

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

T H E

# bulletin

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# Up Front

## from the President



*Sometimes it's appropriate to scream at them. ~ Helen Caldicott*

I have never been prouder to be a teacher, never been prouder to be the President of our Association, than I was at the NL Rising rally on May 7 when almost 700 teachers stood together in defence of education. It was inspiring to see so many teachers taking a stand for their students, their schools, and their profession. It was an impressive display of strength and solidarity which earned the respect of our colleagues throughout the province and in our sister unions.

The message to our political leaders was clear. We are tired of being taken for granted, tired of watching human and other resources stripped from the education system each year, tired and angry of the needs of our students going unmet each year as budget after budget treats our classrooms as expense lines.

Let there be no mistake – the NL Rising rally was only the beginning. It has to be if we hope to change the way government funds education. We must be determined to fight for those things which we hold dear as teachers and which define us as a profession; and the fight may take us outside of our comfort zones. Some of the ways you can oppose this budget – such as writing letters to your MHA, arranging meetings between your staff and your MHA – I have mentioned in articles in *The Bulletin* and recent memos. Your Association is also in the process of developing a long-term strategy to deal with the challenges posed by Budget 2016.

However, to truly change things we may have to start looking after ourselves first if we hope to address the needs of our students. When I was in Grade 5, my teacher told the story of an adult carrying a small child. Both were stranded in the desert with only food and water enough to sustain one person adequately until they could reach safety. He asked us, “Who should get most

of the food and water?” Immediately, we chose the child of course. Then he asked us who would get the child to safety if the adult were to perish. And just like that we were rethinking our assumptions and our decision. It was a valuable lesson on priorities.

We know the adage: “You can’t pour from an empty cup.” As counterintuitive as it is to our sense of who we are as educators, we may have to start taking care of ourselves first if we are to care for our students. Unfortunately, it is our sense of professionalism that prevents us from doing so. Our professionalism is at the same time our greatest strength and our Achilles heel. It’s what government counts on to make each new initiative work. What incentive do they have to provide adequate resources and supports for education when they know we will pick up the slack every time?

The fact is, teachers make the system work. But we are tired of making a system work that places increasing demands on us without the supports needed to meet those demands. We are frustrated by Ministers of Education and government officials who express confidence in the professionalism and abilities of teachers, while in the same breath stripping the resources needed to help our students. Such praise rings hollow.

So where to from here? Maybe, just maybe, we need to take our lead from the current Liberal government. Just as they seem intent on re-evaluating the core services government should be offering, we may need to reconsider and reassess our core duties as teachers. Over the past years we have taken on many responsibilities which have nothing to do with our core duty of teaching the children in front of us. They are,

however, activities that may bring us fulfilment and reward. School development and other committees, fund-raising, marking boards, breakfast programs, choirs, sports teams, chess clubs, school trips, tutoring, and other extra-curriculars are just some of the activities we take on to improve the educational experience of our students. And then there is the excessive amount of time some teachers (primary in particular) spend doing what should be regular tasks. How many primary teachers spent almost forty plus hours completing report cards last term or hired a babysitter so they could do so?

“What should government stop doing?” was the first question asked at the government’s consultation sessions earlier this year. Maybe it’s about time we start asking ourselves the same question. It seems to be the only one they are interested in. It may be the only question that will get them to take our concerns seriously. It may be the only question that will ultimately result in our students getting the services they deserve.

*Jan*



# THE bulletin

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## NOTICE to Teachers Who Did Not Receive the 2012-16 Collective Agreement Signing Bonus

The grievance regarding the Signing Bonus in the 2012-16 Collective Agreements for teachers has been settled. As a result, teachers on periods of unpaid educational leave and/or unpaid sick leave during the 2013-14 school year are now entitled to receive the Signing Bonus based on the applicable pro-rated time on leave. Periods of general unpaid leave do **NOT** count towards eligibility for the Signing Bonus. Teacher Payroll is in the process of making the necessary payments. Any teacher with individual questions should contact the NLTA office.

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

# NEWS

## GREEN'S HARBOUR

### Acts of kindness for Acreman Elementary

On January 18, 2016, Patti Collins Yetman, Principal of Acreman Elementary in Green's Harbour, issued a challenge to all 144 students at her school to perform 1500 acts of kindness from January 18 until March 18. While it seemed like a huge undertaking, it only required the students to perform an average of one act of kindness per week. If the students were able to reach this challenge in the time frame, they would help the principal shave off her husband's beard. As an extra incentive, each class was promised a fruit tray and bottled water if they reached the goal before March 18.

The students busied themselves performing many acts of kindness. Teachers recorded the names and acts, and the numbers were collected at the end of each week. A graph was made to show the progress, and the challenge began.

There were so many acts of kindness – helping kindergarten students when they arrived in the mornings, setting up and cleaning up after chess club, tying up shoe laces, opening doors, doing chores for the office, getting involved with a local animal shelter, and helping out their teachers. "This type of activity encouraged feelings of respect, kindness, empathy, friendship, and social justice," said Principal Collins Yetman. "One student bought a book for his class at our recent book fair and another student organized an awareness-raising event by getting the school population to wear jeans in recognition of those who suffer from rare and unusual diseases."

Not only was the goal of 1500 acts of kindness met, but it was exceeded two weeks before the deadline. As of March 4, the students of Acreman Elementary performed 1604 acts of kindness. The classes received their bottled water and fruit trays in recognition of their efforts and teachers reported that students enjoyed this activity and agreed that it added to the school culture and climate. Students actively

looked for ways to help each other out and not all students wanted to be recognized for their acts. They performed these acts because it made them feel good and they knew how important it was to help others.

On March 18, all the students met in the school gym along with school staff to perform the shave. Mr. Yetman pulled a garbage bag over his clothes and sat on a chair on the stage. A representative from each class was selected to help with the shave and the principal assisted so it was a clean shave and no medical personnel were needed during the activity. Mr. Yetman cleaned up after the students took their turns and then went to each classroom to personally thank the students for their help.

"While this was the end of Mr. Yetman's beard, it will not be the end of the students of Acreman performing acts of kindness," said Principal Collins Yetman. "This school initiative will have long-lasting effects."



Principal Patti Collins Yetman helps a student shave her husband's beard.

## POLLARD'S POINT

### Students at Main River Academy put a new twist on sculpting

The Art 3200 students at Main River Academy in Pollard's Point put a new twist on a sculpting unit using cake. When their teacher, Natalie Jackson, asked her students if they would like to do something different, approximately half the class said it

would be “cool”, even though it meant that a lot of the work would have to be done at home. The students brainstormed cake design ideas and searched online. Then they made the fondant from an online recipe. “Being a small school of 62 meant that once their creations were made and evaluated, they could be shared with the entire school population,” said Ms. Jackson. “All those involved said it was a fun project and that they hated to cut the cakes – five hours to make and ten minutes to eat!”



Students at Main River Academy display one of the many cakes they designed as part of their sculpting unit.

#### GRAND-FALLS WINDSOR

## Exploits Valley Branch scholarship winner announced

Malorie Duffy, a graduate of Exploits Valley High in Grand Falls-Windsor, is the recipient of the Exploits Valley Branch Scholarship for the 2014-15 school year. The \$500 cash award goes to the son or daughter of an active NLTA member of the Exploits Valley Branch who possesses the highest overall average during their graduating year. They have to be attending a post-secondary institution full time. Malorie is the daughter of Marilyn Smith, a teacher at Leo



Malorie Duffy is presented with her 2014-15 Exploits Valley Branch Scholarship by Mr. Paul Moore, President of the Exploits Valley Branch.

Burke Academy in Bishop's Falls and Rick Duffy, a retired teacher. Money from the scholarship is donated by the teachers of the branch.

#### KELLIGREWS, PARADISE, ST. JOHN'S, UPPER GULLIES

## Elementary band students perform at IceCaps game

Congratulations to the Band Students from Octagon Pond Elementary (St. John's), Holy Family Elementary (Paradise), Upper Gullies Elementary (Upper Gullies) and St. Edward's Elementary (Kelligrews) who came together (120 students in total) to perform at the AHL St. John's IceCaps Game at Mile One Centre on Sunday, April 10, 2016.

These 10- and 11-year-old students opened the game by performing both *The Star Spangled Banner* and *O Canada*. They also rocked out Mile One Centre performing *Old Time Rock and Roll*, *Louie Louie*, *Smoke on the Water*, *Party Rock Anthem* and Chicago's *25 or 6 to 4* during the intermission. Finally, the students energized and entertained fans by playing familiar “hockey tunes” that are typically heard in professional NHL games to spur the IceCaps to a 7-1 victory over their opponents.



Elementary Band Students perform at the St. John's IceCaps game on April 10.

## ST. JOHN'S

## Local "Biogenius" takes home major science fair award

Dina Shehata, a Level II student at Holy Heart High School in St. John's, recently returned from Ottawa where she was one of only nine students from across Canada competing in the Sanofi Biogenius Canada (SBC) National Competition.

In early April, Dina had won the opportunity to represent Atlantic Canada after placing first in the Sanofi Biogenius Atlantic Competition, held at Mount Allison University in Sackville, NB. As the provincial coordinator for the SBC, Yvonne Dawe, Chemistry E-teacher at CDLI, accompanied Dina and the other five students that represented Newfoundland and Labrador at this biotechnology science fair. The participants and their project titles were as follows: Guadalupe Koen-Alonso – The Effect of Extracellular pH on Cell Apoptosis in Cancerous and Non-Cancerous Cells; Zoe Breen – Investigating the Role of the Pygopus 2 Gene in the Growth of HeLa S3 Cervical Carcinoma Cells; Grace King – Extracts of partridgeberry and the treatment of triple negative breast cancer; Haleh Zabihi – Do Mutations in Alzheimer's Disease-Related Genes Alter Neuronal Behavior?; Dina Shehata – Low-Cost Gel Models for Point of Care Ultrasound Training; Alyssa Young – Childhood Cancer Chemotherapy: The promise of non-genotoxic options.

