

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

T H E

bulletin

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Up Front from the President

*"Oh so you're a politician who has never taught a class? Tell me more about how schools should be run."
~ Gene Wilder; Charlie and the Chocolate Factory; film-novel by Ronald Dahl*



On April 16th I did an interview with Ted Blades on CBC Radio discussing the education cuts (again) and the negative effect these cuts will have on our schools in September. This stemmed from a letter that the School Administrators' Council (SAC) wrote to me and their members that was obtained by CBC. During that interview I spoke very passionately about the negative effect these cuts will have on our students. It was explained to Ted Blades and in other media interviews that followed, that the real ramifications of the cuts to the education system were only now being realized as administrators were getting their school allocations. Many schools discovered that they were losing administration time, learning resource teachers, specialist teachers, numeracy/literacy teachers, and that there were no fewer students enrolled in their schools.

The Minister of Education, Clyde Jackman, was interviewed later by Ted Blades and his response had several inaccuracies. Mr. Jackman stated when responding to my comments about cuts to Art and Music programs, "Certainly was not the case. The allocations that we have for Music and Phys Ed and for Special Education services, these are all intact. We have not touched them. As a matter of fact, we've increased them over the past number of years." This error was pointed out after the interview through an email that was read by Ted Blades from the Department of Education's Director of Communications, that there were cuts to specialists at the intermediate level for a total of 15 units across the school system. The other error that was communicated to the public by the Minister was the cut of administration time. He stated, "but they are reduced by a quarter of a unit so that in a school that had two and half units for administration now will have two and a quarter." This is false. If a school

previously had 2.50 administrators, they will now be allocated 2.

Prior to the announcement of the budget the NLTA ran a campaign, "Now is Not the Time for Cuts to Education". The main focus of that campaign was to influence the MHAs and the government not to cut education. However, since the release of the Provincial Budget, the NLTA has heard from and spoken with members concerning the cuts to funding for education. The message that we have heard from teachers, administrators, and educational stakeholders is loud and clear. These cuts will have a negative impact on students and their learning in the classrooms and schools of this province. Simple as that!

I feel it necessary to reiterate here the same points we have been making in the media and to Government and I have to keep asking, "how can schools in our province deliver the same level of service in September with 160 fewer positions in our education system?" Approximately 40% of the teaching units being cut will come from the "needs-based" part of the teacher allocation model. This part of the model is intended to provide additional teachers to meet the needs that the districts identify but which cannot be met by the "formula-based" allocations under the teacher allocation model. Teachers are telling me without hesitation that the reductions to teacher allocations will have direct negative impacts on students and will add to the already heavy workload.

As we have stated, the announced reductions in administrative allocations will have significant negative implications on the ability of administrators to carry out their roles and responsibilities. I have stated over and over again in the media that this rollback is a seriously regressive step that is occurring at a time when the school administrators' responsibility will be increased once again. Government is saying it is only a half unit

here or a quarter unit there, but the schools affected are experiencing a 14 to 20 percent cut in their allocation for administration.

The reduction of Learning Resource teachers in this allocation will mean a reduction in an important teaching resource for many schools. The reduction in the allocation for specialist teachers at the intermediate level is difficult to comprehend. These cuts are inadequate to meet the needs to make the curriculum at this level more relevant and meaningful to these adolescent learners.

Program specialists at the board are in a very precarious position. All program specialists are now being declared redundant and placed in positions within the districts according to the collective agreement. Once the new board has established their allocation for program specialists, if they are interested in these positions they must reapply. This is in the best interest of supporting teaching and learning? I think not.

These education cuts are not about a different philosophy of teaching and learning; it is all about cutting the cloth to fit the child. The Department was asked to make cuts to the education budget due to a provincial deficit. Now it is trying to convince the public and parents that 160 fewer teaching units will not make a difference because teachers will make it work. I disagree. In every organization or system there is always a tipping point where the system can no longer sustain itself as it once did, and that tipping point is now for education in this province.

I expect more for the students of Newfoundland and Labrador and so should parents and the public. Our students deserve better – not less! They cannot wait for a balanced budget.

Hily B.

THE bulletin

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PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

DEER LAKE

Teacher raising funds for Caring for Kids' Janeway Walk

Graydon Pelley, a teacher at Elwood Elementary in Deer Lake, has an obvious dedication to helping children. This is not just evident with the children in his classroom, but with the children across our entire province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Last May, Graydon left Corner Brook to walk back home to Deer Lake as an endeavour to raise money for the Janeway Children's Hospital. He had obtained some sponsors before setting out for his walk; however, along the journey many people were inspired to contribute to this cause. Due to the generosity of people, Graydon was able to raise a total of \$5,549.00.

Realizing that he could raise a larger amount if he walked a longer distance, Graydon has spent this year preparing to walk from St. John's to Deer Lake. The walk home represents the desire of the children in the hospital to return to their homes safe and healthy. Graydon plans to leave St. John's on June 24 at 7:00 a.m. to make his way home to Deer Lake.

For anyone who would like to get involved in any way through fundraising, walking with Graydon, or donating, please inbox Graydon at Caring for Kids' Janeway Walk 2013 on Facebook. Any and all support is greatly appreciated on behalf of the children of this province.



Graydon Pelley hits the pavement to raise money for the Janeway.

PARADISE

Teacher professional development at Holy Family Elementary

The challenges in keeping abreast of new technology in the classroom can prove to be a daunting task. The staff at Holy Family Elementary School in Paradise embraced that challenge as they took on a collaborative approach to professional development that was relevant and structured to meet diverse needs.

The Technology Committee identified teachers who were integrating technology in their classrooms to provide leadership and guidance to fellow staff members. In addition, the committee utilized the staff and school's technology goals as well as the school development plan in preparing the PD agenda.



Teachers at Holy Family Elementary School participate in one of the many professional development sessions on technology integration.

The day started with a full group session that addressed the SAMR model of technology integration as developed by Ruben R. Puentedura. This provided some context as to how technology can transform tasks beginning at the **substitution** and **augmentation** stages to the **modification** and the **redefinition** of new tasks inconceivable without technology. Then technology integration was identified as an integral part of the 21st Century Learning framework.

Afterward, teachers were given the opportunity to sign up for sessions that were of interest to them. Concurrent sessions were ongoing throughout the

day and included topics such as: iPad basics and backup; interactive whiteboard activities that included Wizteach and classroom management (tools for student grouping and active living and drama activities); Animoto – photo videos; Weebly – teacher website; StoryJumper – digital stories; Glogster – multimedia posters; Sqworl – websites under one URL; Kidblog – virtual sharing forums; iBooks with iAuthor – digital books and their creation.

At one point, the staff split into small groups where one section created iMovies and the other a book using Book Creator. Apple educators identified these Apps as a way to redefine and transform tasks using the SAMR model.

“The power of technology to break down geographical barriers can make a great impact on learning activities enabling global education and awareness,” said Tina Costello, Teacher-Librarian and Technology Facilitator at Holy Family Elementary. To complete the day, one teacher showcased her class video, a video she will be sharing with a Qatari class in Saudi Arabia; a connection and an opportunity to foster a learning experience between two cultures, similar and different.

Teachers felt that this professional development day was an overall success with approximately 14 teachers peer mentoring. “This, along with the broad choice of topics offered, contributed significantly to such a positive learning experience,” said Ms. Costello.

A special thank you is extended to the Technology Committee for organizing the event and to school administration for their continued support. For more information visit the school website at hfsparadise.com or request enrolment in the school’s iTunes U course.

overdue. The project received generous support from the provincial government and the school council, but help is needed to reach the goal of creating a play area that will allow children to socialize and play for many years to come. In short, donations are needed.

The Eastern Education Foundation, a division of Eastern School District, will issue tax receipts for donations \$25 and over. If you do require a tax receipt, please make cheques payable to the Eastern Education Foundation and drop off at the school or mail to: All Hallows Elementary Community Park Project, c/o All Hallows Elementary, P.O. Box 520, Clarke’s Beach, NL, A0A 1W0. If you do not require a tax receipt, donations towards the playground can be sent to or dropped off at All Hallows Elementary School or to any committee member. Assistance and expertise is also required on build day. To register visit www.ahe.ltbk.ca. In-kind donations of services, equipment and/or materials are welcomed and will be recognized on the donation levels.

