling to and from Mount Allison are the responsibility of the participant. A DSS 2016 application form is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca. Follow the links to “Forms” and then click on “D” for DSS Application. The deadline for applying is May 1, 2016.

DSS 2016 Resource Person

Peter DeWitt (Ed.D) is a former K-5 teacher (11 years) and principal (8 years). He runs workshops and provides keynotes focusing on collaborative leadership, fostering inclusive school climates, and connected learning. Peter is a Visible Learning Trainer for John Hattie, Instructional Coach for Jim Knight, and Student Voice Advocate for Russ Quaglia working nationally and internationally. He is the Series Editor for the Connected Educator Series (Corwin Press) and the forthcoming Impact Series (Corwin Press). Additional information about Peter DeWitt is available at www.petermdewitt.com.



Peter DeWitt

DSS 2016 Program Overview

Visible Learning is an in-depth school change model of professional learning and development. The Visible Learning research began with a simple

question: what affects student learning the most? Visible Learning is based on the principles of Visible Learning that have developed from John Hattie's research and his two books: *Visible Learning* (2009) and *Visible Learning for Teachers* (2012). It takes the theory of this research and puts it into a practical inquiry model for schools to ask questions of themselves about the impact they are having on student achievement.

During the DSS 2016 Institute, participants will explore the latest research from John Hattie while exploring how to build and develop visible learners in our schools. Participants will learn how to gather, collate and examine evidence from their schools and transfer this into action that will make a positive difference to the outcomes of students.

As the research suggests, an important component of the Institute will be to look closely at the idea of Feedback in helping make learning Visible. Time will be spent defining what effective feedback is and how to get the greatest impact from the feedback that you give. Participants will also consider the feedback that teachers receive and how to make a positive difference to the outcomes for students in their school.

Participants will understand the following core principles:

- **Know Thy Impact** – How do you know the impact on student achievement of what you are doing?
- **Visible Learners** – What are the characteristics of Visible Learners and how do you know if your students have these traits?
- **Visible Learning Schools** – How do you align your school's strategies and structures for what matters most in teaching and learning?
- **Inspired and Passionate Teaching** – What are the characteristics of inspired and passionate teachers and how do you know if your teachers have these traits?
- **Effective Feedback** – What type of feedback is being communicated between teachers, between students, and between teachers and students?

If you require additional information re the DSS 2016 Institute, please contact George Tucker, Administrative Officer, Programs and Services (NLTA) at gtucker@nlta.nl.ca or by calling 709-726-3223 ext. 245 or 1-800-563-3599 (toll free).

Are You Thinking About Retiring?

Information You Need to Know

Under the Teachers' Pension Act, a teacher is eligible for pension benefit:

- (a) At age 60, with between five and 24 years of pensionable service.
- (b) At age 55 or after, with at least 25 years of pensionable service.
- (c) After completing 30 years of worked service*, regardless of age.
- (d) Reduced pension with 29 years of worked service and at least 30 years of pensionable service. Pension will be reduced based on the number of months a teacher will be retired prior to reaching age 55.

(*worked service refers to all pensionable service, except university study buy-back that was purchased prior to 1991.)

Access to Pension Estimator

Teachers also have access to a pension estimator through the NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca); click on "Programs and Services", then "Salary, Benefits and Pensions". Teachers can now go on-line and using their individual Teacher Benefit Statement that they receive from the Department of Finance, Pensions Division, input their salary information and obtain an estimate of their expected pension at a chosen point of retirement. As well, there is a website dedicated to the Teachers' Pension Plan under the government site at www.exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/hrs/pensions/plans_TPP.html.

Checklist for Retiring Teachers

The following checklist is designed to assist teachers as they participate and plan for this upcoming life phase change.

- ☐ Apply to the NLTA to attend a pre-retirement seminar up to two years prior to your year of retirement;
- ☐ Confirm the eligible date of your retirement with the Pensions Division at the pre-retirement seminar or by contacting Pensions Division.
- ☐ Submit your resignation to School Board (**do not** resign until eligibility has been confirmed): one month notice is required if retirement is to occur anytime prior to

Christmas; three months notice (March 31st) is required if retirement is to occur after Christmas.

- ☐ Apply for pension by completing the appropriate "Teachers' Pension" application.
- ☐ Complete and submit the "Direct Deposit" form to Pensions Division if there is a change to your current "Direct Deposit" information.
- ☐ Apply for severance pay by completing the "Severance Payment Request" form.
- ☐ Confirm/consult with Johnson Inc. on Group Insurance coverage: 1-800-563-1528.
- ☐ Consider joining the Retired Teachers' Association by completing the application form and submitting it to the NLTA.
- ☐ Consider seeking personal financial advice regarding financial decisions related to retirement.
- ☐ Keep your mind active and your body healthy. Enjoy life!

Changes Effective Upon Retirement

- NLTA Membership status changes from Active Membership to Life or Associate Membership.
- Access to the services and benefits of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) terminates.
- Basic Life Insurance coverage reduces to twice annual pension from twice annual salary (provided coverage is maintained and premiums paid); coverage terminates at age 65 and is replaced by a members only \$15,000 benefit after age 65.
- Basic Critical Illness Insurance terminates.
- Eligibility for EI ceases (unless a person becomes a "re-established worker" or is on a forced medical retirement).

Any questions or comments can be directed to Perry Downey, Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA at pdowney@nlta.nl.ca, Tel: 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 226.

THE REDUNDANCY/REASSIGNMENT AND LAYOFF PROCESS

May 7th is the **DEADLINE** for teachers to be notified of layoff and **ALL** teachers should be familiar with the process for redundancy/reassignment and layoff as outlined under Article 9: Layoff in the Provincial Collective Agreement (*Article 47 in the Labrador West Collective Agreement*).

Article 9 outlines the process that each School Board is required to follow as it prepares and finalizes its staffing plans for the 2016-17 school year.

Teachers should ensure that the steps in the redundancy process are followed in their circumstances.

As well, Article 9: Layoff can be found on pages 4-6 in the Provincial Collective Agreement and Article 47: Layoff can be found on pages 25-27 in the Labrador West Collective Agreement. The Collective Agreements can be accessed at www.nlta.nl.ca.