"All the students performed extremely well and impressed the judges with their projects and presentations," says Ms. Dawe. "NL students won three of the five prizes awarded, all of which included cash prizes. Dina placed first (\$2000), Alyssa, second (\$1500) and Grace, third (\$1000)."

At the national competition Dina was awarded the Commercialism award, a prize worth \$2000. This is the first time a student from Atlantic Canada has won a major award at the national level. The award is given to the project that is closest to being available commercially. Her project involved producing a gel model used to train doctors, nurses and other medical professionals in properly inserting needles into a blood vessel or tissue. The model she developed was not only much less costly than most commercially available models (\$7 vs. \$500), but was also superior in durability and anatomical correctness. Dina plans to patent the formula she devised for her model and make it commercially available with hopes to improve and increase training for medical professionals worldwide.

NL students have been competing in science fairs focused on biotechnology research for the past 20 years. The first NL provincial biotechnology fair was held in 1996, in conjunction with the Eastern Newfoundland Science and Technology Fair (ENSTF). In 2011, the provincial biotechnology fair was replaced with the Atlantic Sanofi Biogenius Canada (SBC) Competition. Since then students from NL have been the most successful competitors of the four Atlantic Provinces. NL students have placed first in four of the five past Atlantic SBC competitions. In 2012 and 2013 Kaitlyn Stockley and Jared Trask of Holy Spirit High School placed first while Mark Hewitt of Bishops College won the competition in 2014. That year all seven competitors were from Bishops College, while this year all participants were from Holy Heart High School.

While the students representing NL at the Atlantic competition have been from only three local high schools, the competition is open to any junior and senior high school student in the province who wants to carry out research in the exciting field of biotechnology. For more information on the Sanofi Biogenius Canada Competition please visit [Biogenius.ca](http://Biogenius.ca) or email [yvonnedawe@cdli.ca](mailto:yvonnedawe@cdli.ca).

## NEWFOUNDLAND &amp; LABRADOR

## Schools play vital role in Kids Eat Smart Clubs

Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador would like to thank all 6100 Kids Eat Smart Club volunteers for their time, commitment and tireless efforts to ensure school-aged children in our province receive nutritious food at school.

There are currently 247 Kids Eat Smart Clubs in



Pictured (l-r): Yvonne Dawe (SBC), Haleh (on iPad), Grace, Alyssa, Dina, Zoe, Guadalupe

almost 90 per cent of our schools province wide. The goal of Kids Eat Smart is to ensure that they are in 100 per cent of schools so every child in every community in our province has access to nutritious food at school at no cost to families.

Serving 23,000 meals every school day takes a great deal of commitment by parents, community leaders, and our school community. Kids Eat Smart could not do this without the guidance, support and commitment of principals, teachers, and school administrative staff – the driving force of Kids Eat Smart Clubs. “You ensure the shopping is done, the volunteer schedule is complete, the finances are recorded and the doors are open early mornings so volunteers can start their preparations before children arrive. Many of you even prepare the food and do the cleanup,” says Sonya Smith, Director of Communications & Fund Development for Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador.

“There is no doubt that without the overwhelming commitment of our school community, our Kids Eat Smart Breakfast Clubs would not be so successful. Some of you may be moving to new schools in September or retiring after this school year, or you may have a key volunteer that is moving on. If that is the case, we encourage you to make a succession plan so that when school starts in September there is someone who will rise up to the challenge and continue your good work in your Kids Eat Smart Club to ensure our children attend school well nourished and ready to learn.”

Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador, their programs and work, have been recognized as one of the best run and administered school food programs in the country. “That is in large part due to the commitment of our school community. We know adding one more task to an already full work day can be onerous but we are truly grateful for your commitment and your dedication. The old adage, *it takes a village to raise a child*, is true and in our case, it takes an entire province to raise well balanced, healthy and educated children,” says Ms. Smith.

“Thank you for all that you do for our children both in and out of the classroom. We look forward to working with you in the new school year. If you are retiring congratulations, and our very best wishes!”

## Winners of social justice poster contest announced

During Education Week 2016, a Social Justice Poster Contest was held for students in Grade 8 to create an awareness of a social justice issue and/or demonstrate

how a social justice issue might be addressed. The winners of the contest were: First Place – Grace Collins, St. Paul's Intermediate (Gander); Second Place – Ashleigh Hodder, Phoenix Academy (Carmanville); Third Place – Reta LeBlanc, Heritage Collegiate (Lethbridge).

Entries were judged by the NLTA Equity Issues Committee based on visual appeal and the level of understanding and clarity of the message being conveyed. The names of all schools with submissions were placed in a random draw and St. Peter's Academy in Westport was chosen as the winner of a collection of books on social justice and human rights.

## NLTA appointment notice

The Provincial Executive Council of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is pleased to announce the appointment of Steve Brooks to the position of Executive Director effective September 1, 2016.

Steve has worked with the NLTA since 2008 as an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services (formerly Benefits and Economic Services Division). In 2013 he was appointed to the position of Assistant Executive Director. In this position, Steve has been responsible for coordinating the daily operations of Programs and Services and has assisted the Executive Director in the overall coordination of the NLTA.

Steve has an extensive background as a district leader, school administrator and teacher. He joined the NLTA from his position with the Eastern School District where he was a Senior Education Officer.

Steve has a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Memorial University as well as a Bachelor of Education (High School Social Studies and Religious Studies), and a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science). He also has a Certificate in Industrial Relations from Queen's University which was received in 2010 and has completed numerous training programs including Labour Relations Foundations, Negotiation Skills, and Dispute Resolution. Steve has a strong reputation as an educational leader and has presented at conferences locally, nationally and internationally. In 2001 he was recipient of the School Administrators' Council Distinguished Principal/Vice-Principal of the Year Award. He is also a Certified Facilitator for the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Program<sup>®</sup>.

In his new position of Executive Director, Steve is the Chief Administrative Officer and is responsible for the coordination of the total NLTA program. He represents the Association on most liaison committees and is familiar with all programs and services offered by the NLTA.



Steve Brooks

**DANNY KING, 1971 - 2016**

On January 17, 2016, the staff of Waterford Valley High School lost a dear friend and colleague. Danny King passed away suddenly, but peacefully, leaving behind an incredible legacy for his family, friends, students and colleagues. It is a legacy that will never be forgotten.

Danny, affectionately known as DK, was born in St. John's, NL in 1971, and was the youngest of four children. Danny attended Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's and excelled in many sports. Rugby and powerlifting were two activities that brought him great enjoyment and success in his life. These sports taught Danny the importance of hard work and determination and he applied these concepts to his teaching and coaching of youth.

In 2009, when Danny began teaching Physical Education at Bishops College, he also started coaching high school rugby. The Boys Rugby Team won the city league and provincial title – a first for the school in many years. A “Rugby Dynasty” was born and Danny established a reputation for producing successful rugby teams.

The interest for the sport grew so much because of this success that Danny at one point coached three boys' high school rugby teams. Students who did not play on any other sports teams tried out for rugby and Danny did not turn anyone away. While the sport likely appealed to many due to its physicality, it was also the personality of “DK” that inspired these students.

Clearly, Danny cared about the students he taught and coached. He formed relationships with many students outside of school in an effort to help them with such things as athletic scholarships, career counselling and injury rehabilitation.

Danny's larger-than-life personality was well known and much appreciated by his colleagues. He had a wonderful fashion sense – from pink shoes to sealskin ties, no one knew what Danny was going to wear one day to the next. At work, DK was known as the “Weather Nostradamus”. He would often send out his weather pre-

dictions daily or hourly and predicting snow days with 100% accuracy. The day after his death, we had a snow day.

Danny's personality was infectious, his laugh hearty, his soul deep and sensitive. He was a friend to everyone he met and not the type of person to want anyone to worry about him. For the many that knew him, it's hard to not feel a sense of loss. But Danny wouldn't want us to be sad. He would want everyone who knew him to “Carry On”, “Stay Cool”, “Keep it Real”, and remember, “DK for Life”.

We are fortunate to have known you Danny. May you Rest in Peace.

(Submitted by Donna Gibbons, colleague and friend, Waterford Valley High School.)



Danny King wearing one of his many great fashion pieces at the high school graduation.

### *In Memoriam Submission Guidelines*

Submissions to In Memoriam should be a **maximum of 250 to 300 words** and may contain a photo of the deceased. In Memoriams should be submitted within a timely manner – normally within the same school year (if possible) of the death of the teacher. Information may be included on where the deceased lived and taught, their education, accomplishments, community involvement and family information.

It is preferred that all submissions be e-mailed to Lesley-Ann Browne, Editor of *The Bulletin*, at labrowne@nlta.nl.ca. If submitting by mail, please address to: Editor, *The Bulletin*, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1. Submissions may also be faxed to 726-4302 or toll-free at 1-877-711-6582. Please be sure to include a contact name, school or business name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.

# Are You Targeted by Inappropriate Social Media Comments?

## Some Basic Tips and Advice for Teachers

Incidents of parents, students and others targeting and harassing teachers and administrators online (cyberbullying) are a significant source of concern for NLTA members. At the low end of the spectrum, it doesn't feel great to find out that someone has been saying "not so nice" things about you. However, one person's nasty rant can quickly become a widespread, well known and permanent attack on a teacher's or administrator's character and reputation due to the persistent and pervasive reach of social media.