This is an amazing opportunity to help foster community spirit and provide a safe, fun and supportive environment where kids can learn, play and forge friendships.

NORTH RIVER

All Hallows Elementary Community Park Project

Exciting things are happening at All Hallows Elementary in North River, and not just inside the building. The Community Park Project at All Hallows has been chosen as a 2013 recipient of a Let Them Be Kids Helping Hand Award. As such, Let Them Be Kids will match, dollar for dollar, all funds raised locally for the purchase of playground equipment. This is an incredible opportunity to create a top-notch recreation and play area for the 420-plus children at the school, and the Community Park Project Committee are not wasting time in getting this done.

A “Build Day” is scheduled for June 8, 2013, at which time hundreds of volunteers will assemble to create a play area that is much needed and long

PORT HOPE SIMPSON

Apple Day at Bayside Academy

Apple Day was enjoyed at Bayside Academy in Port Hope Simpson on Friday, March 22. This day was set aside as one promotion of Nutrition Month (March). Several women from the Breakfast Program at the school dished up servings of apple finger foods for 65 students and 12 staff members.

"All month the students have been provided information on healthy eating," said Joanne Sampson, Vice-Principal of Bayside Academy. The dishes were just a few examples of the various ways apples can be used to get children to eat healthy and enjoy the foods they are eating. "Overall, the promotion was a great success. Students and staff alike talked about the *delicious foods*, the *yummy apples*, and the *lovely gifts* of notebooks and pencils."



Students at Bayside Academy enjoy apple finger foods during Apple Day.

ST. JOHN'S

A busy year continues at Macdonald Drive Junior High

Macdonald Drive Junior High (MDJH) in St. John's has had a busy school year. We reported on several activities in the April issue of *The Bulletin*. The following are additional activities the school has been actively involved in this school year.

Breakfast Program

The cups are overflowing with orange juice, the bagel line is growing and the smoothie making recipe is mastered. The Kids Eat Smart breakfast program has exploded in popularity at Macdonald Drive Junior High. Premier Kathy Dunderdale helped launch the program in its inaugural year. "Thanks to many parent and staff volunteers, the typical morning rivals any-continental-style buffet in the province," said Darryl

Feener, Principal of Macdonald Drive Junior High.

"The dedication of the people who come in faithfully to make sure there's food ready for students is incredible", said Caleb Thorne, a teacher and volunteer for the program. Thorne coordinates the breakfast program with Mary van Thiel, another teacher at the school. Since September, the coordinating pair has been running off the positive energy they get from the 200 plus students who attend each morning.



Premier Kathy Dunderdale joins parent and staff volunteers at the MDJH Breakfast Program.

"As the most important meal of the day, a healthy breakfast has made a phenomenal difference in the energy level of students," said Principal Feener. "They have become much more attentive in class and the atmosphere of MDJH has improved tremendously.

There is no single person responsible for our program's success – we've got a whole team. MDJH is a special school, with a very dedicated staff, strong leadership, all backed by a caring school community of family and friends."

MDJH Student Council

For the first time in many years, MDJH has a student council. Elections were held early in the school year to elect Ryker Richard as President and Jennifer Wilkins as Vice-President. In addition, 30 homeroom reps were elected. The student council has been very active at MDJH. Students have embraced the opportunity to be leaders and have had a positive impact in their school community. They organized a Much Music Dance for the student body as well as a Christmas Dance. The students were able to donate \$450 to both the school's band program and the school's physical education program.

One of the goals of the student council is to raise school spirit and one of the ways to do this is to have various theme days throughout the year. To date, MDJH has had Group Day and Ugly Sweater Day. Donations collected on these days were donated to the school's breakfast program. Students made and

sold candy kabobs before Christmas donating \$100 to the breakfast program and \$100 to the Christmas toy drive.



Members of the MDJH Student Council preparing for one of their fundraisers.

The leadership and contribution of the school's student council has also extended outside the school community. In participating in Jamarama early in the fall, the student council raised \$565 for the Janeway. Members of the student council have also formed a Soup Group which meets every second Thursday to make soup to donate to Streetreach (a centre for at risk youth).

Other members of the student council have formed a Yearbook Committee and have been busy creating a yearbook for the students and staff of MDJH. Other events during February included Valentine's Day candygrams, Anti-bullying Week and Spirit Week activities.

Teacher Hockey Game

On February 5, students and teachers at Macdonald Drive Junior High competed against each other in a student-teacher hockey game.



Students and teachers at MDJH hit the ice for a little competition.

(continued on page 8)

Emergency First Aid Course

On February 8, several students at MDJH completed a one-day St. John Ambulance Emergency First Aid Course. The students focused on many first aid interventions including the use of an AED machine. "A great day of learning was enjoyed by all!" commented Principal Feener.



Students at MDJH participate in an Emergency First Aid Course with the use of an AED machine.

Cake Auction

On March 15, Macdonald Drive Junior High School hosted a cake auction. The event was led by professional auctioneer, Wayne Bartlett. Students and parents baked 68 cakes with a theme built around St. Patrick's Day. It was a great spirited afternoon! Money raised from the auction will support student activities at the school.



Rows of St. Patrick's Day cakes line the tables during MDJH's cake auction.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Sharing Our Cultures – À la découverte de nos cultures

Sharing Our Cultures (SOC), now in its 14th year, was held at The Rooms on March 24-26, 2013. This project engages high school youth from diverse cultural backgrounds in meetings and workshops that

culminate in a public showcase of their cultures. These youth have opportunities to develop English language, literacy, research, writing, time management, and interpersonal skills, as well as nurture friendships and a sense of belonging in school. This year, 45 youth representing 18 cultures interacted and shared their cultures with over 1,150 Grade 6 students and their teachers. Each Grade 6 student received a "passport" designed to stimulate interaction with the high school youth. Students from Prince of Wales Collegiate and Booth Memorial High School, in their role as "tour guides," escorted small groups of Grade 6 students around the cultural displays.



Police Chief Robert Johnston of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary enjoys a soccer demonstration.

Visitors and Grade 6 students learned that in the Eritrean culture coffee is not made by pressing the "start" button on a machine and watching it drip into a cup in seconds. Instead, embedded in hours of socializing, coffee beans are roasted, grounded, and brewed in the presence of the guests, and then served as a sign of respect and thanksgiving for the blessings of life. These visitors and students participated in a Jeopardy game created by two high school youth about their culture and the environment in Colombia. They also learned about Canada's diversity from the staff of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism (OIM).

Two of the 55 teachers who registered indicated the value and relevance of the SOC event: "This event is valuable in that it supports the outcomes for the Grade 6 program for Social Studies. The students have an opportunity to interact with many people from many cultures at one time."; "When living in a small rural community, students oftentimes have NO opportunities to meet children from other cultures at all! They learn about other cultures in school but to have the chance to meet and talk with students from other parts of the world is invaluable to their education and global view."



Lloydetta Quaicoe, Project Coordinator, addresses participants at the Sharing Our Cultures opening ceremonies.

On March 24, the public was invited to participate free of charge. The official opening ceremonies with SOC partners included greetings from Ms. Mary-Ellen Valkenier, Director of Operations, Integration, Eastern Region, CIC, and Mr. Dan Crummell, MHA for St. John's East and Parliamentary Secretary to the Honourable Joan Shea. Ms. Denise Wilson, Managing Director of CBC-NL, delivered the remarks. Two young authors, Ms. Mohera-Lily Baird-Georges from St. John's and Ms. Tracy Laing from Boat Harbour, whose stories were published in issue 6 and 7 of *Cultural Con'txt*, read in French and English, respectively. The new interactive SOC website www.sharingourcultures.com was launched. It allows Grade 6 students to view the cultures showcased at The Rooms as well as download and complete individual "passports."