During any year in which there is a reduction or a realignment of teaching units in a school, a position(s) in a school may be designated as redundant. The actual removal of a position(s) can be accommodated through

one of two means: i) through the natural attrition process, created through teacher retirements or resignations and the School Board's decision not to refill the vacancies that have been created; or ii) through the redundancy/reassignment/layoff process, as outlined in Article 9. Even when the number of retirements and resignations are equal to or greater than the number of teaching units that are scheduled to be removed because of redundancies, there still exists the possibility that redundancy in a school may occur for program reasons. Redundancies in a school can have implications not only for teachers in that school, but in neighboring schools.

Any teacher who has been notified by his/her school administrator and/or School Board Office personnel that their position is redundant and that they will be reassigned or laid off for the following school year should consult with the designated Administrative Officers in Programs and Services responsible for that Board. (The NLTA number is 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599.) The School Board designations for each Administrative Officer are listed below.

NL English School District:	Labrador Region	Miriam Sheppard	ext. 230	msheppard@nlta.nl.ca
	Western School District (including South Coast of Labrador)	Steve Brooks	ext. 231	sbrooks@nlta.nl.ca
	Central Region	Stefanie Tuff	ext. 232	stuff@nlta.nl.ca
	Burin Region	Miriam Sheppard	ext. 230	msheppard@nlta.nl.ca
	Vista Region	Miriam Sheppard	ext. 230	msheppard@nlta.nl.ca
	Avalon West Region	Miriam Sheppard	ext. 230	msheppard@nlta.nl.ca
	Avalon East Region	Perry Downey	ext. 226	pdowney@nlta.nl.ca
Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador		Stefanie Tuff	ext. 232	stuff@nlta.nl.ca
Other:	Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre	Steve Brooks	ext. 231	sbrooks@nlta.nl.ca

School District Teacher Online Profiles:

In determining a teacher's capabilities, the school district will first rely upon the information contained in a teacher's online profile. It is important, and recommended, that all teachers create, review and update if necessary the information in their online profile to ensure that it is accurate and reflective of their teaching experience and qualifications.

Steps in the Redundancy Process

The following are the steps in the redundancy process which teachers should ensure are applied to their circumstances:

Step I:

Clause 9.01: Defines seniority as the total length of time employed as a teacher in Newfoundland and Labrador, and identifies May 7th in the school year as the date of calculation of seniority for the purpose of reassignment and layoff for that year.

Each teacher must ensure that their placement on the School Board's seniority list accurately reflects their entire teaching service in the Kindergarten to Level III public school system in the province. Time taught outside the province or outside of the Kindergarten to Level III school system cannot be credited as seniority. If there are discrepancies between a teacher's calculation of seniority and the School Board records, it is the teacher's responsibility to notify their School Board official as soon as it is discovered.

Step II:

Clause 9.02: Where it is determined by the school board that a teaching position in a school is being declared redundant, the senior teachers shall be reassigned to the remaining positions within the school that they are capable of filling. Subject to capability, the reassignment process shall be as follows:

- (a) tenured teachers;
- (b) teachers on a one-year probationary contract;
- (c) teachers on a two-year probationary contract;
- (d) teachers on probationary contracts in accordance with Clause 7.05.

This effectively means that the junior teacher should be the person leaving the school unless the junior teacher is teaching something that no other senior teacher is capable of teaching while still fulfilling the program needs of the school.

Step III:

Clause 9.03(a): A teacher, who is not reassigned in accordance with Clause 9.02, shall have priority, based upon seniority, subject to capability, to vacant teaching positions or positions held by junior teachers, in the following order of priority:

- (i) within the community;

- (ii) within the nearest community, within the school district, where such a position exists.

A teacher who is reassigned and notified in writing in accordance with Clause 9.07(b), has five (5) working days following their notification to notify the School Board of his/her acceptance or rejection of the reassignment.

Step IV:

Clause 9.03(c) states that notwithstanding Clause 9.09, any teacher who refuses reassignment in accordance with Clause 9.03(a) in any particular year shall not be entitled to further consideration for reassignment in that year. A teacher who refuses reassignment in accordance with 9.03(c) can apply for transfer to vacant positions during the remainder of the school year and will be considered with all other teachers who have applied for transfer to the same position. If the individual is unsuccessful in obtaining a transfer before the end of the school year, the teacher will be placed in recall and subject to Clause 9.10 after the end of the school year. (See Step V below.)

NOTE: With respect to Clauses 9.02 and 9.03, in determining capability to fulfill the requirements of the job function, the School Board shall consider the overall ability of the teacher to perform the functions of the position in accordance with the currently modern standards required for the position. As per Clause 9.05, reassignment contemplated by Clauses 9.02 and 9.03 shall be to a comparable position, where possible.

Step V:

Any teacher, who is declared redundant and not reassigned, in accordance with Clauses 9.02 and/or 9.03, is deemed to have been "laid-off" and placed on recall. Any teacher placed on recall will be offered vacant comparable positions during the subsequent three (3) years following the layoff before the positions are advertised. (Clauses 9.09 and 9.10).

It is the teacher's responsibility to inform the school district of their interest and availability in the subsequent three years after layoff.

If you have any questions or need further information contact mail@nlta.nl.ca or 726-3223 or toll free 1-800-563-3599.



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Application Guidelines

1. FORWARD YOUR APPLICATION DIRECTLY TO THE NLTA by Friday, May 6, 2016.

2. The Professional Issues Committee is the Selection Committee for delegates to CONTACT. Decisions will take into account the following:
 - Priority to teachers who have not previously attended CONTACT.
 - Branch representation.
3. Teachers will be notified of acceptance as soon as possible following the selection of delegates.
4. a) Onsite expenses for CONTACT (registration, accommodations and meals) will be paid by the Association. A travel subsidy will be based on funds available.
b) Transportation costs shall be based on the cheapest and most direct mode of transportation possible.
c) Selected delegates to CONTACT must submit a non-refundable \$25.00 deposit towards their registration.

CONTACT is sponsored by the teacher organizations of the Atlantic Region.



Prince Edward Island
Teachers' Federation



CONTACT 2016 APPLICATION FORM

Name:

School/Address:

Postal Code:

Tel: (s) (h)

Mobile:

Email:

Home Address:

Postal Code:

Have you attended CONTACT before? ☐ No ☐ Yes; Year

Branch:

If you are not selected in the initial process, do you wish to be waitlisted and contacted in the event of a cancellation? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(Waitlisted applicants will be considered up to June 30, 2016)

Date: Received:

Deadline Date: May 6, 2016
Late applications will not be considered.

Return to:

Beverley Park, Senior Administrative Officer, Programs and Services
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL A1B 1W1
Fax: 726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582 (toll-free)

or

submit online at www.nlta.nl.ca

Go to FORMS

and then click on "C" for CONTACT.