Situations like this should be assessed and addressed on a "case by case" basis, and NLTA Programs and Services staff are available to assist teachers experiencing difficulty in dealing with this type of matter. However, the following are some basic guidelines for teachers who find themselves the targets of inappropriate or abusive online conduct:

- make a hard copy and/or screen capture or otherwise save any offensive messages, comments, posts, images, texts, videos, etc.
- when possible, block further contact and/or prevent continuing communications.
- request/demand that offensive material be removed immediately, stating that it is unacceptable and inappropriate. Do not further engage the person who is targeting you online/in writing as this may escalate the situation.
- if the cyberbully is a student, contact the parents and involve your school administration to ensure that proper consequences are put in place, in keeping with school district policy (e.g. Safe and Caring Schools, NLESD Social Media Policy).
- if the cyberbully is a parent, request a meeting to discuss the issue and to reinforce the proper channels for parents to communicate and address concerns with appropriate school staff.
- if the situation is severe and/or the inappropriate communications continue, advise and seek the support and involvement of your school administration.
- report abuse/inappropriate use to the administrator of the social media platform in question and ask to have the post(s) removed. For example, there is a "Report Post" option for Facebook posts; the Snapchat website has a reporting function under the "Community Guidelines" heading; and, you can select "Report Something" under "Terms and Privacy" on the Instagram website, etc.;
- seek school district support for matters that cannot be resolved at the school level;
- some things that are posted online may be considered criminal acts – if there is a question as to whether this is the case, or if you feel your personal safety is at risk, you should contact the police;
- teachers/administrators should contact a staff member in Programs and Services at the NLTA if actions taken to address the situation are ineffective and/or if you need further support or advice.

[mail@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.nl.ca)  
[www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca)





# Reflections

by DON ASH

Most busy people, and teachers are certainly busy people, don't take enough time for reflection. I am retiring August 31 and the writing of this, my final article for *The Bulletin*, has forced me to take time to reflect.

My first thought is around change – even though much about the classroom has changed, the basic principles of successful teaching have remained the same.

My first day of teaching for pay was a day of substitution in 1980. My first class was a homogenous bunch of 38 students at Gonzaga – almost exclusively white, Anglo Saxon, all boys in their final year of school in Grade 11, all Catholic, all grouped by comparable ability, no visible or otherwise identified disabilities, and no other adult connected to my classroom. I used the chalkboard teaching Mathematics all day, and to test the bounds of technology, I may have booked out an overhead projector, if one was available. Students and parents trusted me, respected my profession, and allowed me to teach.

Now, let's look at the high school classroom of 2016 with more like 25 -30 students who will graduate from Grade 12, not Grade 11, physically bigger and seemingly more mature and worldly, far more diverse – boys and girls, different colours and cultures, undoubtedly multiple students with diagnosed disabilities, and certainly a couple of adults (student assistants or IRTs) in the room. There's not a piece of chalk or a chalkboard to be seen, and just about every person – student and teacher – holds in their hand or pocket a device with access to more information and technology than was held in our entire school library in 1980. Man, has there been change!

Do I think the classroom of 2016 is better than the classroom of 1980? Before I attempt to answer that, let me just say that it's certainly not easier. It's harder to be a teacher now. Meeting the educational needs of a class of students of diverse abilities, of children with different and demanding physical and mental challenges, is tougher than teaching a homogenous group. Attempting to address the concerns of an increasing number of helicopter parents with unreasonable expectations and demands can be frustrating.

There is no doubt that it is better that children are no longer institutionalized (Exon House) and isolated because of disabilities, and better that all children, regardless of differences, are included in today's classrooms. It is better that socialization with one's age group peers is the norm. It is good for students and society that children of different ability, culture, background, and sexual orientation work and play together, and accept each other for who they are.

However, I am less convinced today's inclusive classroom is enabling the achievement of the optimum academic potential of our students any better than the classrooms of 1980. The philosophy, and quite frankly the success of the inclusive classroom, is based on the premise that adequate human resources will be provided to support the diverse needs of students in the classroom. But, cost cutting, fiscal restraint, and government austerity has prevented supports from being provided to enable the academic potential of the inclusive classroom to be realized. Today's inclusive classroom can be disruptive and distracting for many students. Teachers are often forced to prioritize the greatest student needs, having to leave the less emergent needs of many students unaddressed. Teachers in today's inclusive classrooms are often more frustrated and less satisfied because their students' needs exceed the time and resources available to meet those needs.

What has not changed is that the fundamental of successful teaching is the personal and individual relationship of a teacher with his/her students. A caring teacher who connects with his/her students, demonstrating an interest and desire to help each child meet his/her potential, remains the key to a successful classroom. All the technology in the world cannot replace the encouragement or acknowledgement by a classroom teacher or school administrator of a student's efforts. It is in the student-teacher relationship that both a student and a teacher draws satisfaction and success. What has not changed is the vast majority of teachers understand this and are committed to their students' success.

I have had the opportunity to spend 17 years in

the public school classroom attempting to assist students and another 17 years working at the NLTA attempting to assist teachers. I have approached every year with enthusiasm, energy, hard work, and a desire to make a difference. I have been fortunate to have had and maintained good health, and will take this same enthusiasm into the next phase of my life.

Thank you to the thousands of students who sat in my classrooms, the thousands of teachers I have had the opportunity to represent directly or at bargaining or pension tables, and the hundreds of teachers and colleagues with whom I have taught and learned. Thank you to the NLTA Presidents and

Executives for whom I have served and advised, and thank you to the individual NLTA staff members who are dedicated to the professional excellence and personal well-being of teachers and providing outstanding programs and services for teachers.

Finally, thank you to my family, whose needs and interests have unfortunately often taken second place to my work commitments. I look forward to retirement and more time to pay closer attention to them.

Best wishes to all who work in the education sector in the interests of the children of this great Province. Enjoy each day.

## NEW NLTA Health Education Special Interest Council



Congratulations to all those involved in the formation of a NEW NLTA Health Education Special Interest Council.

A special thank you to all teachers who supported this initiative – without your interest and support, this initiative would not have been possible.

All those who have already agreed to be part of the membership, be on the lookout for a website and information being sent your way. If you would like to become involved, either at the Executive level or as a supporting member who will receive updates on current health education initiatives, information and research, please contact one of the following Executive Members:

**President** – Deanne Whelan, Carbonear Academy, [deannewhelan@nlesd.ca](mailto:deannewhelan@nlesd.ca)

**Vice-President** – Patti Hicks Brown, Twillingate Island Elementary, [pattihicksbrown@nlesd.ca](mailto:pattihicksbrown@nlesd.ca)

**Treasurer** – Suzanne Chafe, Carbonear Academy, [suzannechafe@nlesd.ca](mailto:suzannechafe@nlesd.ca)

**Secretary** – Denise Broomfield, St. Francis School (Harbour Grace), [denisebroomfield@nlesd.ca](mailto:denisebroomfield@nlesd.ca)

**Communications** – Kellie Baker, St. Matthew's Elementary/Cowan Heights Elementary (St. John's), [kelliebaker@nlesd.ca](mailto:kelliebaker@nlesd.ca)

**MUN Representative/Health Ed. Researcher** – Dr. Erin Cameron, [ecameron@mun.ca](mailto:ecameron@mun.ca)



# School-based Professional Development and the Collective Agreement

by STEVE BROOKS

In negotiating the 2012-16 Collective Agreements, the Association pressed for changes in Articles 28 of the Provincial Agreement and Article 16 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement. The Association raised concerns regarding the feeling expressed by many teachers that they lacked the opportunity to have input in their own professional development. This absence of consultation left many teachers feeling that professional development activities did not address their needs.

As a result of the Association's efforts the following language change was agreed to in both Clause 28.01 (a)(ii) and 16.01 (a) (ii) of the Provincial and Labrador West Agreements respectively.

*Effective September 1, 2002, for salary purposes, the length of the school year shall be 195 teaching days comprised of 187 actual teaching days, three (3) paid holidays, two (2) non-teaching days to be scheduled by the Board during the school year for administrative purposes, and three (3) professional development/in-service days to be scheduled by the Board during the school year; one of which shall be reserved for professional development at the school level. In determining the topics to be covered, in consultation with the school principal, priority will be given to professional development needs identified by teachers at the school level.*

The Association felt this language would guarantee one day of professional development during which priority would be given to professional development needs identified by teachers at the school level. In March 2015, after this new provision had been agreed to by all parties, a group of teachers found it necessary to file a grievance with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. The teachers contended that they were not afforded the one professional development day guaranteed by the collective agreement to cover and give priority to needs identified by teachers at the school level.

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District denied the teachers' grievance at both Stage I and Stage II. On October 27, 2015, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

notified the District that it was referring the matter to arbitration. Dates for an arbitration hearing were set for April 12-14, 2016. On April 8, 2016, the School District and the Association reached a settlement and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on the interpretation of Clause 28.01 (a) (ii):

1. The Topics to be covered in the school level professional development day will be determined **in consultation between the Principal and the Teachers of the School, which will allow for input and feedback on topic selection.**
2. Providing the topics for the school level professional development day relate to the teacher's individual Professional Growth Plan's **and other new professional development needs, priority will be given to the professional development needs identified by the teachers at the school level.**

Through separate correspondence, the Association confirmed that this settlement would not be on a "with prejudice," basis, this means that it is an applicable interpretation of the Agreement for all schools.

As a result, teachers should, in the future, expect meaningful consultation and the opportunity to provide input when determining the one professional development day prescribed under Clause 28.01(a) (ii) of the Provincial Agreement and Clause 16.01(a) (ii) of the Labrador West Agreement. As well, for this day, priority should be given to professional development needs, including new professional development needs, identified by teachers.

Teachers with questions regarding the application of any provision of either the Provincial Collective Agreement or the Labrador West Agreement should contact a Programs and Services Administrative Officer at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599.

Steve Brooks is Assistant Executive Director of the NLTA.

# Something to Consider Before You Volunteer

by STEVE BROOKS

As all teachers know, there are many opportunities to volunteer your time in the workplace. Teachers volunteer as coaches and tutors, they volunteer their time on school committees, district committees and for school functions such as graduations and concerts. Some teachers even volunteer to take on added responsibilities, including Department Head for Student Support Services, Alternate Materials Advisors, Athletic Directors and Technology Leads.