Kids Eat Smart launches Family Nutrition Blog

Healthy eating is something that goes far beyond the school day. That's why Kids Eat Smart has launched a Family Nutrition Blog that shares recipes, tips, menu planning, news and information for families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The blog is hosted by Kristin Harris, a registered dietitian who works as a program development coordinator with the Kids Eat Smart Foundation. Some recent posts include: meeting your family's different food needs; five fantastic foods for your pantry all year round; quick tips for cooking @ home; learning to love grocery shopping; and how to get your kid to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Check it out on Wordpress at kidseatsmartnl.wordpress.com.

Rooting for Health – a special day for kids and farmers

On March 13, 2013 the farmers came to school! Egg farmers, produce farmers, dairy farmers, and poultry farmers brought the magic of agriculture to kids throughout the province in the 4th annual Rooting for Health event.

Rooting for Health is a special initiative to help school children recognize the relationship between farming, food and health.

The day is hosted by Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador, in association with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, the School Milk Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Egg Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The event involves local farmers visiting schools across Newfoundland and Labrador and doing small information sessions with the students. A main component is providing the students with a healthy breakfast made up of mostly local foods.



Local farmer Mary Lester helps serve breakfast at Virginia Park Elementary in St. John's during Rooting for Health 2013.

Fifteen Kids Eat Smart Clubs participated in this year's event. Kids ate eggs and berries, drank milk and asked the farmers all kinds of questions. The healthy breakfasts were provided by partners and prepared in a variety of ways – French toast, egg wraps, pancakes, smoothies – and many special guests were part of the preparing, including farmers, MHAs, health promoters, parents and others.

Kids saw the connection between local farms and healthy eating and having a happy, healthy start to the school day. To take the message home, for the first time Kids Eat Smart issued a Rooting for Health guide and an online quiz about farming in our province – one lucky entrant will even win an iPod touch!

For more information about Rooting for Health, visit www.kidseatsmart.ca/rootingforhealth/.

Cancer Society's Sun Safety Program available to schools

Since January, the Canadian Cancer Society - Newfoundland and Labrador Division (CCS-NL) has been busy delivering their Sun Safety message to schools throughout the province. Darrell Yetman, Coordinator of Sun Safety and Skin Cancer Awareness with the CCS-NL, is available to visit classrooms at all grade levels and speak with students and teachers about winter and summer sun safety, skin cancer awareness and prevention, as well as the Society's Province-Wide Tan-Free Graduation Challenge. In many areas of the province, trained CCS volunteers are available to deliver the program. To date, Mr. Yetman and other volunteers have delivered the Sun Safety message to approximately 2000 students and teachers in nine schools, both through school-wide awareness events and in-class presentations. "Feedback gathered from these presentations shows that the information is very positively received by students, many of whom have family members and friends affected by cancer," said Mr. Yetman. "The presentation on the Tan-Free Grad Challenge is an eye-opener for those teens who have not been fully aware of the dangers of indoor tanning in particular."

On March 5, Mr. Yetman visited each class at Acreman Elementary School in Green's Harbour and spoke with the students and staff about staying safe in the sun. The students were very interested in the message as they were presented with lots of age-appropriate information on the dangers of UV radiation both from the sun and from tanning beds, the increased risk from reflected rays off snow and ice in winter, and the various ways we can protect ourselves when out in the sun.



Students at Acreman Elementary listen intently to the Cancer Society's message about sun safety.

Depending on the age level of the audience, the presentation includes videos, songs, a slide show,

pencil-and-paper activities and lively discussions, and even an interactive quiz game suitable for older students, who can win “money” for correct answers on the subject of sun safety. Where appropriate, informative literature and sunscreen samples are distributed to participants.

The Province-wide Tan-free Graduation Challenge aims to inform high school students on the risks associated with indoor tanning, and to challenge them to pledge to go tan-free for graduation. “This is a very timely subject and a very important message for our students,” said Mr. Yetman “as

demonstrated by the World Health Organization’s recognition of artificial tanning devices as a known carcinogen, as well as the trend across Canada toward legislation limiting their use.”

The Sun Safety program is made possible by a grant from the Department of Health and Community Services, Newfoundland and Labrador. Teachers can contact Darrell Yetman at the Canadian Cancer Society – Newfoundland and Labrador Division at 1-888-753-6520, ext. 237, or email dyetman@nl.cancer.ca to arrange classroom visits or to get more information.

Correction

Canadian Blood Services and NLTA Partners for Life

In the April issue of *The Bulletin*, we printed an error in our Partner ID for the Canadian Blood Services Partners for Life Program.

To register online go to www.blood.ca/partnersforlife

Our Partner ID is **NEWF007787**

To book an appointment call **1-888-2-DONATE** (1-888-236-6283) or visit www.blood.ca to find a mobile clinic near you.

We apologize for this error.



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Changes to EI Regulations: Information for Teachers

by STEVE BROOKS

In its 2012 Budget, the federal government announced that it would be making changes to the Canadian Employment Insurance Program. As a result of this announcement your Association engaged in a number of efforts to ensure that the concerns of teachers were heard regarding any changes to the EI Program. The Association, with the support of the Canadian Teacher's Federation, engaged in high level meetings with both the Commissioner for Workers and senior management with the national office of Service Canada. In addition to our own efforts, we also encouraged school boards, the employers, to make known to the federal government their concerns regarding the potential impact changes in the program would have on their employees. It is hard to determine what level of impact these lobbying efforts had on a review of a nationally administered program. This month, the federal government formally adopted regulatory changes to the EI Program. The two most significant changes to the program included a definition of what constitutes suitable employment in a job search, and the level of earnings that can be reported while on EI before affecting benefits.

Suitable Employment

In determining what constitutes suitable employment in a job search while in receipt of Employment Insurance benefits, the program categorizes claimants into three groups based upon an assessment of their contribution and claim history. Any assessment of a claimant's job search will include consideration of available employment opportunities and commute time. Under normal circumstances a claimant will not be expected to accept a job which requires a commute, to or from their residence to place of employment, longer than one hour. Claimants will be placed in one of the following categories based upon a review of their contribution and claim history:

Long-tenured Workers

A long-tenured worker is defined as an individual who has paid at least 30% of the annual maximum

EI premiums for at least seven out of the last ten years; and over the last five years received 35 or fewer weeks of EI regular benefits. For persons in this category, suitable employment will be defined as the same occupation with wages 90% of previous earnings for the first 18 weeks in receipt of regular EI benefits. After 18 weeks suitable employment will include similar occupations with wages 80% of previous earnings.

Occasional Claimants

Occasional claimants will have three or more claims and more than 60 weeks of regular benefits in the past five years. For persons in this category, suitable employment will be defined as the same occupation with wages 90% of previous earnings for the first six weeks of EI benefits. Between six and 18 weeks suitable employment will be similar occupations with wages 80% of previous earnings. After 18 weeks of receiving regular benefits, suitable employment will be defined as any work with wages 70% of previous earnings.

Frequent Claimants

Frequent claimants include all claimants not covered by the definitions for either Occasional Claimants or Long-tenured Workers. For persons in this category, suitable employment will be defined as similar occupations with wages 80% of previous earnings for the first six weeks of EI benefits. After six weeks, suitable employment will be considered any work with wages 70% of previous earnings.

All persons in receipt of regular EI benefits have always been expected to engage in a constant job search while on a claim. This requirement has not changed, however, as a result of the above referenced regulatory changes, teachers must be mindful in their declared job search of what the definition of suitable employment is for the category of claimant they fall into. A teacher defined as a long-tenured worker can restrict their job search to the field of education for the first 18 weeks of their claim. A teacher defined as

an occasional claimant can restrict their job search to the field of education for the first six weeks of a claim. Those teachers defined as frequent claimants must include similar occupations in their job search once they start receiving regular benefits, keeping in mind that an occupation with a wage representing 70% of previous earnings can be considered suitable employment under certain circumstances.

Earnings While Receiving EI Benefits

Claimants claiming regular, parental or compassionate care benefits can, under certain conditions, declare earnings without changing the amount of EI Benefit they receive. Under the new regulations individuals may choose from two options in determining eligible earnings:

a) Claimants may claim, under previous rules, earnings of \$75.00 or 40% of weekly benefits without a reduction in EI Benefits.

b) Claimants, under new rules, may claim 50% of their EI Benefit for every dollar earned, up to 90% of the weekly insurable earnings.