What Does Government Need to Stop Doing?

by JAMES DINN

We've been asked as a public and as public sector unions to engage in the consultation process as part of the government's renewal initiative – which we have. While “renewal” and “initiative” suggest hope, the process seems to inspire fear and cynicism. Consider the first question asked during the sessions: What does government need to *stop* doing? Despite the assurance that all options are on the table, it seems that layoffs and cuts are the preferred measures. While public sector unions met with Minister Cathy Bennett on Friday, February 12 as part of a stakeholders' consultation meeting, Premier Ball was telling reporter James McLeod that budget targets will be linked with contract negotiations and layoffs. This does not inspire confidence or trust in the process; nor does it inspire hope.

So, let's be clear what we are talking about when we ask, “What does government need to stop doing?”

Let's not kid ourselves. We are talking about fewer government services, and we may as well ask ourselves: “What are we willing to do without?”

Over the past few years in education we have seen reductions in teacher allocations, increases in class sizes, and the rise of mental health issues. We have an inclusive education system that is already woefully under resourced, struggles to meet the needs of students requiring supports and those who don't, and is the source of deep frustration for teachers and parents alike. Our schools have been cut to the bone and cannot be cut further without irreparable harm.

So, for the children of our province the answers to the above questions are starkly simple.

It will mean that class size will increase again and the ability of the classroom teacher to provide your child with individual attention will decrease yet again. If your child has diagnosed learning exceptionalities, expect fewer supports – not more. Waiting for your child to be assessed? Count on

waiting longer. Do you want inclusive classrooms or classrooms that are inclusive in name only? Is it important that your child have access to speech-language pathologists, school counsellors, music teachers, physical education teachers, teacher librarians and other specialists? Do you want your child to have access to technology in their school and teachers to teach it? What extra-curricular activities are you willing for your child to do without? Is it important for you to be able to meet with your child's teacher in a timely manner?

You get the point.

We are asking the wrong questions. We need to ask how do we invest in our schools and our students? The future of our province depends on it.



This letter to the editor, written by NLTA President James Dinn, was published in the February 20, 2016 issue of The Telegram. He can be reached at jdinn@nlta.nl.ca.

Expression of Interest

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE SECOND LANGUAGES SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCIL?

If so, please complete the following
and return by **April 29, 2016.**

Name:

School:

Email:

Please fax to 726-4302 or
1-877-711-6582 (toll free)
or email your information to
mail@nlta.nl.ca





Contributing Their Fair Share?

by STEVE BROOKS

Few people would disagree that the province's current financial situation warrants action of some kind, and I expect there will be diverging views on possible solutions. I would like to commend the Provincial Government for embracing a consultative process with a timeframe that will allow for the exchange and consideration of recommendations, as opposed to reacting in a "knee jerk" fashion. I would also hope that any long term plans adopted will be grounded in a vision for the type of society we want and an appreciation of the realities of our province.

It was with great interest that I reviewed Government's "Our Fiscal Future: Starting the Conversation" document, especially the "Where Does the Money Come From?" section. To be honest, I did not know that government businesses account for \$363 million in revenue that is used to support programs and services. Likewise, I was surprised to learn that this exceeds the total corporate income taxes received from the entire business community, which is \$352.5 million.

The document goes on to report that personal income taxes account for \$1.3 billion of revenue for government programs and services. To put that into perspective, the people of the province contribute, through personal income tax alone, 21.3 % of all government revenues. In comparison, the business sector contributes, just through corporate income tax, 5.8% of all government revenues, while government businesses contribute 6% to overall revenue. It would seem then that the business community, which is typically first to call for cuts to programs and services, actually contributes the least toward these programs and services to begin with. I also suspect that

businesses and corporations have greater means than do individual taxpayers to replace such programs and services through their own wealth, which is partially generated by low corporate tax rates.

It is estimated that 30% of all working people in this province are employed in some manner by the Government, but it is important to look at this statistic within its very particular context. Newfoundland and Labrador has a large number of communities to which the Government is expected to provide services across a vast and challenging geography. According to Statistics Canada, Newfoundland has 381 separate municipalities, compared to Nova Scotia's 98 and Ontario's 586. Our population density

is 1.4 persons per square kilometer while Nova Scotia's is 17.4 and Ontario's is 14.1. Even tiny Prince Edward Island has the advantage of a high population density of 24.7 with 113 municipalities. Obviously, if we are to provide equitable health,

"It would seem then that the business community, which is typically first to call for cuts to programs and services, actually contributes the least toward these programs and services to begin with."

education and other government services to a population spread over so many communities and kilometers, the cost of equivalent services will be higher than it is in other provinces. This means we need more doctors, teachers, nurses, plow operators and public officials than other jurisdictions. These are the realities of the place we call home, and no amount of per capita cost comparisons to other provinces will change that. Simply put, the cost of providing government services anywhere in the country, including Newfoundland and Labrador, is not driven by each specific individual, but rather by the population distribution in general. As a result, our provincial per capita costs of Government will always be above the national average.

If 30% of workers are employed by or through

Government in order to provide programs and services to a population thinly distributed across great distances, this also means that public sector employees should account for at least 30% of provincial revenue derived from personal income tax. I suspect the figure is in reality higher since most retired government employees receive pension income, which is also taxed. If this is indeed the case, as the information suggests, it would mean that government employees contribute, through personal income tax alone, roughly \$390 million toward government programs and services, compared to the businesses sector's contribution, through corporate income tax, of \$363 million.

Prior to making any decision to further reduce the public service in this province, the questions must be asked. Are we prepared to accept a lower standard of services to compensate for our large geography and dispersed population? Secondly, should we ensure that all sectors of our society are contributing their fair share to maintain our provincial programs and services? In a January 2016 article, *The Huffington Post* reported that the tax burden in Canada has shifted from the business community to consumers. The article stated:

It is the apparent result of successive Liberal and Conservative governments that have cut corporate taxes far more aggressively than they have cut personal income taxes, while increasing "hidden taxes" that mostly impact low-income and middle income workers.

Is everyone contributing their fair share? Perhaps not.

This letter to the editor, written by NLTA Assistant Executive Director Steve Brooks, was published in the February 8, 2016 issue of The Telegram. He can be reached at sbrooks@nlta.nl.ca.