Teachers volunteer their time for both personal and professional reasons. For some, volunteering brings them a deep level of personal satisfaction; for others, they do so out of a sense of professional responsibility. Whatever the reason, and whatever the role, teacher volunteerism always helps to improve the school culture. Clauses 29.02, 29.05 and 29.07 of the Provincial Collective Agreement and Clauses 17.02, 17.05 and 17.07 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement protect the rights of teachers to volunteer and to refuse to volunteer.

It is very important that teachers understand their right to volunteer or to refuse to volunteer. Just because the employer may have policies requiring school committees, teacher chaperones, additional tutoring, this does not mean that a teacher can be directed to participate on a committee, accompany students outside the regular work day, or arrange additional tutoring sessions after school or on the weekend. At no time should a teacher feel compelled to volunteer their time except as a result of their own personal or professional interest.

Those teachers who actually volunteer to assume additional responsibilities in their schools as Department Heads for Student Support Services,

Alternate Materials Advisors, Athletic Directors or Technology Leads need to be aware that the NLTA has repeatedly attempted to negotiate compensation and protection for these types of positions in the past. Repeatedly, the employer has refused. The employer will never be motivated to properly compensate or protect individual teachers for administrative work that they are prepared to volunteer to do without compensation or protection. Recently, the NLTA representatives on the Inclusion Committee strongly advocated that a compensated position responsible for Student Support Services at the school level be recommended to government. The government members on the committee were not prepared to make such a recommendation, claiming that it was a collective agreement issue.

The NLTA has received numerous calls from teachers seeking clarification on the issue of volunteered responsibilities, many teachers claiming that they no longer have the time as a result of increasing demands from the employer. Clause 29.01 requires that consultation occur in determin-

ing a teacher's curricular and non-curricular duties. The District is responsible for ensuring that every effort is made to have this consultation completed by the first instructional day of the new school

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**“At no time should a teacher feel compelled to volunteer their time except as a result of their own personal or professional interest.”**

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year. While this clause does not address extra-curricular activities, if you have volunteered in the past and have decided that you wish not to volunteer in the coming school year, this consultation period is a good time to inform the school district. This can be done through the school principal. A teacher cannot be penalized for exercising their right not to volunteer.

If a teacher has questions regarding what activities are part of their professional responsibilities and which are volunteer activities, they should contact an NLTA Programs and Services Administrative Officer.

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



# Important Changes Announced to the Employment Insurance Program

by MIRIAM SHEPPARD

Many teachers avail of employment insurance benefits at some point in their careers. The 2016 Federal Budget proposed a number of important changes to the Employment Insurance program. Administrative details have yet to be provided in relation to many of these changes; however, given the potential importance to teachers of some changes (particularly those relating to qualifying hours), teachers should ensure that they follow the progress of these matters carefully. The Association will provide further information to members as information becomes available.

## (a) Qualifying Hours

At present, new entrants and re-entrants to the labour market must accumulate at least 910 hours of insurable employment before being eligible for EI regular benefits. Budget 2016 proposed to amend the rules to eliminate the higher EI eligibility requirements that restrict access for new entrants and re-entrants to the labour market. With these changes, new entrants and re-entrants will have to meet the same eligibility requirements as other claimants in the region where they live, instead of a higher standard. Changes in this regard are anticipated in July of 2016. **Teachers should closely monitor this change to ensure that they apply for benefits at an optimal time.**

## (b) Waiting Period

Currently, Employment Insurance claimants must wait two weeks before they can start receiving benefits. Budget 2016 proposed legislative changes to reduce the EI waiting period from two weeks to one week, effective January 1, 2017.

## (c) Working While on Claim

Under the Working While on Claim pilot project, claimants can keep 50 cents of their EI benefits for every dollar they earn, up to a maximum of 90 per cent of the weekly insurable earnings used to calculate their EI benefit amount. Budget 2016 proposed extension of this pilot project until August 2018. As well, in certain circumstances, claimants will be able

to have the rules of an earlier pilot (introduced in 2005) applied to their claims.

## (d) Job Search Requirements

In 2012, changes were made to the EI program to specify the type of jobs that unemployed workers are expected to search for and accept. For some claimants, this has meant having to accept work at lower rates of pay and with longer commuting times. Budget 2016 proposed to reverse those changes that strictly define the job search responsibilities of unemployed workers; however, claimants will still need to conduct job search activities and accept suitable employment while on EI. Further details will be provided as they are available.

## (e) Other Proposed Changes

Budget 2016 also proposed to make legislative changes to extend the duration of EI regular benefits by 5 weeks, up to a maximum of 50 weeks of benefits, for all eligible claimants in the 12 EI economic regions that have experienced the sharpest and most severe increases in unemployment. Most of Newfoundland and Labrador is included, with the exception of the “St. John’s” region, as defined by Service Canada. (A map of the “St. John’s” region can be found at <http://srv129.services.gc.ca/eiregions/eng/stjohns.aspx>) Extended benefits will be available for one year starting in July 2016, with the measure being applied retroactively to all eligible claims as of January 4, 2015. Budget 2016 also proposed legislative changes to offer up to an additional 20 weeks of EI regular benefits to long-tenured workers in the same 12 EI economic regions, up to a maximum of 70 weeks of benefits. Extended benefits for long-tenured workers will be available for one year starting in July 2016, with the measure being applied retroactively to all eligible claims as of January 4, 2015.

Teachers who have questions regarding the Employment Insurance Program, or who wish to challenge a decision relating to Employment Insurance

Benefits, are encouraged to contact an NLTA Administrative Officer (Programs and Services) for advice. The NLTA will represent a teacher at the appeal if the case is valid in the opinion of the Association.

*Miriam Sheppard is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*

## Can Teachers Collect EI Benefits During the Summer Holidays?

by MIRIAM SHEPPARD

The end of another school year will soon be upon us. At that time of year the following question often arises: Can teachers collect Employment Insurance (EI) benefits during the summer holidays?

The Employment Insurance Regulations state that, in general, teachers are not eligible to receive EI benefits during the “non-teaching periods” (Christmas, Easter break, July and August) unless they fall within one of three exceptions, which are:

1. if the teacher’s contract of employment for teaching has terminated;
2. if the teacher was working on a casual or substitute basis; or
3. if the teacher qualifies for EI benefits on the basis of employment in an occupation other than teaching.

Since they have no termination of contract, teachers in permanent positions are not eligible to collect regular EI benefits when school is not in session (unless they have sufficient insurable hours from employment other than teaching). Substitute teachers would generally qualify under the second exception.

Replacement or term contract teachers may be eligible for EI during the summer in certain circumstances. This issue has been the subject of many EI appeals over the years and was ultimately brought to the Federal Court of Appeal by the NLTA in a case that was heard in June of 2002. The case in question involved a teacher who had been hired in a replacement position for the 1998-99 school year. Just before the last day of school, the teacher accepted another full-year term contract for 1999-2000. The teacher applied for, but was denied EI benefits for July and August of 1999. His appeal to the Board of Referees was successful but the EI

Commission appealed to the Umpire and the decision was reversed. The Federal Court of Appeal upheld the Umpire’s decision. This issue is not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador and a number of similar cases from Alberta resulted in a similar decision from the Federal Court of Appeal.

The Federal Court of Appeal decisions are legal precedents and the application of these decisions has had the following impact: teachers who finish a term contract at the end of a school year may be eligible for EI regular benefits during the summer, but their entitlement ends as soon as they accept a position (term or permanent) for the following school year. For example, a teacher who has a term contract for the 2015-16 school year applies for EI benefits at the end of June. On August 1, she is offered and accepts another term contract for the 2016-17 school year. This teacher would therefore only be eligible for EI benefits for the month of July as she would be disqualified as of the date of acceptance of the new contract. It is the teacher’s responsibility to advise Service Canada once she has a new contract – failure to do so may result in an overpayment of benefits for which Service Canada can seek reimbursement. It is also prudent for substitute teachers with replacement contracts in the previous school year to advise Service Canada of contracts starting in September.

Of course, like other employees, teachers must meet the normal eligibility requirements in order to receive regular EI benefits: they must have the necessary insurable hours of employment and must be available for work. Teachers in receipt of regular EI benefits must be able to demonstrate that they are ready, willing and able to work and are conducting an active job search. Those who restrict their job search to teaching positions only during the summer, when such work is not available, may be disqualified and/or have to repay benefits received.

In addition to regular EI benefits (those available to someone who is unemployed), there are also four categories of special benefits: sickness, compassionate care, parents of critically ill children, maternity and parental. There are separate eligibility requirements for special benefits and teachers would not normally be eligible for sickness benefits during the non-teaching periods. However, teachers may be able to claim maternity, parental, compassionate care or parents of critically ill children benefits during the summer months, as well as the Christmas and Easter breaks.

*This information has been prepared by Miriam Sheppard and is general in nature. If you have a specific inquiry regarding your own EI claim, please contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*



# Read Your Way to Wellness and Vacation with Books

by GAIL CARROLL

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**“The more that you read, the more things you will know.  
The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go!” ~ Dr. Seuss**

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As summer approaches and you begin planning your vacation, the excitement builds. What will you do this summer vacation? Whether it’s an exotic vacation away, local travel or a staycation in your beautiful backyard, consider the many benefits reading can offer. (Especially if you are staying home and long to go somewhere else.) Take a vacation through books. Read your way through Italy with *Juliet* by Anne Fortier, explore new cultures with books like *Secret Daughter* by Shilpi Somaya Gowda and *Birdie* by Tracey Lindberg.

Of all of the things you can do to promote better health, reading has so many benefits:

- **Relaxation.** After a busy year and the stressors with doing so much in such a compressed time frame, reading can help you unwind. It can offer respite and relaxation. Because our jobs often require us to read work-related materials and we are often reading on a screen, research suggests that holding a book in your hand and actually turning the pages can slow you down.
- **Brain Gym.** Reading a book is like exercise for your brain. It boosts your brain power.
- **Promote Better Relations.** Did you know that reading can increase your capacity for empathy? According to a study at Carnegie Mellon University, getting lost in a book can help you better relate to others ([www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201412/can-reading-fictional-story-make-you-more-empathetic](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201412/can-reading-fictional-story-make-you-more-empathetic)). Maya Angelou says that reading fiction can better help you both understand emotions and learn to read others’ emotions.
- **Improve Memory.** Did you know that turning pages can actually help you remember what you are reading? The feel of pages under your fingertips provides your brain with some context which can lead to better comprehension of what you are reading.