The table below illustrates, using a single set of assumptions, the differences in the two options. Individuals filing for applicable benefits with earnings to report will be automatically registered for the new method and have until 30 days after the completion of a claim to request to have their claim reverted to the previous method.

Teachers reporting earnings while receiving EI benefits are encouraged to wait until the end of their claim period before assessing which method provides the greatest financial benefit. This will allow the teacher to properly consider their earning history. Teachers have 30 days following the end of their claim, to request a change in method. Teachers who have questions regarding the Employment Insurance Program are encouraged to contact an NLTA Benefits and Economic Services Administrative Officer for advice.

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Steve Brooks is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Comparison table of the previous pilot project and the new pilot project

Previous method		New Method	
Weekly insurable earnings	\$600	Weekly insurable earnings	\$600
EI weekly benefit amount (55% of \$600)	\$330	EI weekly benefit amount (55% of \$600)	\$330
Gross earnings declared during a week while on EI benefits	\$450	Gross earnings declared during a week while on EI benefits	\$450
Earnings amount (40% of the benefit amount: $\\$330 \times .40 = \\132)	\$132	Earnings amount (50% of gross earnings: $\\$450 \times .50 = \\225)	\$225
Net EI benefit payment for that week ($\$330 + \$132 - \$450 = \12)	\$12	Net EI benefit payment for that week ($\$330 + \$225 - \$450 = \105)	\$105
Combined earnings and EI benefits ($\$450 + \$12 = \$462$)	\$462	Combined earnings and EI benefits ($\$450 + \$105 = \$555$)	\$555



Pre-Retirement Seminars 2013

Teachers within two years of retirement eligibility should register for one of the NLTA's six Pre-Retirement Seminars scheduled to be held in the fall of 2013 in Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, Stephenville, and three in St. John's. (Please note: consideration will be given to combining seminars if registration numbers are sufficiently low in a particular seminar.) These seminars are held in accordance with Association policy as part of its overall program of pre-retirement counselling. Clause 18.12 of the Provincial Collective Agreement and Clause 29.12 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement provide two days paid leave to attend these seminars.

Information sessions will deal with topics such as the Teachers' Pension Plan, Severance Pay, Employment Insurance, NLTA Group Insurance, Financial and Estate Planning and the Canada Pension Plan. As well, time is available for individual counselling of prospective retirees by the various consultants.

Things You Should Know About Attending

- Potential participants must register with the NLTA for a particular seminar and apply to their Board office for leave.
- Only those teachers eligible to retire during or before June 2016 will be eligible to attend.
- Registration should be received at the NLTA Office at least four weeks in advance to ensure approval of attendance.
- The Association reserves the right to refuse acceptance of registration at any particular seminar if the registration forms have not been received at the NLTA office in accordance with Association policy.
- It is the responsibility of the individual participant to make arrangements and pay for hotel accommodations, should any be required. Please reference that you are attending an NLTA function and the hotel should provide a reduced rate which is available to the NLTA.
- Travel expenses shall be reimbursed in accordance with the following provisions:
 - i) participants shall be reimbursed the lesser of travel by private vehicle or public transportation to the seminar closest to the place of residence. In the event that a teacher requests and is accepted to attend a seminar other than the closest seminar, the participant shall only be reimbursed the amount applicable for travel to the closest seminar.
 - ii) payment for private vehicle shall be at the rate which is 15% of the average cost of self-serve regular gasoline as determined on the first day of each fiscal quarter for the return trip from residence to seminar site.
 - iii) travel via public conveyance shall be reimbursed at the rate of 80 percent of ferry, taxi, or economy airfare; in the case of airfare, the lesser of excursion (seat sale) or 80 percent of economy airfare will be paid, where excursion (seat sale) fares can be arranged. Receipts shall be required for all reimbursement.
 - iv) no expenses will be paid to participants living or teaching in the community where the seminar is held.
 - v) a spouse is welcome to accompany the participating teacher to the pre-retirement seminar, but no expenses will be covered.
- All other expenses, such as meals, accommodation and child care, are the responsibility of the participating teacher.
- Expenses will be provided for one pre-retirement seminar only and a teacher participant shall be permitted to attend one seminar only. (Notwithstanding this, a teacher may attend a second seminar as a spouse.)
- Teachers must attend the seminar location closest to their place of residence, except in cases where the mode, cost or availability of transportation necessitates otherwise.
- Directors and Assistant Directors, and spouses, are welcome to attend one pre-retirement seminar, but no expenses will be paid in accordance with this policy.

Given the large number of teachers eligible to retire, we reserve the right to limit the number of people who will be granted access, depending on the physical facilities available at each site. Consequently, it is imperative that teachers plan ahead and register early in the event that registrations have to be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.

NOTE: The full text of the NLTA Policy on Pre-Retirement Seminars and the registration form can also be found on the NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca). Click on "Recent Info" on the main page or "Online Forms" on the members-only website. The NLTA policy will also be mailed to teachers with confirmation of registration.

2013 PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR

REGISTRATION FORM

Name

Mailing Address

Postal Code

Home Telephone

Social Insurance Number*

School Name

School Telephone

Email

*** By providing your SIN you are authorizing the NLTA to request your pension information from the NL Department of Finance. This information will be used for NLTA internal purposes only.**

Please check which session you will be attending:

☐ **Oct. 17-18** – Greenwood Inn & Suites, Corner Brook

☐ **Oct. 24-25** – Mt. Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls-Windsor

☐ **Nov. 7-8** – Holiday Inn, Stephenville

☐ **Nov. 14-15** – Holiday Inn, St. John's

☐ **Nov. 21-22** – Holiday Inn, St. John's

☐ **Dec. 5-6** – Holiday Inn, St. John's

Will your spouse be attending? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of spouse (if attending)

Earliest eligibility date for pension

Have you attended a previous pre-retirement seminar?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- Note:**
- Teachers within two years of retirement (on or before June 2016) are eligible to attend.
 - All participants must pre-register.
 - You will receive confirmation prior to seminar.
 - Travel costs will be paid according to policy and only to the nearest seminar.
 - Teachers are advised to bring a calculator.

Please submit registration form to:

Melanie Jaster

Benefits and Economic Services Division

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

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

Fax: 709-726-4302; 1-877-711-6582 (toll free)

or submit online at www.nlta.nl.ca. Go to Forms Online and click "P".

NOTE: As space is limited, registrations will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.

FOR NLTA OFFICE USE ONLY		
Date Received	Confirmation Sent	Information Package Sent

Important Notice to All Teachers

NLTA's Financial Information Seminars

Fall 2013

For more than 25 years, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association has been providing Pre-Retirement Seminars for teachers across the province who are within two years of retirement. During each of these seminars, teachers have provided feedback and suggestions based on the presentations and information and have indicated that the information provided was very important, very useful and very valuable for all teachers. Many have suggested that the information should have been provided "much earlier in their career" so that they would have had the time to "better plan their financial future and their retirement".

In recent years, there has been an overwhelming increase in the interest of all teachers around the province, no matter what stage of their teaching career, to be provided the opportunity to attend a similar seminar and to receive similar information as presented at the Pre-Retirement seminars. **As a result of this increased level of interest, the NLTA began sponsoring Financial Information Seminars during the Fall of 2010, and the interest has been overwhelming.** To date, the NLTA has held 14 Financial Information Seminars and have scheduled three more for Fall 2013. These seminars will coincide with the Pre-Retirement Seminars to be held in Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor and St. John's. The seminars are scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:30 p.m., with lunch provided. The dates for the Financial Information Seminars for Fall 2013 are as follows:

- **Saturday, October 19 – Corner Brook (Greenwood Inn & Suites)**
- **Saturday, October 26 – Grand Falls-Windsor (Mount Peyton Hotel)**
- **Saturday, November 16 – St. John's (Holiday Inn)**

To find out more information on what will be covered at these seminars, we would encourage you to talk to a teacher who has attended a Pre-Retirement Seminar or a Financial Information Seminar to get their opinion of such seminars. For those who have already attended a Pre-Retirement Seminar in the past, we would encourage you to recommend this seminar to your colleagues.