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We can't just let them play all day...can we? Reflecting on the Teacher's Vital Role in Play-based Kindergarten

by JILL LeBLANC

There is lots of discussion around play-based kindergarten. Ready or not, it's coming! And it has the potential to be a positive change for our students and their families in many ways. As an educator, I am seeking out the advantages for learning and in doing so, I have found that there is significant potential for lots of quality, enjoyable learning to take place, but that I play a vital role in the level of success of this pedagogy in my own classroom.

The teacher has arguably the most important role in the effectiveness of this kind of learning. While current literature indicates that the classroom environment is a teacher in its own right, the classroom teacher must be intentional and strategic in creating a classroom environment that is conducive to play- and inquiry-based learning. The teacher must prepare a classroom that is developmentally appropriate. Students must have choice, independence and creative freedom in various contexts. And the environment must be flexible and continually changing in order to be stimulating and to cover the required outcomes. What might look dull, unprepared and un-inviting is actually strategic and intentional. Ensuring that students take ownership in helping to create the decor and print material that adorns the walls of their space not only makes the environment relevant to them, but it empowers them to engage in learning in their own ways.

While essential, on its own, a favorable environment that fosters play and inquiry is not enough to achieve the type of learning we need to see in full day kindergarten. There is still a full curriculum to cover, report cards to write and accounts to be given. Most

importantly, student learning needs to be maximized, not simply meeting the minimum requirements. Fortunately, this is where an effective teacher can fill in the blanks! As children explore and play in their classroom, the teacher is flexible and responsive to student learning. When students are engaged in play, the teacher must engage with them, asking questions to verify and extend learning and also to help the student develop oral language skills by expressing their thoughts and wonders. Thorough documentation of learning is another powerful tool at the teacher's disposal. A series of digital photos or a short video

clip can reveal so much about what students are learning in any given situation and both are much less time consuming than taking notes or completing endless individual meetings focused on checklists.

On my journey gradually implementing play-based learning into my classroom, I have been reminded of the importance of being alert and aware of what's happening in my classroom. Being present during play and attentive while children are at play is the best way to help create rich, authentic learning experiences for students. An engaged teacher makes them feel validated in their play and in time, they will welcome some adult interactions in their adventures. Paying attention to students' actions, conversations, questions, facial expressions, and activities allows the teacher to learn about the individual student; often, just a few minutes of observation can reveal information that is extremely helpful for the teacher, in terms of planning, supporting learning and reporting. A thorough knowledge (or frequent reference) of curriculum outcomes helps me pose thought-provoking,

“...I have found that there is significant potential for lots of quality, enjoyable learning to take place, but that I play a vital role in the level of success of this pedagogy in my own classroom.”

open-ended questions to my students and their responses usually show me so much more about what they know than what I originally thought I was looking to cover that day. If I am inattentive or disengaged, I run the risk of missing spectacular moments of enlightenment for my students, and of tripling my workload by creating needless separate lesson 'plans' to cover outcomes that my students can discover if I just give them space and guidance.

While at first I was apprehensive and skeptical of the logistics of a full day of play-based learning, the freedom and adventure of this pedagogy is becoming more irresistible to me by the day. Yes, there will be challenges. Yes, I will experience frustration, fatigue and uncertainty. Those are all things that I would face with a traditional teaching style, but without the magic of children who are getting excited about learning everyday. So I am choosing to embrace play-based learning and I suspect that in doing so, my students won't be the only ones doing the learning!

Jill LeBlanc is a French Immersion kindergarten teacher at St. Peter's Primary in Mount Pearl. She holds a B.A. in French from Memorial University, a B.Ed. in primary/elementary from the francophone program at the University of Ottawa and a M.Ed. in literacy from Memorial University. She lives in St. John's with her husband and 2-year-old daughter, who will be a big sister in March! She is passionate about working with children in their natural work of play and is excited about the upcoming implementation of full-day kindergarten in September of 2016.

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Teacher Intern Kasi Humber
and Gregory Woolgar.

Why is it Worth it? Communication Between Home and School

by GREGORY WOOLGAR

Now more than ever you can reach the home of a student and you, the teacher, can be reached. Twitter, texting, agendas, blogs, email, landlines and cell phones, not to mention apps like 'Remind,' are all avenues for communication between home and school. Because all of these means are at our disposal, I hear that teachers are too visible, overly accessible, and in the line of fire, but I think that building an open rapport is key to keeping such fires at bay.

Early in my career, I read an article about a teacher who decided for every negative call to a home, he would follow that up, same night, with a positive call to a random family in his class. He would praise that student for practically any reason; that way, he would not go to bed on a sad note. He raved about how it increased spirit and camaraderie with the families he contacted. I was sold, and decided to take it a step further. Starting that fall, I called every home in the first two weeks just to say hello, to compliment on any little thing I could find, and to open the lines of communication. The responses have been priceless. "Really? She's not in trouble?" or "Are you sure you have the right number?" or "What did he do this time?" Now though, they know moving forward if my number comes up it is not necessarily a bad thing.

I call home several times during the year; it takes little effort, and helps everyone feel at ease when discussing the necessary topics. There are times when a parent wants to get off track and discuss another matter, but I am quick to get back to the message at hand and end on a high note. Other things I do are send daily emails to a parent list, with photos attached showing events in class, Tweet about tasks to complete, message via 'Remind,' and even a blog note now and again. Sounds like a lot of time, so why is it worth it?

I love to listen to my buddies who are parents and

how they view schools and teachers. I think they are a good representative sample of the real world and of what parents expect. Also, I hear how parents talk with parents at other schools and compare teachers and what they are doing for their children. It can be very telling. I often speak with parents who would like teachers to know their child better—to know the families who are raising them, and to know they are available in times of need. From these conversations, I know the report card should not be the first line of communication.

Teachers are extremely busy, I know, but a proactive approach to daily communication actually reduces e-mails, phone calls, and extra one-on-one meetings. I once had a parent tell me that while she was away, the daily emails with pictures of her daughter allowed her to have insight into what our class was doing, there was no need to catch up, which was very calming and reassuring. That alone was my motivation to keep seeking ways to inform parents on a daily basis. Equally, there are many things going on at home that if we know in advance, can inform our teaching and help us face a challenging situation with the right attitude. Divorce, layoffs, sickness, and new family members, can all stress a child. Knowing these things via a simple and comfortable connection will allow everyone to face a day in the best possible way.

Another of the many benefits of contacting home is it removes "email trails". The best advice I was given in regards to email was "only email in delight but call home if you fear a fight." If you create great lines of communication, any call can be brought to a positive place in time but an email sent in haste can create an array of issues.