- **Reduce Disease Risk.** Reading can reduce your risk of Alzheimer Disease. ([www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201412/can-reading-fictional-story-make-you-more-empathetic](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201412/can-reading-fictional-story-make-you-more-empathetic))

- **Reduce Stress and Increase Happiness.** Reading can help you relax, reduce your stress and increase your happiness. In 2009, Sussex University conducted a research study that showed reading can reduce stress by up to 68% “...losing yourself in a thoroughly engrossing book you can escape from your worries and stresses of the everyday world...” ~ David Lewis, neuropsychologist ([www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/5070874/Reading-can-help-reduce-stress.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/5070874/Reading-can-help-reduce-stress.html)) Snuggle up with a wonderful book, a favorite chair and/or blanket, a cup of tea or a glass of wine and escape.

- **Promote Better Sleep.** According to the Mayo Clinic, reading before bed can help you sleep. Make it a part of your bedtime ritual. Having a ritual before bed like dimming the lights, a warm drink, soft music and a little reading can signal the body that you are winding down and getting ready to go to sleep. Handheld paper books are encouraged over digital reading since blue light technology can interfere with sleep as it actually signals your body to wake up. ([www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379))

- **Encourage Life-long Learning and Growth.** Start a virus – a reading virus that is. Reading can be contagious. A great virus to catch. Start your children off when they are young with bedtime stories. According to Scholastic, this will encourage them to become readers. ([www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading](http://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading)) This is a virus that is fun. There is nothing like catching the reading bug. It will fuel your conversations for a lifetime.

- **Engage in Fitness with Longer Duration.** If you

are walking on a treadmill or working out on a stationary bicycle, consider reading. It may actually keep you invested in the activity for a longer period than if you were just engaged in the activity itself.

- **Increase Vocabulary.** Word power. Keep a dictionary handy as reading can increase your vocabulary. How often have you read a book and found new words you hadn't heard before? Keep your eyes open for new words and possible vocabulary increases the next time you pick up a good book.

- **Inspire and Encourage Goals.** Reading may inspire goals. When you read a book where a character is trying to accomplish something or makes a change in their life, the story can inspire or encourage you to create and/or complete life goals.

- **Achieve a Natural High.** Reading can make you high. What a great way to lift your spirit. Sometimes a book can be so beautiful, inspiring or even downright funny that it can lift our own spirits and even improve our mood.

- **Save Money.** An economical form of entertainment. Cheaper than the movies or the theatre. Go on – explore your local library ([www.nlpl.ca](http://www.nlpl.ca)). There is so much there.

- **Travel the World.** Travel the world through books. Reading helps you explore and understand other cultures as well as takes you on a journey through history.

- **Be a Better Problem Solver.** Reading can help you problem solve. Sometimes we try so hard to solve a problem that it seems the more effort we put in to thinking about it and trying to resolve it, the further away from an answer we move. Try not thinking about it for a little while. Sometimes when reading for pleasure an answer just comes to us or a character or situation in a book provides us with a sense of direction.

- **Builds Better Self-esteem.** Did you know that by becoming well-informed on a variety of topics you can increase your feelings of self-esteem and self-worth?

- **Provides Respite.** Reading can take your mind off your troubles and provide you with respite.

- **Lifelong Friendship and Better Socialization Skills.** You will never be lonely when you have a book for a friend. It will always give you something to talk about. It makes socialization easier and fun.

- **Helps You Find Creative Ways to Celebrate and Enjoy Life.** Have a party around books. Invite your friends and exchange reading lists or choose a book and have a theme party around it. A number of years ago a group of friends read Hannah Tuncliffe's *The Color of Tea*, about a woman who settles with her husband in a new country and she opens a beautiful

bakery dedicated to French macaroons. We hosted a party with several tasty colored macaroons and teas. A fun evening full of laughter and recipe ideas, along with lots of book chit chat. Create a couples reading group to build friendship and intimacy. A great way to celebrate getting together. Prepare food and drink around the theme of your book if it is suitable. Find ways to celebrate reading, friendship and fun.

"Great books help you understand and they help you feel understood." ~ John Green author of *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Looking for Alaska* and other great novels.

With all these wonderful benefits of books and reading in mind I have decided to share with you my own summer reading list for this year. Every year I look forward to two things: CBC Reads Battle of the Books in March month and Harper Collins 50 Book Pledge. For those of you who are not familiar with the 50 Book Pledge, visit [www.50bookpledge.ca](http://www.50bookpledge.ca). Wishing you all a very happy, restful and fun summer.

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

## Top Ten Summer Reading Recommendations

1. *Secret Daughter* by Shilpi Somaya Gowda
2. *The Golden Son* by Shilpi Somaya Gowda
3. *Orphan Train* by Christine Baker Kline
4. *Lilac Girls* by Martha Hall Kelly
5. *The Piano Maker* by Kurt Paka
6. *Bone and Bread* by Saleema Nawaz
7. *The Hero's Walk* by Anita Rau Badami
8. *Minister Without Portfolio* by Michael Winter
9. *Birdie* by Tracey Lindberg
10. *The Illegal* by Lawrence Hill

*Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest counsellors and the most patient teachers.*

~ Charles William Elst



# Pre-Retirement Seminars 2016

Teachers within two years of retirement eligibility should register for one of the NLTA's five Pre-Retirement Seminars scheduled to be held in the fall of 2016 in Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, and three in St. John's. 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 2019 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 for 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 partner 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 partner.)
- 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, Assistant Directors, Senior Education Officers and partners, 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](http://www.nlta.nl.ca)). Go to Programs and Services and then Pre-Retirement Seminars. The NLTA policy will also be mailed to teachers with confirmation of registration.

# 2016 PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR

## R E G I S T R A T I O N F O R M

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. 13-14** – Greenwood Inn & Suites, Corner Brook

☐ **Oct. 20-21** – Mt. Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls-Windsor

☐ **Nov. 17-18** – Hampton Inn & Suites, St. John's

☐ **Dec. 1-2** – Hampton Inn & Suites, St. John's

☐ **Dec. 8-9** – Hampton Inn & Suites, St. John's

Will your partner be attending? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of partner (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 2019) 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

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](http://www.nlta.nl.ca). Go to Programs and Services and then Pre-Retirement Seminars.

**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



## Teacher Recognized for Building Young Leaders

**D**ianne Penney, a social studies teacher at Corner Brook Regional High (CBRH), has been honoured with a Loran Teachers Building Leaders Award. This award recognizes teachers who instill character, an unwavering belief in the importance of community service and leadership qualities in students who become Loran Scholars. Ms. Penney's award presentation took place at Corner Brook Regional High on March 23, 2016.

Allie Carew, a former CBRH student and 2011 Loran Scholar who graduated last year from Queen's University, nominated Ms. Penney for the award. "Ms. Penney truly believed in her students' potential and I admired that she worked so diligently to get us to see this for ourselves," said Ms. Carew. "I believe I

became both a better academic performer and a better community leader because of Mrs. Penney's dedication to teaching."

"Character traits like integrity, curiosity, drive and resilience are essential to leadership," says Franca Gucciardi, CEO of the Loran Scholars Foundation and one of the first Loran Scholars. "Building character starts at an early age, and we are deeply grateful to teachers like Ms. Penney who helped our scholars become the young leaders they are today."

Started in 2015, the Loran Teachers Building Leaders Award is granted by the Loran Scholars Foundation with support from the McCall MacBain Foundation. Twenty-nine teachers across Canada are receiving Loran Teachers Building Leaders Awards over the course of the 2015-16 school year. Each teacher receives a certificate from the Loran Scholars Foundation and a congratulatory letter from His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, the Governor General of Canada.

The Loran Scholars Foundation is a national charity that invests in young people who demonstrate character, commitment to service and leadership potential. It selects 30 young Canadians from over 4,000 applicants each year as Loran Scholars. The Loran Award is tenable at 25 partner universities and has a maximum value of \$100,000 over four years of undergraduate study.



Dianne Penney (left) and Allie Carew following the presentation of the Loran Teachers Building Leaders Award.



## HATS OFF!

Have you recently won an award or know of a teacher who has been recognized for their contribution to the education of children in Newfoundland and Labrador? If so, we'd like to hear from you. Please send information on the award as well as a profile of the award winner(s) to:

**Lesley-Ann Browne**, Editor-in-Chief, *The Bulletin*  
 Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association  
 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL A1B 1W1  
 E-mail: labrowne@nlta.nl.ca

# Teachers Take Home Juno Award

Two primary school teachers from Newfoundland and Labrador were awarded a 2016 Juno Award for Children's Album of the Year at the Juno Gala Dinner in Calgary on April 2. Laura Winter, a French Immersion teacher at Bishop Feild Elementary in St. John's and Erin Power, a kindergarten teacher at Larkhall Academy in St. John's, along with guitarist Duane Andrews, are members of The Swinging Belles, a swing band for kids from St. John's. The Swinging Belles was the only group from Newfoundland and Labrador to win a Juno this year.

Erin and Laura have recently completed Masters degrees in Education and Folklore respectively. As primary school teachers, both Laura and Erin know first hand the joy that kids feel when they can boogie to some good time music. They have been working in the classroom for the past number of years and their love of folk, swing jazz and country music seeped into their pedagogy and is showcased through songs and stories supported by guitars, mandolins, banjos and ukuleles.

"It is such an honour to have our music recognized on a national level," says Erin. "The love and support that we have received from our school communities has been overwhelming and we can't thank them enough. We are forever grateful to the children and families that have come out to sing and dance with us over the past two years and we are looking forward to more!"



Erin Power (left) and Laura Winter accept their 2016 Juno Award in Calgary.