Important Information Regarding the Seminars

1. Teachers wishing to attend a seminar **MUST** complete and submit a **2013 Financial Information Seminar Registration Form**. This form is available on the following page and will also appear in future issues of *The Bulletin*. This form can also be accessed on the NLTA members-only website (www.nlta.nl.ca) under "Online Forms".

2. A **MAXIMUM of 30 teacher participants will be accepted at each seminar.**
3. The selection of the participants will occur on a **first-come, first-served registered basis.**
4. The seminars will be conducted by the NLTA Administrative Staff responsible for conducting the Pre-Retirement Seminars. In addition, Johnson Inc. officials will be present at each of the seminars to answer any questions and/or provide any assistance to teachers who wish to discuss and/or make changes to their NLTA Group Insurance Plan coverage.
5. Each participant will receive at the seminar a copy of their Group Insurance Benefit Statement, as well as a copy of their Teacher Pension Benefit Statement. These documents will be reviewed, in detail, during the seminar and very important information regarding both documents will be discussed.
6. Financial Planning officials from the Newfoundland and Labrador Credit Union will also be presenting valuable information and suggestions regarding financial planning and other financial considerations.
7. Some of the topics that will be covered in detail during these seminars include:

1. Pensions and Other Benefits:

- The Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Accrual and Calculation of Pension Benefits
 - Integration, Pension Indexing, Survivor Benefits, Credit Splitting
 - Transfer and Reciprocal Agreements
- The Importance of Upgrading
- The Government Money Purchase Plan (Substitute Teachers' Pension Plan)
- The Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security
- Severance Pay

2. The NLTA Group Insurance Program

- Plan Options
- Do I have the proper coverage for me and my family?

3. Financial Planning Considerations

- Facts and Questions To Consider Regarding Financial Planning
- The Importance of Eliminating Debt Prior to Retirement
- Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) & Tax Free Savings Account (TFSA) – Initial vs. Future Tax Savings
- The Effect of Inflation on Disposable Income
- The Importance of Having a Will
- Steps That You Can Take
- Estate Planning

PLEASE REMEMBER TO REGISTER IF YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE SEMINARS!

2013 Financial Information Seminars

Registration Form

(please print)

Name:

Mailing Address:

Postal Code:

Home Telephone:

Social Insurance Number*:

School Name:

School Telephone:

E-mail:

** By providing your SIN you are authorizing the NLTA to request your pension information from the NL Department of Finance. This information will be used for NLTA internal purposes only.*

Have you attended a previous financial information session? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please check which session you will be attending:

- ☐ Oct. 19 – Greenwood Inn & Suites, Corner Brook
- ☐ Oct. 26 – Mount Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls-Windsor
- ☐ Nov. 16 – Holiday Inn, St. John's

Please submit registration form to:

Melanie Jaster

Benefits and Economic Services Division

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

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

Fax: 709-726-4302; 1-877-711-6582 (toll free)

or submit online at www.nlta.nl.ca. Go to Forms Online.

NOTE: As space is limited, registrations will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.

FOR NLTA OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received	Confirmation Sent



Hardening of the Attitudes

by JUDY BERANGER

“I will never forget the year I was bumped and had to go from driving ten minutes to get to school to more than a half hour. Nobody knew at the time that I was also dealing with a very sick parent along with financial worries. Now, years later I see several things I could have done to reduce my stress – the biggest one being my attitude. It was bad and I went from having a special way of bringing joy to others to feeling very sorry for myself. Makes me shudder to recall how negative I became and how much worse I made my own situation. Now my colleague thinks he might be bumped and is already stressing as if he has been. I hope I can find a way to support him.”

“For any teachers who find themselves having to change jobs, schools or are otherwise uncertain of what September holds, it is important to realize that there will be a cycle of grief whether the change is welcomed or not.”

It is that time of the year again. The crunch is on and to add to the “normal” stress and pressure we now have the annual school-end expectations along with the uncertainty that is created around redundancies and changes in teacher assignments for next year. As EAP Coordinators we hear teachers saying, “I feel exhausted and am hoping I can last until June!”

What can you do to best manage this stressful time? Three things that can help:

- Identify what is taking energy; make a plan to address it or ask for help if you can’t do it alone.
- Reflect on your attitude – keep facing the sun so the shadows stay behind you.
- Let go of what you have no control over.

Hardening of the attitudes happens when we succumb to stress and negativity. It can be detrimental to our health and no one is immune! In her book, *Transforming Work Pressures Into Productivity*, B. Potter reports that we can avoid the common burn-out symptoms such as strong negative emotions,

interpersonal problems, health problems, declining performance, risk of substance abuse and feelings of hopelessness if we identify and address them early enough.

Attitudes also harden when support is minimal and it seems like no one is really paying attention. Did you ever have the experience of talking to a person who you know was not listening? Studies of human neurophysiology have estimated that 60% of the information that flows to the brain comes via our video system – the eyes. Talk to the eyes! For example, consider how TV commercials are more effective than radio commercials. Researchers like Brammer and Bullmore demonstrate that if we talk to the eyes in addition to recruiting the verbal centers of the brain, we greatly increase the effect we can have on the person receiving the message. The reason for this is that more neurons are activated when a message combines both visual and verbal elements compared to the sum of the activity provoked when each of these modalities is stimulated separately. The important learning here is to be attentive visually and verbally, striving to be totally present and attentive in our conversations and especially when providing support.

Shaping our attitudes is about shifting perspectives that are not helpful and intentionally changing how we frame things. It is about caring enough to endure the immediate discomfort that is created when we move from avoidance to facing head-on the challenges in our lives. There is no question that it is tough to find something in the present to enjoy and appreciate when all else seems to be falling around you. Albert Ellis says, “The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on others. You realize that you control your own destiny.”

Developing and maintaining attitudes that reflect sensitivity, authenticity, courage, understanding based on knowledge, respect, and empathy for others is vitally important in our day to day interactions. What would it take to see each other as allies who are supportive and loyal even regardless of what is happening around us?

If you find journaling or reflection time helpful, types of questions to consider include:

- Does my mental filter only allow me to see the negative aspect of a situation(s)?
- Will I be a victim or will I actively thrive, be an “actor” or a “reactor”?
- Do I allow negative emotions to flow through me or do I allow them to set up house and create a new negative reality?
- Is there something deep down preventing me from taking necessary actions to move to higher ground?
- Are there any attitudes/beliefs I have that are blocking present relationships?
- Are there any other attitudes and beliefs that I would like to change? Do I have the supports I need to change them? (Your Employee Assistance Program can help)
- Will any of my attitudes/beliefs result in self-defeating behaviours?
- Do my attitudes encourage good personal growth, maturity, and strong mental health?
- Do my attitudes and beliefs assist in my maintaining collaborative and respectful relationships?
- Do I truly understand what forgiveness means and that true forgiveness allows the releasing of grudges?

For any teachers who find themselves having to change jobs, schools or are otherwise uncertain of what September holds, it is important to realize that there will be a cycle of grief whether the change is welcomed or not. Most people are comfortable in their jobs and the shock of change will be activated as the reality sets in for what this means to you and your family. Whether shock and denial, anger, depression or withdrawal, it will be experienced differently by each person. It is wise to seek assistance or call your employee assistance program and to focus on things that you can change and to make a list to follow in the short term for active self care. There will be bad days as one works through changing emotions and your attitude will greatly affect your grieving process.

In his book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, Dr. Bridges says that transition is an inner process through which people come to terms with change, as they let go of the way things used to be and reorient themselves to the way that things are now. How often have we heard “just get over it”, when in reality we all know that what we have to do is work our way through it – evolve. The transitioning process can only start when we let go of negativity including the anger and bitterness that comes with a victim stance. As long as we hold onto the way things were, we won't be able to move to what is, or what could be.

“As an administrator I felt very angry that I had to tell teachers they were redundant. I felt for the people

involved and was worried about how all of this was going to impact their lives and our staff. I felt an unrealistic sense of responsibility to fix everything and make it okay. I had difficulty sleeping and didn't feel like eating.”