In teaching we are not just working with the student, we are working with the whole family, and we need everyone in the same corner. Regular school days can be hard enough, but if you have lost an ally at home, days can feel like weeks and even months. Be out front, be seen, listen to what is happening with your peers, and make sure you are embracing advances in communication; your school year will fly by on a much lighter note!

Greg Woolgar is a Grade 5 classroom and Drama teacher at St. Matthew's Elementary in St. John's. This article is part of a bigger manual that Greg is creating for new teachers or teachers looking for something new. Kasi Humber, an Education student at Memorial University and Greg's Intern at St. Matthew's Elementary, also contributed to this article.

On-Line Training Program

ASD and Behavioural Interventions: An Introduction for School Personnel

by PAULETTE JACKMAN

The Atlantic Province's Special Education Authority's Autism in Education (AIE) Partnership has been working on an exciting project. Expanding on a training program that began in New Brunswick in 2012, the four Atlantic Provinces worked with New Brunswick to develop an online course for educational personnel on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The online training program, *ASD and Behavioural Interventions: An Introduction for School Personnel*, was launched on April 2, 2015 to mark World Autism Awareness Day. The program is designed for all educational personnel including teachers, school administration, student assistants, speech-language pathologists, and educational psychologists, etc. This program is offered in both English and French and is made up of 10 e-learning modules. The 40 hours of self-paced instruction includes the following modules:

Module 1: Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder
Module 2: Impact of ASD on Learning
Module 3: Evidence-Based Practice
Module 4: Identifying Learner Needs
Module 5: Learning and Behaviour
Module 6: Behavioural Teaching Approaches
Module 7: Structuring the Classroom Environment
Module 8: Communication Skills
Module 9: Managing Challenging Behaviour
Module 10: Social Skills

The training features:

- Interactive activities and opportunities for self-assessment
- School-based video examples (elementary, middle, and high)
- Ethical considerations in supporting students with ASD
- Strategies for fostering positive home-school relationships
- A new tool, *Setting Priorities for Intervention: A Planning Tool for Learners with ASD*, to help set

meaningful goals for students based on strengths and needs

- Audible content – listen to course screens or download them as MP3 files
- Learning Guides (note-making tools) that highlight key concepts which you can use for future reference.

There are suggested benchmarks for the completion of the ten modules and a quiz at the end of each module to ensure mastery of critical concepts. Participants who successfully complete all modules and quizzes receive a certificate of completion signed by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Since its launch, over 400 educators and student assistants in Newfoundland and Labrador have completed this training to date. Over 200 individuals completed the program during the initial program launch and again during the second offering which clued up on January 29, 2016. In addition, over 200 individuals registered for the program which began on February 8. All participants are to be commended for their dedication to improving their knowledge and skill set as it pertains to educating students with ASD.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development covers all costs related to registration, licenses, technical support and program facilitation. The selection of participants is the responsibility of the school districts. The program will be offered twice a year in the future.

For further information about the training program, please contact Paulette Jackman, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development at paulettejackman@gov.nl.ca or (709) 729-5431.

“...over 400 educators and student assistants in NL have completed this training to date.”



Supporting Students With ASD

by KENDRA LANE

Professionals who work with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be inundated with strategies designed to assist in all aspects of learning: curriculum, social interaction, life skills, and independence. Most of these strategies are effective, but what we know about ASD tells us that each individual is vastly different from the next. The true challenge becomes sorting through what is helpful to each individual student. This process can be demanding on time, resources and student learning, as well as frustrating for both student and educator.

Despite great variance amongst individuals on the spectrum, there are common characteristics* that generally affect individuals on the spectrum, at least to some degree. We can use these characteristics to remind ourselves just how our learners are impacted by their diagnosis and brainstorm ways to help our students perform their best.

Relative Strength in, and Preference for, Processing Visual Information

Does my student seem to not listen to verbal directions? What visual information does my student rely on? Is it deciphered by the student independently? Are there instances where verbal instructions contradict visual information? Perhaps there are instances where more visual information will help my student better understand expectations. It is most important to understand the power of visual processing for individuals with ASD. This does not mean every student should be following picture instructions. It does mean we can use this strength to the student's advantage so s/he can perform better.

Frequent Attention to Details but Difficulty Understanding the Meaning of How Those Details Fit Together

Does my student get stuck at specific points during a task? Does my student have difficulty completing a task in its entirety? If the answer is yes, it can be attributed to this common challenge. Students with ASD benefit from the breakdown of large tasks into smaller, sequential steps in order to complete the full

activity. Your student may have the skills required to complete the task, but lack the ability to understand how each piece fits together to make the whole. Students with ASD often have difficulty "seeing the forest for the trees".

Difficulty Combining Ideas and Organizing Ideas, Materials, and Activities

Does my student seem to get overwhelmed with more than one instruction, assignment, or expectation? Does s/he refuse to complete novel tasks and exercises? Am I constantly reminding the student what s/he should be working on? Most students with ASD will experience some similar challenges in school and require help with organization so they can spend more energy on the curriculum. Depending on the age and ability of the student, try color coding, matching systems, desk organizers, to-do lists, finished folders, etc. Sometimes what appears to be an inability to comprehend a task is actually just an inability to organize one's thoughts and materials.

Difficulties with Attention and Concept of Time

Is my student easily distracted? Does s/he require constant re-direction? Or, does my student focus too intently on something and struggle to shift attention to the next required topic? Does s/he act out when asked to disengage from certain activities? Does s/he move too quickly or too slowly? Am I constantly reminding my student to slow down or speed up?

Some individuals are very distractible while others have difficulty shifting attention when it is time to make a transition. There are many ways to help students overcome these challenges. Empowering students with the knowledge and control a schedule provides allows them to be more prepared to deal with upcoming transitions and required shifts in attention.

Recognizing and managing the passage of time can be a significant challenge for many on the spectrum. This can make it difficult for students to complete tasks in sufficient time and it can be challenging for educators to plan activities and keep a group of students relatively synchronized. It is important to

find ways that structure and organization can help with concepts of time, such as time-timers, visual counters, and checklists.

Communication Problems

As a diagnostic criterion of ASD, communication deficits will affect all students in some way. The key is learning a student's individual communication patterns and level of comfort. Neurotypical individuals rely heavily on verbal communication by default – it is most helpful to keep language clear and literal. Students may have well developed *language* but it does not mean they can communicate *effectively* using that language, especially in the context of social nuances and pragmatics. Many obstacles to student performance can be traced back to frustration as a result of social or communication-related stress.