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## From Story to Design:

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# Motivating Students w/ Digital Badges

by TOM KENNEDY

From an early age, I enjoyed the concept of merit badges. Whether it was Scout badges on my sash as a young boy or working to earn my Cross-Rifles in Sea Cadets, the concept of meeting criteria and being able to display the achievement on my sleeve was motivational. Eager to earn additional badges, I worked harder to earn more. While my experiences may be dated for many young people today, the same idea has resurfaced in gaming.

I remember student excitement when games such as *Call of Duty* (COD) hit the shelves and students

were motivated by the ability to unlock achievements, receive badges and display this through online gaming. In my time, a PC game released in the early 90s called *Star Wars: X-Wing* offered a similar reward system with similar results. Though gaming style may have changed during those 20 years, the motivational potential of such a reward system remained at the core. Digital badges have the potential to offer a reward system to students on their level, but what are they all about?

## 7 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT... BADGES

### 1. WHAT IS IT?

Badges are digital tokens that appear as icons or logos on a web page or other online venue. Awarded by institutions, organizations, groups, or individuals, **badges signify accomplishments such as completion of a project, mastery of a skill, or marks of experience.** Proponents suggest that these credentials herald a fundamental change in the way society recognizes learning and achievement—shifting from a traditional books-and-lecture pedagogy to a model with multiple knowledge streams, including new media, collaboration, interest-based learning, and project-based learning. As records of achievement, badges can recognize the completion of projects within a traditional college program or acknowledge experience gained through community efforts, online learning venues, or work-related projects.

### 2. HOW DOES IT WORK?

Details vary from one grantor to the next, but one path for badges is provided by the Mozilla Open Badge Infrastructure (OBI) specification. Using this model, **a learner fulfills the issuer-specific criteria to earn the badge by attending classes, passing an exam or review, or completing other activities.** A grantor verifies that the specifications have been met and awards the badge, maintaining a

record of it with attendant metadata. This metadata includes the issuer's name, the recipient's e-mail address, a link to the criteria, and a short description of the badge. It may also specify other details, such as the issue date, the expiration date, or a link to the evidence that supports the granting of the badge. The earner pushes the badge into a "backpack," a portfolio-style server account, where this award is stored alongside badges from other grantors. This badge repository might be the Mozilla-hosted Badge Backpack, or it might be a backpack hosted by any provider using the OBI specifications. Badge recipients using the Mozilla Badge Backpack can choose to keep their awards private or display some or all of them on selected websites, social media tools, platforms, or networks.

### 3. WHO'S DOING IT?

**Numerous groups, organizations, community projects, and web entities currently issue badges.** The Khan Academy, for example, offers a lengthy web page of them, such as an "Atomic Clockwork" badge, which requires a student to watch videos or hone a skill for each of 30 consecutive days. On the web at large, badges often provide participants with an opportunity to prove themselves, as with the Google News program. This initiative offers the chance to earn badges for reading a specified num-

ber of articles in a given content area. Readers can then raise the badge level (bronze, silver, gold, etc.) through still more reading.

#### 4. WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

**Badges represent a different approach to credentials, one that places the focus on individual students and their learning accomplishments.** Individuals can control their badges by choosing where to earn them and—depending on the privacy specifications of the backpack—determining who can see them. Often these badges reflect educational experiences beyond the classroom, calling attention to study abroad, student government, or community service. A collection of badges can function as a distributed portfolio that may eventually be accessible from a variety of social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google Plus. When badges serve as part of a résumé or portfolio, they tell prospective employers a more detailed story about the projects and activities that define a student's learning, including both the hard and soft skills that were acquired.

#### 5. WHAT ARE THE DOWNSIDES?

**Many details remain for badges to be broadly accepted** as legitimate indicators of education, skill, or experience, and it is too early to say whether employers will come to view them as trusted credentials. Acceptance depends, at least in part, on the level of quality control for these awards. The nature of an open system means that ultimately those granting badges are the ones who determine and verify their value. Given that many badges are awarded for such activities as completing a game sequence, some people may be inclined to discount badges as a whole. Because the performance of many activities is not directly observed, it can be difficult to prove that the badge was awarded to the person who completed the specified assessment. The reputation and the accreditation of colleges and universities give value to the degrees they confer and the records they hold in trust. By contrast, it can be difficult to establish the value of a badge awarded by an unknown or unaccredited source. Moreover, the rate at which online entities appear,

disappear, and are purchased by others creates a fragile structure upon which to build trust.

#### 6. WHERE IS IT GOING?

As badge systems become more broadly adopted, a host of issuers and endorsers will emerge. **Ongoing work will be done to validate badges** to ensure those who earned, issued, and endorsed them are who they claim to be. If badges are headed toward employer buy-in, people might one day be hired based in part on the badges they have earned. In the near term, badges offer talking points for a job interview, opening a friendly dialogue between a manager and an interviewee and allowing the latter to speak about accomplishments and interests that might not otherwise arise in conversation.

#### 7. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING?

Badges could represent an opportunity for higher education to rethink what is of value and recognize achievements that could be codified but currently are not. As an adjunct to institutionally supported learning, badges might provide a new avenue for continuing education. They support lifelong learning, not just through traditional academic or formalized learning pathways but also the kind of knowledge that comes from personal initiative and investigation. If badges are able to widely establish themselves as trusted credentials, they could help people plot their own path to learning, pursuing projects and experiences they feel are worthwhile. Badges have sparked lively conversation in the academic community. Some suggest they could disrupt the monopoly of credentialing that has been the province of higher education, while others insist that institutions will embrace badges to augment the traditional curriculum and add depth to the student portfolio. Whatever the future holds for these awards, it is clear **badges offer an opportunity to reevaluate credentials, expanding their role by making otherwise hidden accomplishments visible.**

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#### Digital Badges @ STEMfestNL

Integrating digital badges is just one of many STEM related sessions slated for STEMfestNL this summer. This professional learning event will offer over 60 sessions grounded in STEM education, facilitated by 35 facilitators. Join the Technology Education and Math Science Special Interest Councils July 26-30 at the Marine Institute for four days of profes-

sional learning unlike any other. Visit <http://stemfestnl2016.sched.org> for more information.

Tom Kennedy (B.A., B.Ed., Dip. Tech Ed, M.A. & Ed. (E.F.L.C.)) is a teacher at Eric G Lambert School in Churchill Falls and President of the Technology Education Special Interest Council (TESIC).



# Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

by KENDRA LANE

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) experience unique challenges related to their diagnosis. Compounding these challenges is the phenomenon of “co-morbidity”, or secondary diagnoses that may often accompany the ASD. These co-morbidities include gastrointestinal dysfunctions, sleep disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, seizure disorder, intellectual disabilities and motor problems. The most common co-morbidity is anxiety.

According to the DSM-V, Autism Spectrum Disorder is characterized by impairments in social interactions and communication, combined with repetitive and restricted behaviours and interests. In addition, it is estimated that up to 40% of children with ASD also fulfill diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder, and as many as 84% have impairing anxiety symptoms. Experts agree more research is needed to determine whether these anxiety symptoms are a direct consequence of ASD, a distinct co-morbid anxiety disorder, or a unique manifestation of anxiety that is altered by its co-existence with ASD. In any case, debilitating anxiety affects a significant portion of our students on the spectrum; for most, these symptoms create significant barriers to learning in the inclusive classroom.

Some of the most common and effective support strategies for students with ASD are also designed to target anxiety. For example, schedules are intended to empower the student with the knowledge of expectations of him/her and allow the student to refer to consistent instruction in times of transition or uncertainty. For the individualization of a schedule, one of the first considerations should be the student's level of anxiety. While some students benefit from seeing an entire school day at once, others may spend the day apprehensive about what happens in the final period or when they go home. These students may be better suited to a half day or even “what's next?” schedule design.

Similarly, it is common for students on the spectrum to be anxious when ‘time’ is concerned, such as the time of day, what time things are supposed to

happen, etc. This is another case where individualization is important. Some students benefit from supports that *do not* include elements of time as they are too big a distraction and create unmanageable stress when time is not followed *exactly*. Other students will be relieved of stress with the inclusion of time as it helps them prepare and understand exactly how long their attention is expected to last. It is important to consider a student's intellectual ability and level of independence when developing support tools; and, how the student is impacted by anxiety.

Anxiety can play an important role in behaviour. In previous articles I have discussed the idea that students on the spectrum are battling social, sensory, and communicative stressors in a classroom environment as a baseline, making it much easier for these students to reach a ‘boiling point’ of unmanageable stress. This tipping point is what often leads to inappropriate or non-preferred behaviour. If we consider the addition of clinical or subclinical anxiety, then we can surely imagine that students can reach their limit with the simplest of unexpected changes, demands, or stimulations.

Sterility in the environment and/or lowered expectations is not a solution. In fact, in many cases our expectations of students with autism can expand. It is important to consider the weight scale of stress and anxiety versus pride and success. Teaching coping strategies and self-regulation is crucial to the life skill development of every student, but one of the greatest stress relievers is a feeling of accomplishment. Sometimes the most calming activities for students on the spectrum are those that can be completed successfully and independently. Striving for a more balanced scale can often result in a student more ready and able to learn.

Anxiety can present significant barriers to any student; those with ASD may have even more complex manifestations of the disorder and its symptoms. It is crucial that we, as professionals, equip ourselves with the tools to help our students overcome any unique learning challenges they face.

On Monday, November 7, 2016, ASNL presents the Geneva Centre for Autism Workshop *Coping with Anxiety & Autism Spectrum Disorder: Techniques That Help*, at the Holiday Inn, St. John's. Please join us as Adriana Karka, faculty member with the Geneva Centre Training Institute, discusses the impact of anxiety on the daily lives of individuals with ASD. This workshop will include: first-hand accounts; indicators of anxiety; assessment tools; and effective interventions that may decrease anxiety and enhance

self-regulation. For more information and registration details, please visit [www.autism.nf.net](http://www.autism.nf.net) or contact ASNL at [info@autism.nf.net](mailto:info@autism.nf.net).