We all know the steps to creating and maintaining balance and health in our lives – proper sleep, movement, exercise and nutrition, to goal setting, naming priorities, taking respites and improving time management skills. What is equally important is to surround oneself with supportive people, reducing the sense of aloneness and debriefing challenges in a trusting environment. Laughter and fun are very important in this challenging time and what that is varies for everyone. Simple things like taking time out with a precious person or a precious pet can lower stress levels and give immediate respite. If you need it, your EAP program is there to help.

Respectful attitudes assist us in letting go of what we cannot change and are critical to our well-being. To let go of self-defeating thoughts is a tremendous relief and makes room for new growth and winning attitudes filled with possibilities and promise. The choice is yours.

Adapted from the wise words of an anonymous writer...

To Let Go ...

is not to stop caring. It's recognizing I can't do it for someone else.

is not to cut oneself off, but realizing we can't control others.

is not to disable but to allow learning from natural consequences.

is not to fight powerfulness but to accept that the outcome is not always in my hands.

is not to try to arrange the outcome but to allow others to effect their own destiny.

is not to be protective but rather to permit another to face reality.

is not to regulate anyone but to try to become the best we can be.

is not to fear less but to Love more.

is to make the most of myself and not meant to fix but rather to support.

is to forgive and to keep moving.

Judy Beranger is a Wellness and Employee Assistance Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Judy Beranger (ext. 265) or Gail Carroll (ext. 242). Suggestions for future articles for this section are welcomed.



A Framework for Successful Systematic Technology Integration

by DAVID GILL

Professional development is one of the key mechanisms for maintaining and increasing our professional capacity as educators. However, from my experience and the experience of others, many of the professional development opportunities available are very static. Although there are a plethora of sessions available at any given time, typically they are introductory or isolated in nature. Even if these individual sessions are engaging, they rarely incorporate the support mechanisms needed to help individuals develop a deeper understanding of the pedagogical implications of the session topics. This is especially true if the topic covered is foreign to the participating teacher. Some people might say that after a professional development session, individual teachers are responsible to forge forward regardless of the follow up support offered. This might be true, and the knowledge and skills that are acquired by these methods can end up benefiting teachers and ultimately their students, albeit possibly in pockets of isolation. Although individual teachers can develop their professional capacity in this manner, it is questionable how grade levels, departments, schools and districts can develop a similar professional capacity in an effective manner with authentic measures of success. Over the past two school years (2011-13) through a sustained, supported, model-based and goal-oriented cohort of teachers, Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts has been doing just that. With a focus on technology integration and the 21st century learning principles of collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking, they have been building a shared professional capacity that is having a direct and positive impact on their daily classroom practice.

The idea of information and communications technology integration is not new in education. Passages from research literature in the 1950s on the topic of film in the classroom could easily be slipped into the latest article dealing with mobile computing without detection. Despite its popularity, there are many reported issues with integrating technology:

cost, access, maintenance, and training to name a few. Even after many years of research, the myth persists that technology integration stops at the acquisition of hardware and/or software. Nothing could be further from the truth. Deciding on, and acquiring resources, should be the last step in any technology integration plan. Of equal importance, but often left in the shadows, is the professional development framework for the implementation of the acquired resources. This framework should directly relate to fulfilling the goals of the teacher, school or district in question. Even with all of the challenges of effectively integrating technology into the classroom, most people believe that the benefits still greatly outweigh the risks. Since its opening in 1991, Amalgamated Academy has strived to be a leader in meaningful, authentic, student-centered teaching with a strong emphasis on technology integration. One of the basic principles that both teachers and administrators have shared over the years is that students' achievement and learning is one of our highest priorities. We believe it is our duty to develop and evolve with students to meet their needs. One of the tools that we have used to stay current and sharpen our collective skills has been the professional learning community model.

The idea of a professional learning community, or community of practice, has also been around for a while. In essence, a professional learning community is a group of professionals that share a common goal and work towards achieving that goal through supporting the directed efforts of its members. Over the last ten years my role at Amalgamated Academy, in conjunction with other teachers, has been one of developing, implementing and facilitating rich technology integration lessons and projects based on the principles of 21st century learning. Over that time I've had the opportunity to observe the changing dynamic of our staff. While there always seems to be a group of teachers who will try new ways of integrating technology without any external motivation, there is a second group of teachers who want to integrate technology into their lessons but lack the skill

or confidence to fulfil their goals. With this in mind, I asked myself a question: how could I connect these two groups of teachers in a positive and supportive manner that could possibly lead to greater student engagement and teacher motivation? I believe the development of our latest professional learning community is a step in the right direction.

At the center of our professional learning community is the MOODLE (www.moodle.org) course management software/virtual learning environment. This open source software allows teachers to create interactive web-based courses and modules for their students. Resources and activities can be shared between teachers and student work can be completed in, or accepted by, the software. A variety of standard modules are available which include forums, blogs, wikis, online journals, quizzes, lessons, and glossaries, just to name the most popular choices. Although we began using this platform as a small isolated group seven years ago, we quickly realized the potential for transforming our teaching practice. Our courses were no longer confined to the classroom, but open to anyone, anywhere, with an Internet connection. We started by blending our teaching approach by including online components to complement our traditional methods. By booking computer lab time and offering alternative submission methods, we were also able to deal with any personal student Internet access issues. Overall, the blended method we spearheaded had worked well and we offered several general professional development sessions based on our experiences. Although many teachers had indicated a strong interest in this approach, these isolated sessions were not enough to kick-start a systemic change at our school. As a result, in the spring of 2011 I proposed a cohort to the administration to support these teachers in mastering not only the MOODLE platform, but technology integration in general. Our administration was very receptive to the idea and in June of 2011 I

(continued on page 22)



Teacher Carole Saunders showing students Jakob Linthorne, Megan Nolan and Valerie Croke how to access grade 9 math resources online through MOODLE.

called for volunteers to join our cohort for the following school year. Over half of the staff responded, 30 in total. This group has been working together for the last two years and have collectively built a capacity for technology integration that goes beyond the individual; it is starting to be entrenched in our school culture. I believe the key to our success lies in the framework that supports and fosters the development of collegial collaboration based on the goals of our teachers, school and district.



Teacher Keith Delaney working on an endangered species project with Erin Stagg and Ashley Peach.

The basic framework for our professional learning community is quite simple: we work within a portion of the professional development time that is available to the school during the year, we set and record measurable goals and we work toward those goals between professional development days. We also rely on smaller sub-groups led by mentor teachers for support during the implementation of our goals and we share and record our reflections on our successes and limitations as we move throughout the year. One of the reasons for our success is the voluntary nature of our group. Individual teachers make the decision to join and commit to working through the program for at least one school year. After their yearly commitment is over, they can decide if they have gained the skills needed to move on without the formal support of the cohort or stay for a second year of directed professional development. If teachers decide to leave, they offer their support informally throughout the year to anyone in need. Teachers gain experience by developing goals based on their classroom needs and extend the complexity of their goals throughout the year based on their individual and collective reflections. Typically, teachers that have no experience with MOODLE will start with basic goals that help them become proficient with the platform interface. From there, they move on to developing lessons and activities that engage students directly in the online

learning environment that they have created. As teachers and students become even more familiar and comfortable integrating the different technologies available, partnerships between teachers of not only the same but different grade levels tend to emerge. The partnerships and projects that are produced typically support the implementation of student-centered activities incorporating the principles of 21st century learning. The progression from novice to competent integrator, to expert and mentor, is truly amazing to witness. What is more amazing is that this transformation is not only changing individual teaching practice, but is also molding the teaching culture of our whole school.

Self-directed, sustained and supported professional development is at the heart of our success. Our goal was to move away from isolated pockets of knowledge and skills to a community of educators empowered with the ability to engage with their students at a technological equal level. We recognize the daily challenges and imperfections of the system we work in, but have decided to tackle these issues together as we move forward on our journey of lifelong learning. By utilizing our existing professional development time in a unique way, setting obtainable measureable goals and building a network of professional support throughout the last two years, we have created an authentic learning community with far-reaching affect. Based on my experience and the experience of my colleagues, I believe this approach could be successfully utilized to revitalize professional development in many situations and settings.