Tendency to Become Attached to Routines

Does my student become upset with changes to routine? Am I constantly trying to control things so that routine has the least disruptions? It is important to help students manage this when it becomes problematic and help them use this tendency as a strength. When used and taught *effectively*, 'schedules' are consistencies that have the ability to teach students flexibility and help them learn how to cope with change. There is no easy answer for schedules. Just like each of us, every student requires a slightly different style to meet individual needs. The ideal schedule should be used with independence and should create confidence for the student – not additional stress.

Marked Sensory Preferences and Dislikes

Do my students cover their ears when getting upset? Do they seem stressed and act out in certain environments? Do they attempt to run during class or during a transition? Do they fixate on moving objects or make erratic movements? Many of these common behaviours are related to the sensory impact of ASD. Students on the spectrum can be hypersensitive to certain types of sensory input including light, sound, smell, and touch. Alternatively, students can seek sensory stimulation through certain behaviours. Some of these may appear obvious – fidgeting with a toy or staring at a fan. Other behaviours may not be so obvious and may even appear to have other sources of motivation. It is very important for us to try and understand the negative impact these distractions can have and work with each student to create a comfortable learning environment.

There are a plethora of teaching and support strategies available to educators who work with students

on the spectrum. Learning new strategies and going through trial and error helps us build our toolbox as professionals and better prepares us to help students to the best of our ability. Sometimes, however, the best we can do for our students is to keep it simple and stop and think: Who is my student? What does it mean to have autism? And from there, we can often create the most powerful and effective strategies to help our students be all they can be.

* For more information on the Culture of Autism please visit the TEACCH Autism Program at www.teacch.com.

Kendra Lane is Manager, Programs & Services, with the Autism Society, NL. 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.

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Creating a Meaningful Life

by GAIL CARROLL

“The biggest adventure you can ever take is to live the life of your dreams.” ~ Oprah Winfrey

How many of you are living the life you dreamed about? Was teaching the career you always dreamed about and it excited you? Are you living in a place you have always wanted to live and have designed your space to be one that uplifts your spirits? Are you happy in your life with your partner and your family or living alone by design and enjoying life? Do you plan fun activities for yourself?

If you answered yes to these questions, that is truly celebratory. If you answered *no* or are not sure, it is never too late to re-dream, create or re-create a dream that is fitting for you now and helps you enjoy each day.

Many people go through the motions of life doing things they feel are expected of them and they do not stop to think that each of us has a choice. I had a supervisor and mentor in my early career whose favorite saying was, “you are the boss of you.” You always have a choice.

With all of the talk about “mindfulness” and living with purpose it is so important to be able to enjoy living your life. For those of you who have had me speak at your school or who have attended a presentation I have given, I always speak about my good friends and colleagues Dr. Khalid Sohail, kindly known to all as Sohail, and Bette Davis, his life partner and co-therapist who write, teach and counsel from the Green Zone Theory.

Dr. Sohail is a Newfoundland trained psychiatrist with a private practice in Whitby, Ontario and his partner, Bette, is a fellow Newfoundlander, nurse and mental health therapist. Together they have counselled many based on their Green Zone Living philosophy which is very simple. It works like a traffic light and can be applied to many areas of your life. If you are living, working and loving in your **Green Zone** then you are mostly living a peaceful and happy life, if you are in your **Yellow Zone** then you see and experience things that could use some work. Your yellow zone is a perfect time to consider therapy and a perfect time to contact your Employee

Assistance Program. It means that some things have gotten out of balance. The signs of work stress, little conflicts and other little red flags in your life are popping up to let you know that some part(s) of your life need attention right now. Finally, if you are in the **Red Zone** then things have gotten to a point that you are truly struggling. You may be off on long term leave of some kind.

No matter where you are in your life it is never too late to find meaning and purpose. This is the message that Dr. Sohail and Bette Davis impart. They have written a whole series of books around this very subject: Living, Loving and Working in Your Green Zone. There is even a book for educators on Green Zone Schools (*The Art of Learning in Your Green Zone*) and they have been widely respected by Ontario educators. Recently Dr. Sohail has started an interactive weekly Blog to help spread the word of the Green Zone and living your best life. He also recently published a post that I felt would really be enjoyed by teachers. He tells us what is behind the lives we lead and what happens when we lose our dreams or they become derailed. How do we move forward to create more meaning in our lives? He has entitled this Blog post: *Dream Catchers*. Many of us have bought dream catchers and hang them in our homes, cars, etc. As a preamble to his post, here is a little knowledge on Dream Catchers:

In the native cultures dream catchers are made from natural materials. They have a web in the middle similar to a spider's web. Indian mythology tells us that dream catchers were made to hang over your bed and to catch the bad dreams from the webs to allow the good dreams to pass through. Each day the bad dreams are burned off the webs by the sunshine and daylight so each night there is a fresh web.

Gail Carroll is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Gail (ext. 242), gmc Carroll@nlta.nl.ca or Judy Beranger (ext. 265), jmberanger@nlta.nl.ca.

DREAM CATCHERS

March 2, 2016 Blog

As a psychotherapist, I meet so many people every day who have lost their dreams. They look and feel sad. When I interview them I find out they have no goals, no passions and no dreams. They do not live, they just exist. The more I get to know them and hear their stories, the more I realize that they had dreams as children and as teenagers. They wanted to become scientists and artists, poets and philosophers, musicians and athletes, teachers and professors, reformers and revolutionaries but they did not find parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers and principals, neighbors and ministers, who believed in their dreams. They did not find good role models and became involved in the struggles and responsibilities of day to day life. Sadly, they lost their dreams on the way. They work hard just to pay for the basics. They work too much and play too little.

Many people come to see us as they have heard of the Green Zone Philosophy. They want help to get over their sadness and lead a happy, healthy and peaceful life that we call Green Zone Living. After introducing them to Green Zone Therapy, I share with them that according to Green Zone Philosophy, there are three parts to the personality:

1. Natural Self
2. Conditioned Self
3. Creative Self

The *Natural Self* is that part of their personality that they were born with. That was the gift life had offered them. As they grew older the Natural Self turned into the Conditioned Self and the Creative Self. The *Conditioned Self* is the outcome of social, religious and cultural conditioning. It is guided by what they *should do*, *must do* and *have to do*. The other part is the *Creative Self*. It is developed when people do what they *like to do*, *want to do* and *love to do*. People who have emotional problems often experience a conflict between their Conditioned and Creative Self. They feel conflicted between what they feel they should do and what they love to do. On the other hand, emotionally healthy people, find a unique balance between their Creative and Conditioned Self.