*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](mailto:klane@autism.nf.net).*

## **Autism Society, Newfoundland Labrador presents:**



### **Coping with Anxiety & Autism Spectrum Disorder: Techniques That Help**

Monday, November 7th, 2016 at the Holiday Inn, St. John's

**New and Current ASNL Member Registration:** \$219

**Non-Member Registration:** \$259

**Deadline to Register:** Friday October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Presented by:** Adriana Karka, Training Institute Faculty

This workshop is designed for teachers, parents/caregivers and other professionals working with individuals with ASD – in the school, home and/or community. Participants will learn about the impact of mild to severe anxiety in the daily lives of individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder including first-hand accounts; indicators of anxiety; assessment tools; and effective interventions that may decrease anxiety and enhance self-regulation.

**For more information, and to register, contact ASNL at**

**(709) 722-2803 | [www.autism.nf.net](http://www.autism.nf.net) | [info@autism.nf.net](mailto:info@autism.nf.net)**



## *Is this Test Fair?* Implementing Democratic Assessment

by DALE PARSONS

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**“Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.” ~ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed***

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Have you ever asked yourself, “Is this test fair?” How did you respond? Have you ever seen a student, upon returning a test or assignment, flinch with disappointment? How did this make you feel? It is interesting that as teachers we are tasked with preparing individuals to take their place in a democratic society – to create engaged citizens of the world – but many taken-for-granted school structures can be viewed as unjust and unfair. As Freire pointed out, there exists a teacher-student contradiction – teachers are teachers and students are students; teachers are arbiters of knowledge and students are recipients of knowledge. However, democratic assessment may be an avenue to reconcile this contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.

Many educational researchers have argued that assessment is the most powerful structure in education. It can grant or withhold qualifications, be used to decide academic streams, and influence one’s personal worth. Truly, assessment can be viewed as a mechanism to sort and grade students, and eventually calculate where a person fits in society. Thus, assessment choices can have serious and far reaching consequences for individuals and society. Within a democratically structured classroom, assessment works to resolve this imbalance between teacher and student. With this, assessment becomes open, transparent, explained, and examined. Basically, as teachers we demystify assessment and, in the end, students assess *themselves*.

Current assessment practices maintain Freire’s teacher-student contradiction. This is most obvious with traditional assessment practices – worksheets, essay tests, multiple choice tests, short answer ques-

tions, and true/false questions as examples. Here, the teacher is in full control of what knowledge is to be assessed and how it is to be assessed. Assessment is something done *to* students. This power imbalance is exceedingly apparent with standardized, high-stakes tests (unit tests, CRTs, and public exams). These tests assume all students are the same. However, in a true democracy diversity is recognized and celebrated. Ask yourself this, does a teacher serving on the provincial marking board take into account diverse learning styles or cultural differences that may influence how a student responds to a question?

Currently, the buzz is “authentic assessment”, “performance assessment”, and “differentiated assessment”. Here, instead of pencil and paper tests, students engage in real life tasks, for example, interviews, projects, demonstrations, and portfolios. With this type of assessment pupils participate in higher order thinking, work in collaborative groups, solve problems, and investigate real life scenarios. However, decisions about what is to be assessed and how it is to be assessed still remains with the institution and the teacher – the student has little input. Sometimes we offer the illusion of control – a choice board, tic-tac-toe assignments, choose-your-own-topic projects, etc. – but in the end, these democratic practices only extend to the most basic of classroom procedures.

True democratic assessment is different. It focuses on students thinking deeply about what they have learned in collaboration with classmates and the teacher. Here, assessment is done *with* students and involves self, peer, and co-assessment strategies. However, these concepts are unlike the conventional idea of shared assessment. Traditionally, with self

and peer assessment, a teacher will generate rubrics or checklists, hand them out to students, and the students assess work in groups, alone, or with the teacher. As well, this assessment is generally formative – it is used to inform students about how to improve their learning rather than generate a final grade. Conversely, with democratic assessment the teacher enters into dialogue with their students about assessment itself. The class engages in critical thought about the different modes, criteria, and consequences of assessment for a given unit of work – all steps in the assessment process are discussed, debated, transparent, and mutually agreed upon. The point is to have students deeply consider the assessment process, choose how to be graded, reflect on what they have learned, record their thoughts, and give themselves a grade. An important point here is that the teacher does not act as final decision maker – that power rests with everyone. Thus, assessment becomes democratic – students have a say, an equal voice. And consequently, Freire's teacher-student contradiction is lessened.

The benefits of instituting democratic assessment are far-reaching. For teachers, democratic assessment may lessen workload as students become experts in assessing themselves. Teachers gain a deep understanding of how and what a student learns. Further, when students' voices are heard and validated, the classroom becomes a more respectful learning environment. Students learn how to be self-reflexive, engaged, and autonomous learners. This goes beyond just critical thinking and enters into the realm of self-criticism and self-affirmation.

As well, the type of knowledge democratically assessed is different than traditional assessment. Little emphasis is placed on concrete facts, and more emphasis is placed on abstract notions – how well a student cooperates with others, how well they can identify a problem and work to solve it, how well a student innovates in unfamiliar situations, or how well a student can empathize, for example. Moreover, democratic assessment is less concerned with the end product, and more concerned with how students arrived there – it is about knowledge *construction* rather than knowledge duplication.

Although the benefits of democratic assessment practices are far-reaching, so are the challenges. Students may have feelings of anxiety, discomfort, and confusion with such an open and democratic assessment practice. They may be less than forthright when critically assessing peers' work due to fear of retribution. Students may feel frustrated with the

(continued on page 28)



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As Gary tells it, he owes much of his success to the indispensable "edge" he developed at College of the North Atlantic because of: instructors who were experienced professionals; small class sizes "where you can't hide"; and an educational approach that goes beyond theory to demonstrate, hands-on, how concepts are applied.

Over the years, Gary's picked up a bit of a Texas drawl, but he's never forgotten his connection to home. Or to CNA.

To meet Gary, and watch stories about other industry leaders, visit [CNAstories.ca](http://CNAstories.ca)

process and defer authority to the teacher. Students may experience self-doubt about their ability to judge quality work and grades may be exaggerated. Students driven by individualism and competition may inflate grades and students who are apathetic or cursory may undervalue work. As well, if students have under-developed collaboration or social skills, the process becomes troublesome.

To alleviate these concerns it is necessary to start slow and start early. Introduce democratic peer and self assessment at the beginning of the school year and as formative assessment at first. Thus, students gain confidence and comfort with the new process without worrying about final marks. Then, when the class feels ready, allow democratic assessment to inform summative grades. Another strategy is to model deep self-reflection. Let students hear you reflect on how well you taught a particular concept. Disclose what you feel are your strengths and weaknesses, and how you plan to improve. Openly grade yourself. Furthermore, allow students to give you critical feedback on your abilities as a teacher and let them grade you. In this way, you become the student and your students become the teachers. Consequently, Freire's student-teacher contradiction is addressed.

Teachers may also encounter challenges when considering democratic assessment. First, teachers may find the process fraught with anxiety and overly time-consuming. In addition, managing the complexities of student to student power struggles requires considerable skill and patience. Furthermore, teachers may not welcome a changing role in the classroom – especially the idea of surrendering assessment to students and reworking established course procedures. Often it is difficult to question our own status quo and ask, “Is this the best way to do things?” To overcome these difficulties, teachers should engage in deep critical thought about their own practice. In essence, they become what they want to see in their students – they become learners, students of democratic assessment. And, once again, this contributes to solving Freire's student-teacher contradiction.

However, the most difficult aspect of implementing democratic assessment may be the curricular and institutional restraints imposed upon teachers. Frequently, official curriculum and assessment goals may not align with democratic assessment practices. For example, many curriculum guides detail what and how to assess which serves to exclude student involvement. Furthermore, schools may have prescribed grading policies and evaluative criteria – this may hinder the introduction of new assessment

procedures. Year-end and high stakes exams will also pose a significant problem for teachers. In order to alleviate these issues, teachers can begin by introducing democratic assessment in a low-stakes course and only for some assessment pieces. In this way, the teacher can hone their skills without the worry of how it may affect curriculum achievement. As well, it may be advisable to seek the input and support of administration. Finally, making careful and well thought out preparations will ease anxiety – be well informed and learn from others who apply democratic assessment in their classroom.

Democratic assessment immerses students in a fundamental pillar of our society – democracy. It teaches fairness, equality, and justice in real world and tangible ways. Instead of just learning about democracy, students *do* democracy. They actively discover that their thoughts and opinions, their voice, counts. They discover empowerment. However, as with any new initiative, there are bound to be bumps along the road. But the alternative is to remain constant, never innovating, and maintaining Freire's teacher-student contradiction. “Is this test fair?” – maybe our students have an answer.

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*Dale Parsons teaches junior/high school English and Social Studies at John Burke High School in Grand Bank, NL. This article is distilled from his Master of Education exit paper on critical pedagogy and assessment. To read the paper and its sources visit: <https://sites.google.com/site/mrparsonsjbhs/masters-exit-paper>. Dale can be reached at [daleparsons@nlesd.ca](mailto:daleparsons@nlesd.ca). Note: Head Shot by Travis Parsons Photography*



## *The True North Strong and Free?* 2016 Women's Symposium

by SHERRI ROSE

Two years ago, I attended my first Women's Symposium, co-hosted by CTF (Canadian Teachers' Federation) and YTA (Yukon Teachers' Association) in Whitehorse. It was an eye-opening and humbling experience that I will never forget. I had the privilege of attending my second symposium (with Donna Reddick, NLTA Provincial Executive and Beverley Park, NLTA Senior Administrative Officer, Program and Services) in Winnipeg from February 28 to March 1, co-hosted by CTF and MTS (Manitoba Teachers' Society) entitled *Social Justice at the Heart of Women's Human Rights*. Again, I was left in awe of the things I was learning.