Trevor Smith and Clarence Mercer collaborating on the development of a student-led video project for the next grade 7 science unit.

David Gill is an E-Learning Specialist (LRT) at Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts.

BGM 2013: Reflections from a Beginner Teacher

by BRANDON FIELD

For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to be a teacher. Growing up, I vividly recall sitting on the couch each Monday night to watch *Boston Public*, an early-2000 drama centred on the lives of a group of teachers. While watching *Dangerous Minds*, I remember thinking to myself, "I'd like to do this someday."

Of course, the notion that I wanted to be a teacher didn't begin with a television show or a movie; it began in a classroom, with a real-life teacher. No taking the entire class to the amusement park here, just a skilled grade seven Language Arts teacher who cared about his students. Along the way, there were many more that reinforced the idea that teaching was the path that my life would eventually take.

With all of these influential teachers in my life, I developed the utmost respect for educators, and for the profession. Now that I have myself become a teacher, I continue to believe that teaching is the noblest profession, and one which I take very seriously. We must be informed, active participants in the protection of this most important of occupations. It was with this in mind that I accepted an invitation by a colleague to attend BGM 2013.

Looking around the packed ballroom at the Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland was a little intimidating for a first-timer. Luckily, an orientation session was offered, allowing new delegates to acquaint themselves with the policies and procedures of BGM. Although the majority of attendees were experienced teachers, BGM offers a multitude of learning and conferencing opportunities for the new teacher, or any teacher who wishes to become better informed in areas such as pensions, policymaking or the functions of our union. It is also an excellent opportunity to meet those elected to represent the teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador, including our newly-elected President, Vice-President and Executive Council.

BGM allows teachers from across the province to take an active role in the trajectory of their union,

and their profession. Topics of discussion were numerous and varied, as well as pertinent to the classroom teacher, including workload, teacher mistreatment and inclusive education. I quickly took advantage of the opportunity to take part in the discussions of resolutions and even submitted one of my own. It was truly a thrill to present an issue to the delegates, who eventually carried the motion, knowing that my actions could have a positive effect on the teachers of this province. As a result, the NLTA will now explore further means to promote the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides teachers with assistance for professional or personal challenges which they may face during their career.

I greatly enjoyed the coffee breaks, banquets and socials during which I had the occasion to discuss our profession in the many forms it takes across this unique province. I spoke with teachers young and old; those who teach in large, urban schools, and those who manage five grades at once; teachers who have had a long history of participation with the NLTA, and other first-time delegates. It was a genuinely memorable experience to meet such wonderful colleagues from across Newfoundland and Labrador.

When pitching the idea of attending BGM 2013, Waterford Branch Vice-President and newly-elected Executive Council Member, Trent Langdon, told me that it would change my entire perspective on the teaching profession, and it did, it really did. During his acceptance speech, 2013 Honorary NLTA Member Inductee Eric Burry implored teachers to remember the "unfavoured" children in our classrooms, stating "If not you, then who?" This is a phrase that I will carry with me for the rest of my career. Like a classroom teacher, Mr. Burry had no idea that his words could have such a profound effect. Teachers are like that – they have the power to change lives. We have the single most special profession on the planet, and it is one worth fighting for. Tomorrow, I will attend my very first branch meeting. I encourage teachers from across the province to do the same, and get involved with their local NLTA branch to create a strong, unified association to represent us today, and in the future.

Brandon Field is French Department Head at St. Peter's Junior High in Mount Pearl.



Being Part of CTF is Being Part of the World of Teaching

By being a member of CTF Member organizations, teachers are connected nationally and internationally. Even though CTF is a small organization, its impact on the teaching profession is tremendous in terms of vision, voice and vibrancy. While direct service to members is provided by provincial and territorial teacher organizations, CTF provides support and service to each Member organization. Let's give you the "Big Picture" of what the Canadian Teachers' Federation is all about for a little more than \$2 per month per teacher.

"Canadian teachers can receive subsidies to engage their students in citizenship and social justice activities in their communities through CTF's Imagination program."

Coordination of Knowledge and Activities

CTF acts not only as a clearinghouse to share material among Member organizations but also provides analysis and impact that complement their work. Our researchers draw out interactions and identify trends in education that stand to benefit all teachers and many national organizations that share teacher values and support public education.

Past CTF Research projects have examined student mental health, class size, student diversity, education funding, out of pocket expenses of teachers, professional development, technology in the classroom and most recently, teacher aspirations through its Teacher Voice series.

Every summer, the CTF President's Forum explores the different perspectives of quality education – this year, the Forum will examine First Nations, Aboriginal and Métis education.

Influence Directions in Education

CTF is pro-active in working with national groups around the world to head off or divert bad ideas that originate outside the country and/or by narrow-minded organizations such as the Fraser Institute. CTF is currently working with the National Education Association (3.2 million teacher members) and the American Federation of Teachers (1.7 million members) to reverse the information flow from the US to Canada by sharing the many strong and positive practices of Canadian teachers.

Advocacy

CTF lobbies the federal government on matters of direct interest to teachers such as taxes, copyright legislation, employment insurance, criminal checks and criminal allegations. One example of our success has been to protect teachers' free access to materials (especially on the Web) with respect to copyright protection through our collective efforts with other educational groups. Despite strong lobbying from the corporate sector to cut free educational access off, the copyright act has maintained provisions for free educational access. Another success has been to the protection of teachers from frivolous legal charges thanks to Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

CTF also provides briefs and makes appearances before numerous Parliamentary and Senate committees and coordinates a Hill Day in which provincial and territorial teacher organizations' leaders meet face to face with Ministers, MPs, Senators and senior officials.

Solidarity is Priceless

There are many interest groups who would gladly subvert public education to private interests; insert corporatism into pedagogy; restrict pensions, employment insurance and health benefits; control or profit from assessments; press for unfair evaluation practices and a host of other initiatives that go counter to teacher interests and values. Through the CTF, Canadian teachers can maintain a common vocabulary, shared views and a joint focus to protect us all.

International Representation

CTF gives Canadian teachers a strong voice on the world stage. Whether it's opposing bad ideas such as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), the creep of institutional assessment, and the influence of the OECD, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, CTF has been vocal and influential.

International Service

Through its Project Overseas program, CTF and its Member organizations offer rewarding and life-changing experiences both for participating Canadian teachers and overseas partners. By working through the CTF, the impact of Member organizations funds is maximized, redundancy eliminated and value enhanced.

Social Action Projects

Canadian teachers can receive subsidies to engage their students in citizenship and social justice activities in their communities through CTF's Imagineaction program. One highly successful initiative under the program is the "Listen, I read" in cooperation with the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the Public Lending Rights Commission and Indigo Books & Music.

Another exciting program is the Canadian Defenders for Human Rights which was launched last December by CTF, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

Visit www.imagine-action.ca for more information on these programs which are readily accessible to all K-12 Canadian teachers.

In closing, find out more about what your national federation is doing on your behalf by subscribing to *Perspectives*, the CTF flagship online publication.

Also check out our new campaign "Hear My Voice" which rallies us collectively for democracy in Canada. (Vox.ctf-fce.ca)



From Apples to APPs

How 21st Century Technology Can Be Incorporated Into Classroom Play

by ANNE BURKE & JULIA WARREN

In contrast to even a few years ago, early learners now enter school familiar with technology as it is ubiquitous in much of their everyday living. While some have limited experience and even access, most come with a lot of skills and knowledge about technology and media already well in place. While many parents and teachers are uncomfortable with the amount of technology present in their children's lives, it need not be seen as a threat or a hindrance to educational progress. As educators, we actually have a responsibility to help children become comfortable with technology, so that they can learn to use it properly and safely to inform their own learning. With newer hand-held mobile technology there has emerged many opportunities for children to learn through play – a vital need for children to grow in healthy ways.