I share with my clients that when I lived in the traditional, religious and conservative environment of Pakistan, I was not very happy because I did 80% what I thought I should do following my Conditioned Self and only 20% what I loved to do following my Creative Self. Such a situation made me unhappy.

Since I came to Canada I started following my Creative Self because of the liberal, secular and humanist values of Canada. Now I do 80% what I love to do following my Creative Self and only 20% what I think I should do following my Conditioned Self. Such a lifestyle makes me happy and creative.

Every person has to find his/her own unique balance between the Conditioned and Creative Self if they want to live a healthy, happy and peaceful lifestyle. Some of our patients are happy with a 50/50, some 60/40 and some 70/30 balance between their Creative and Conditioned Self.

We have met so many patients who suffer with anxiety and depression, anger and frustration because their Conditioned Self is overdeveloped and their Creative Self is underdeveloped. We help them nurture their Creative Self and find a new balance between the Creative and Conditioned Self.

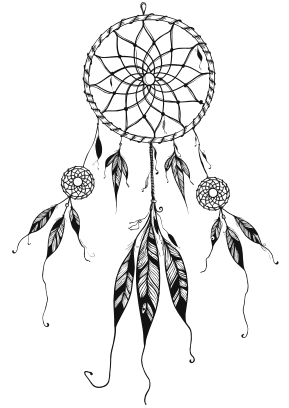
We suggest that they should have a Green Zone Hour every day in which they do what they love to do. Once people start doing what they love to do they nurture their Creative Self. They develop a hobby, which transforms into a passion and then into their dream and they become their own dream catchers.

I hope more and more people can become dream catchers and then transform their dreams into realities and create a peaceful world together.

Peacefully,

Dr. Sohail

Reprinted with permission from Dr. Khalid Sohail and Bette Davis. To learn more about Green Zone Living or to interact with Dr. Sohail through his Blog please follow <http://blog.drsohail.com> and www.greenzoneliving.ca





Teachers in Action

Engaging Teachers and Students Through Technology

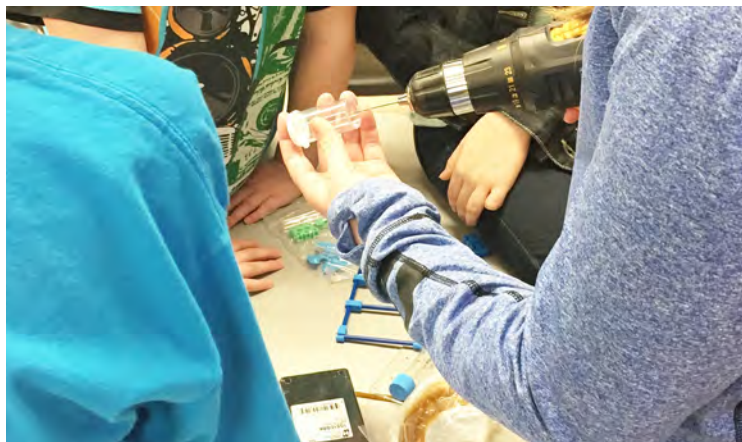
by KAREN GOODNOUGH, CRAIG ADAMS, KEITH POWER & TOM WALSH

In our province, supporting the professional learning of teachers of math and science is a shared responsibility involving many partners and collaborators. The Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, is playing a role in this area through the Memorial University/Hibernia Project STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Teacher Inquiry Program, also known as Teachers in Action. The program is currently in its third year of implementation and offers K-9 teachers the opportunity to work in collaborative school-based action research teams to examine or change aspects of their classroom practice in STEM disciplines. Supporting 8090 teachers per year from all areas of the province, the program promotes teacher-centred, active, relevant professional learning that focuses on enhancing student learning.

A number of technologies are playing a key role in helping teachers in these projects to become more reflective about what they do, adopt innovative approaches to teaching in STEM, and gain more insight into how to support and scaffold student learning. When selecting technologies to support their classroom projects, teachers take considerable

time to carefully explore a range of technology tools. Ultimately, they choose appropriate tools that enable them to meet their project goals and curriculum learning outcomes.

Last year, teachers at Riverside Elementary in Shoal Harbour investigated how engineering technology supported and enhanced teaching and learning pedagogy in their grade 6 science classrooms. A number of hands-on activities and technologies were implemented with a focus on electricity and flight. These projects included the completion of, and exploration with, engineered cars, transmission lines, ROVs, pop rockets, and gliders with launchers. This year, the grade 6 students have become mentors for grade 2 science students and the grade 3 afterschool engineering technology club. Through peer mentoring, the grade 6 students have taken on the responsibility of facilitating the completion of an engineering project (LEGO WeDo/Scratch) with primary students. Together they are discovering the world of coding and its use in Lego Robotics. Over the past two school years, teachers and students at this school have met curriculum outcomes and developed a collaborative, problem-based approach to learning.



A team of grade 6 students at Riverside Elementary collaboratively building a ROV (remotely operated vehicle) submersible.

At St. Bernard's Elementary in Witless Bay, grade 3 teachers integrated science, technology, engineering and mathematics using the video game Minecraft. The teachers wanted to know if this integrated approach would enable their students to make stronger connections between what they learn in school and the real world. The teachers integrated the math unit on geometry with the science unit "Build It Up." Students needed an understanding of geometric shapes, solids, and their components (faces, edges, and vertices) to begin the project. They then began the sci-

ence unit, connecting lessons to real world building and the construction of houses in MinecraftEdu (educational version). Once houses were completed as part of a community in the Minecraft world, students had to share what they had learned by giving their teacher and other classmates a tour of their constructions. This project enabled them to be creative, work collaboratively and address curriculum outcomes.

Teachers at Holy Cross Elementary in Holyrood and St. Matthew's Elementary in St. John's completed a collaborative math project with grade 6 students using a flipped classroom model. They wanted to know if this method would improve student motivation in learning about ratio and percent. A flipped classroom changes the delivery of information from teacher to student. It flips the traditional order of teaching. The teachers provided information to students by creating videos using ShowMe and Educreations iPad apps along with SMART Notebook. These videos were viewed at home by students prior to coming to class. It allowed students to access information; they could rewind the video or watch it more than once if needed. They could also fast-forward it if they already had an understanding of the topic. This allowed teachers more opportunities to work with small groups or individual students during class time. Most students reported that they enjoyed the approach and were more positive in their attitudes towards math.