The way we teach will always be changing and shifting, particularly as we struggle to stay abreast of the new technological advances in the 21st century. However, we should not see this as a conflict – technology is a tool that when used correctly, can enrich “how” we teach and “what” we teach. Educators often struggle with how to find ways to help students learn to use technology effectively in their practice. As Dr. Bruce Vey, CEO/Director of Education with the Eastern School District says, “We are moving forward with a 21st century learning strategy and it's a key component of our strategic plan. I think, without knowing where the future is going, the use of technology through the Internet and various devices, in the current system, is going to be [a] place many students are going to take advantage of.”

The school curriculum, i.e. the fundamentals of what we want our students to learn, has not actually changed as much as we might think through the decades. For example, in Kindergarten students are still expected to learn shapes, colors, patterns, the alphabet, along with core social concepts such as turn taking, manners and how to be a friend. However,

how do educators reconcile such tacit knowledge with technology such as tablets, the iPod Touch and mobile phone apps that have become a huge factor in children's learning within home spaces? We are told as educators to embrace these new technologies, and while as both teachers and researchers we agree, we also feel that it is exceptionally important we never stray far from one of the core elements of childhood development: the value of play.

So how do we juggle both “technological” play and “hands-on” play in the Primary/Elementary classroom? In our research we have found that there first needs to be acceptance of both forms of play, followed by strategic planning that incorporates both the old and new in “Center-Based Learning”. This can be a very effective way to encourage classroom creative play, and could include a sand table, water table, puppet theatre, writer's area, listening section, block area, dress up center, gross motor area, painting easel, or any other number of options, depending on space and equipment. It is relatively easy to introduce technology into these centers; use of Smartboards to create backdrops such as a rain forest, apps on tablets which introduce particular animals in a habitat, to digital cameras which can visually share student knowledge, to voice recorders for interviewing each other in role play. All of these can be used for a particular center, or added to enhance the learning in center-based play.

Simply by watching youngsters innovatively use technology, we may start to understand the potential it holds for creative learning. From the time that children start writing through traditional pencil and paper, many now also learn through computer apps and video games. Young people are already using computers, technology, and media as a source of play, communication, and entertainment. Nevertheless, computer games, on-line programs, and interactive media also may present children with valuable learning experiences in which they can actively participate. Although the educational outcomes may

seem vague in some uses, children's mastery of these digital games, sites and devices could also reveal growing sophistication and expertise. Young people are discovering resourceful ways of using computer technology and media to enhance their cognitive development (Burke, 2010). Technology must be used to deepen engagement in the curriculum, while the use of assistive technology greatly enhances the participation of children with learning disabilities.

Children are constantly learning, and through play we can create comfort, curiosity, and safe-mindedness with the technology around our homes. Handled properly, computers and other screen-based technological tools can actually enhance children's social, emotional and cognitive development. The key is finding play scenarios in which children are active participants, therefore learning through the play, rather than just passively working their way through endless levels of pointless video games. Teachers and educators do need to understand how children's learning processes work when they encounter computer programs and their like. These processes should be kept well in mind when directing children's computer and Internet interactions.

Realistically, computers and computer-based technology are going to remain a significant part of children's lives. The key is to use them to enhance children's educational needs. The work of researchers like Lydia Plowman and others have distilled three principal educational considerations which technology can bring to children's play. First, it can enhance their operational capacities – regardless of our feelings about technology, it will be a significant part of our students' lives. Early constructive exposure can help them acquire basic computer skills which they will later use and expand upon. Second, it helps them understand the wider world – technology offers the entire sum of human knowledge at a child's fingertips, a marvelous benefit we take too lightly. Third, it helps create a disposition towards learning through technology. Computers and other technological platforms will be part of every child's educational experience, and early guided exposure can create a platform and scaffold for later learning and development. With this in mind, today's teachers should strive to have their students become confident in their ability to use technology and see how creativity and critical literacies may be enhanced as a part of the play-based learning.

Anne Burke is Associate Professor of Literacy Education with the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and researches in the areas of digital media, play, social justice and multiliteracies. Julia Warren is an Itinerant teacher with the ESDNL and graduate researcher with the Faculty of Education, MUN.



SUMMER PROGRAM FOR FSL TEACHERS

July 7-19, 2013 & July 21-August 2, 2013
Université de Moncton, campus de Shippagan, Nouveau-Brunswick. The program focuses on a series of instructional activities that allow participants to experience a multidimensional approach to second language teaching. The language component ensures that participants improve their skills in accordance with their individual needs. Participants live in French in daily situations and are supported by professionals. Fees: \$2,195 per person (plus taxes). Includes courses, food, lodging and most of the cultural activities. For information visit: www.umoncton.ca/umcs/ciaf or www.facebook.com/CIAFUMCS.

MEETING THE DIVERSITY CHALLENGE

July 14-17, 2013
Lamplighter Inn & Conference Centre, London, ON. Can schools be both effective and inclusive within a special education context? A symposium designed for inclusive leaders and those who wish to be. For registration information and program details visit www.inclusiveeducation.ca or www.communitylivingontario.ca

HUNTSMAN MARINE SCIENCE CENTRE – "ALL THINGS MARINE" SUMMER INSTITUTE

July 15-19, 2013
St. Andrews, New Brunswick. A cross-curricula maritime institute with connections between biology, art, history, culture, and cooking. Join us as we explore the unique environment of the Bay of Fundy and the diversity of life it supports. Open to teachers and friends. Cost is \$670 (early bird fee of \$610 if you register by May 15). For more information visit www.huntsmanmarine.ca, Tel: (506) 529-1220 or email tdean@huntsmanmarine.ca.

AT THE EDGE:

CREATING DIRECTION FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

August 21-23, 2013
St. John's Campus, Memorial University. At the Edge Conference brings together people and organizations involved in

educating and working with youth who recognize that in every act of violence and injustice there is a message that needs to be understood (Vanier, 2008). Participants will listen to and critically reflect on these messages, as well as be invited to commit to personal and organizational change. This conference is a collaborative venture by the Faculty of Education, Memorial University, the NLTA and the Canadian Red Cross. In addition, several other education and social agencies are partnering with us, including the NL Department of Education and the Eastern School District. Plan now to attend. For more information visit www.edge2013.ca.

COSS WORKSHOP:

FALLEN ANGELS: WHAT CAUSES CHILDREN TO BECOME VIOLENT AND HOW CAN WE PREVENT IT?

October 10, 2013
Sheraton Hotel, St. John's. Featuring Dr. Kathy Seifert. Registration opens February 18. Download registration form at www.nlta.nl.ca/pd_opportunities. For more information contact: Keith Adey, keithadey@nf.sympatico.ca or Tel: 709-489-6481.

COSS WORKSHOP: TEACHING WITH WIT AND WISDOM

October 11, 2013
Sheraton Hotel, St. John's. Featuring international best selling author and speaker, Barbara Coloroso. Registration opens February 18. Download registration form at www.nlta.nl.ca/pd_opportunities. For more information contact Keith Adey, keithadey@nf.sympatico.ca or Tel: 709-489-6481.

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCIL (TESIC) BGM & CONFERENCE 2013

November 7-8, 2013
St. John's. NL. Theme: *Is There an App for That?* For more information contact Thomas Sheppard, tomshepp@gmail.com.

ATTENTION WRITERS

Please join us in 2013 for five inspirational days at the 5th



September 23-28, 2013 Kilmory Resort, Swift Current

Emerging and established adult writers are invited to join mentors **Jessica Grant, Joan Clark** and **Don McKay** for small-group workshops and one-on-one explorations of your creative work. Social evenings and a spectacular location enhance this literary experience.

The cost of \$690 includes program fees, meals, five nights' accommodations and social events. (Ground/air transportation is not covered).

Deadline to apply is August 2, 2013.

To learn more and apply – www.literaryartsnl.com

The Literary Arts Foundation is grateful for the support from Piper's Department Stores, the Newfoundland & Labrador Teachers' Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, and the Government of NL Department of Tourism, Culture & Recreation.

Dates to Remember

May 2013

May 7 **Deadline:** Notification by Board of layoff
May 16 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications
May 31 **Deadline:** Provincial Executive Meeting

June 2013

June 1 Provincial Executive Meeting
June 15 **Deadline:** Notification by board of acceptance/rejection of Deferred Salary Leave requests
June 20 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

July 2013

July 1 **Deadline:** NLTA Scholarship Applications