Not all teacher projects involve sophisticated technology tools. Another group of primary/elementary teachers at Sacred Heart Elementary in Corner Brook explored the use of the 360 degree classroom to determine how it would affect students' engagement in learning mathematics. In establishing their 360 classroom, the teachers created a special room for their classes that was surrounded by white boards; no furniture. Students worked in small collaborative groups, and could move freely around the classroom to see the work of their classmates as they recorded their problem solutions on the white boards. What the teachers discovered about student learning was compelling! Students took far more responsibility for their learning, had lots of fun, and were truly engaged. Being able to move from board to board made the learning collaborative and teachers were better positioned to see how students were making sense of mathematical concepts and developing skills.

Working collaboratively with colleagues through teacher-directed, ongoing professional development as part of this professional learning program has resulted in many benefits for the teachers and their students. This is what teachers have said about the project:

It was a phenomenal experience. I felt, as an educator, that I took so much from it in terms of my teaching, and my knowledge of the inquiry process. Collaborating with you guys and all the other teachers, and watching what they did was great! I would highly recommend it to anyone. (Cassandra)

It makes me keep looking at new ways of teaching. Twenty-seven years is a long time. It has taken me out of my rut; it is exciting! (Mary)

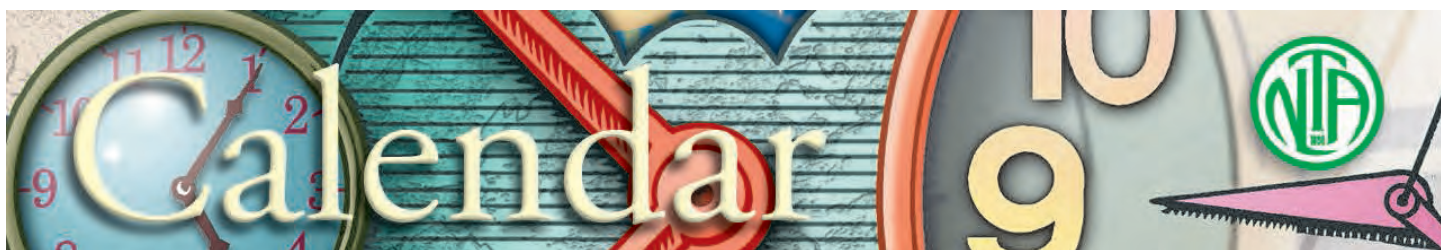
Completing this project has allowed me to focus more on more student-led experiences. I've let go – and I'm not saying I have full-fledged inquiry instruction for all my classes, but I can definitely see me not being afraid to let the kids explore a bit more. (John)

But it opened my view of how outcomes can be met, and how different teachers and different styles of teaching can meet the same outcomes in very different ways. (Kelly)

This type of PD causes you to reflect more and to see how you are going to carry on in the future. To say that I think this project ends today – or June 25th or whatever – no, it's not going to – my teaching will never be the same because of going through this process, so I think that says it all. (Eve)

For more information about the Teachers in Action Project, go to www.mun.ca/tia.

Dr. Karen Goodnough is a professor in the Faculty of Education (science education and teacher education). Her research and teaching interests include action research, problem-based learning, science teaching and learning, and teacher professional learning. She may be reached by e-mail at kareng@mun.ca. Craig Adams is the project coordinator for Teachers in Action. Keith Power is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and Tom Walsh is the professional development facilitator for Teachers in Action.



SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' COUNCIL PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

May 25-27, 2016

Terra Nova Park Lodge, Port Blandford.
Learning... Today... Leading... Tomorrow.
For more information contact Todd Crane
at toddcrane@nlesd.ca. To register visit
the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca.

STEMFESTNL – A SITI EVENT

July 26-30, 2016

Marine Institute, St. John's. The
Technology Education Special Interest
Council (TESIC) and the Math-Science
Special Interest Council (MSSIC), in
partnership with Marine Institute, are
excited to announce the 3rd offering
of the Summer Institute of Technology

Integration (SITI): STEMfestNL. This
professional learning event will highlight
Science, Technology, Engineering and
Mathematics (STEM) as an essential part
of K-12 education. If you are interested
in facilitating a session, submit your pro-
posal to <https://goo.gl/g9gcp9>. To register
visit <https://stemfestnl2016.sched.org>. For
further information email Tom Kennedy,
TESIC President, at tom@tesic.org.

PHYSICAL & HEALTH EDUCATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE – PHE CANADA & PESIC

May 4-6, 2017

St. John's. More information to follow.

Dates to Remember

April 2016

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Apr 15 | Deadline: Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP |
| Apr 21 | Deadline: PD Fund applications |
| Apr 29-30 | NLTA Executive Meeting |
| Apr 30 | Deadline: Deferred Salary Leave Applications |
| Apr 30 | Deadline: Year-end resignation from contract |

May 2016

- | | |
|----------|--|
| May 7 | Deadline: Notification by Board of layoff |
| May 9-13 | Branch Election Week |
| May 19 | Deadline: PD Fund applications |

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR RETIRING TEACHERS

Teachers who are planning to retire at the end of June 2016 and who will be entitled to receive a pension benefit effective July 1 are advised that there will be a major change regarding when they will receive their summer holdback pay and their first pension benefit.

Effective June 2016, teachers who have submitted their resignation to their District on or before March 31 and who have completed and submitted their "Application for Teacher's Pension" to the Pensions Division on or before that date will receive their entire summer holdback pay as a lump-sum payment during the first pay period following the end of the school year. As a result, retiring teachers will then receive their first pension benefit on July 15 or July 31.

With this change, it will be important for those teachers considering retirement for the end of the school year to submit their resignation to the Director of their District on or before March 31 and to complete and submit their pension application to the Pensions Division in a timely manner. Any resignations or

applications submitted after March 31 cannot be guaranteed payment of pension on July 15 or July 31.

Income Tax for the summer holdback pay lump-sum payment will be calculated on a pro-rated basis as though the teacher had received four separate pay checks. This will avoid any additional taxation.

NOTE: This change is only applicable to teachers who are retiring at the end of the school year and summer holdback payments for all other teachers will not be affected.

If you have any questions regarding this change, please contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA by calling **1-800-563-3599** or **726-3223** or **mail@nlta.nl.ca**.