The Honourable Patricia Hadju, Minister of the Status of Women, attended our Monday evening banquet and gave an address. We were celebrating the centennial of some women gaining the right to vote in Canada. Notice I said *some* women. While non-Aboriginal women were eligible to vote as of 1916, it was not until 1960 that Aboriginal women gained that same right. I was asked to sing *O Canada*, and it was truly an honour for me. However, as I thought about singing it, I couldn't help but reflect on the lyrics "the True North strong and free." Throughout the symposium, every time I heard a new statistic about human trafficking, domestic violence, murdered and missing indigenous women and oppression, it made me realize that not everyone is strong and free in Canada. I, myself, have told my students and classes on many occasions how lucky we are to live in Canada, and we are. But unfortunately, for many Canadians, this is not their reality. It is the reality for the privileged Canadians.

Dr. Alex Wilson gave a compelling workshop on anti-oppression education. We played a privilege game at the end that really hit home for me. We lined up and as she asked questions we had to either take a step back or take a step forward according to our personal response. By the end there was a clear divide. There were only a few of us at the front. We were the privileged. Can you guess who we were? With each step forward I took because I had never experienced real hunger, never felt discriminated against, never felt in

danger, etc... I became more uncomfortable, guilty and upset. At the back of the room stood Dr. Wilson and another few women. Can you guess who they were? Dr. Wilson holds degrees from Harvard University. She is an Associate Professor and the Academic Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. She is a very educated, knowledgeable woman. She is Swampy Cree from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. Should it matter? I've never been made fun of for the colour of my skin, the way I talk, my family heritage or my religious beliefs, but I wonder how many of you reading this have experienced any of these situations? I think many would be surprised by the answer.

Barb Byers gave a presentation on domestic violence called *Can Work Be Safe, When Home Isn't?* After already having attended a few sessions, it was no surprise to me that incidents of domestic violence were much higher for women, Aboriginal people and non-heterosexuals. It is so prevalent that the Yukon Teachers' Association (YTA) recently negotiated five instructional leave days per year when a member is a victim of domestic violence. An amazing step in the right direction. Bravo YTA!

The most difficult session was presented by Diane Redsky who discussed murdered and missing indigenous women and human trafficking. My first exposure to the realities of human trafficking in Canada was at the symposium in Whitehorse. I was shocked. For many of us, human trafficking is something that happens in far off lands and in the movies, but it happens here. It happens everywhere. It could be occurring in your neighbourhood and students in your classes could be involved.

Another speaker, Niki Ashton, the New Democratic Party MP for the riding of Churchill – Keewatinook Aski, spoke about the importance of courage. Courage is needed to ensure that everyone has the same human rights. As you walk around the Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, you can see examples of courageous, strong, powerful women who stood up for themselves and for others. We all have to do this to help build a better tomorrow for all Canadians.

Change starts with each of us. It can start today. To conclude, I think Anne Frank sums it up nicely. "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." Each one of us can help make Canada strong and free, so that we can sing the anthem and know it to be true.



Sherri Rose is a teacher at Xavier Junior High in Deer Lake and a member of the NLTA Provincial Executive. She is also a member of the CTF Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.

# Getting Schools Ready for Children

## Our Reflections on the NAREA Winter Conference

by KYRAN DWYER & MELANIE CULLETON

At the beginning of the school year, we began to discuss the Reggio Emilia Approach and what it could mean for our school. According to the Reggio Children website, “the Reggio Emilia Approach is an educational philosophy based on the image of the child, and of human beings, as possessing strong potentials for development and as a subject of rights who learns and grows in the relationships with others”. The fundamental beliefs of Reggio Emilia-inspired educators are that children learn best through direct experiences and relationships with others based on their own motivations. Essentially, the way that adults and educators see the child is at the core of the Reggio Emilia belief-system and practices.

We feel truly lucky to have had the opportunity to attend the Seventh North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) Winter Conference in Miami, Florida in March 2016. The experience was inspiring and eye-opening. It was also a uniquely personal one for each of us. We were surrounded by experts, teachers and early childhood educators from all over the world. It was incredible to hear at least five languages (English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese) being spoken throughout the three days at the conference. It was amazing to have such a cultured experience, but what was most exceptional is that hundreds of educators were brought together from all over the world because of their shared views of children.

The following is an account of our personal experiences and reflections on the conference. Although we listened to the same speakers and visited the same Reggio-inspired schools, we processed information based on our own perspectives and drawing from our own backgrounds; one of us as an administrator and one of us as a teacher. As you read on, we encourage you to keep this idea that we held onto from the

conference close to your thoughts: “We must start getting schools ready for children, instead of getting children ready for schools.” ~ Karyn Callaghan, President, Ontario Reggio Association

### The Learning Environment

Walking into a Reggio Emilia-inspired school is both heartwarming and astonishing. The schools felt nothing short of magical to us, even as adults. The schools were there for the children – they were

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**“We must start getting schools ready for children, instead of getting children ready for schools.” ~ Karyn Callaghan, President, Ontario Reggio Association**

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ready for the children and not the other way around. In all of the schools, the walls were adorned with large photographs of children having “ah-ha” moments. There were no art projects where

each child in the class followed the same recipe to produce identical products. Instead, creativity and learning were visible everywhere we looked. There was a focus on process and documentation versus products. We didn’t see any commercial posters or brightly coloured teacher-made displays – everything was created by the children. Elements from nature such as rocks, wood, plants and light were available to all children aged anywhere from under one year old to twelve years old. A learning environment rich with natural elements provides, as one presenter put it, “an eternal sense of wonder”.

The learning environment should promote a sense of wonder in not only the children who spend their time there, but also the adults. When we do the same units, the same projects, the same concerts over and over, we lose our own sense of wonder. Many of us tend to say and feel things like, “why re-invent the wheel?” or “why fix it if it’s not broken?” The Reggio Emilia Approach promotes ‘uncovering the curriculum’ versus teaching to the curriculum. We saw this philosophy in action with younger children as

well as older primary/elementary children. With kindergarten children we recognized much play-based learning and differentiated instruction, while with older children we saw that there was always a large-scale project based around the children's interest which covered a multitude of curriculum outcomes. For example, in a third grade classroom, students were very focused on learning about all of the body systems and had done much research, writing and artwork on that particular topic. Long-term projects were student-driven at all grade levels.

### What does the Reggio Emilia Approach Mean to Our Schools?

We discussed at length on our journey back to Newfoundland how we could possibly convey what we had learned so to inspire, rather than to overwhelm fellow administrators and teachers. In a world where we have so many deadlines, curriculum outcomes and protocols to follow, it can sometimes feel unimaginable to make changes to how we teach. The more we talked, the more we realized that we already know so much of what we saw at the conference. We saw play-based learning, differentiated instruction and catering to the multiple intelligences of children all at work. What we know in theory was being used authentically and skillfully in the schools. The Reggio Emilia Approach is not just *another thing* to include in your teaching. It's really a way of thinking and feeling about your role as a teacher. We have been introduced to so many *better* ways of teaching, that it can become teaching survival to stick to what we think is working and block out the rest. The Reggio Emilia Approach truly embodies everything we know about how children learn and develop.

As teachers, we all entered this profession because we value children. However, we often feel that children need us to teach them everything. Most of us grew up in a school system that saw the teacher always directing; always in control of the learning. However, the Reggio Emilia-inspired teacher works to observe and document learning in order to help children further their learning. The teacher often intervenes to question, guide or support, but doesn't dictate the learning which is taking place. "The child doesn't need the adult to show him what the world can offer," was a quote from one of the presenters that stuck with us both. In a world where we often remark that children are growing up with limited problem-solving skills and motivation, it was refreshing to witness videos of children trying and then trying again, instead of relying on an adult to show them exactly what to do.

Loris Malaguzzi was the founder of the Reggio

Emilia educational approach and played a large role in the opening of the first Reggio Emilia preschools and infant-toddler centers. Before attending the NAREA Conference, we had already heard of the way Malaguzzi described children as having one hundred languages (or hundreds of ways to communicate: through play, music, movement, art, discovery, etc...). However, as we visited the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools in Miami, we couldn't help but feel we have been limiting our own students to just a few languages for far too long. We left the conference inspired and motivated to provide a learning environment full of wonder – one which is ready for children.

For more information about the Reggio Emilia Approach or NAREA, please visit the following websites:

- [reggioalliance.org/](http://reggioalliance.org/)
- [www.reggiochildren.it/?lang=en](http://www.reggiochildren.it/?lang=en)
- [www.legofoundation.com/en-us/newsroom/articles/2015/lego-prize-2015](http://www.legofoundation.com/en-us/newsroom/articles/2015/lego-prize-2015)

*Kyran Dwyer is Principal of St. Matthew's School in St. John's. Melanie Culleton teaches Kindergarten French Immersion at St. Matthew's School.*

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# The Evolution of an Act of Kindness

by KRISTIE ST. CROIX

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**“How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment, we can start now, start slowly changing the world!” ~ Anne Frank**

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This year has been a year of learning and a year of love at Mary Queen of the World in Mount Pearl. The students have really embraced the meaning of kindness and generosity. They are on the beginning of a beautiful journey that will make a difference in the lives of many others.

It all began in the month of December when my Grade 6 class started to read the novel *Pay it Forward* written by Catherine Ryan Hyde. This book is about a twelve-year-old boy who receives a Social Studies assignment to make an effort to change the world. The character in the book creates a movement of kindness by doing good things for others and not expecting anything in return. The people that are at the receiving end of an act of kindness must be kind and “pay it forward” to three others. The students really began to embrace the meaning and lessons in this book. They also began considering its ability to make a difference.

After finishing the novel, they continued to learn about influential children in the world such as

Hannah Taylor, Ryan Hreljac, Jimmy Akana Hreljac, Craig Kielburger, Malala Yousafzai and Nevaeh Denine – all of whom have made a difference in the world in which we live.

For International Literacy Day, we were very fortunate to have had a parent volunteer read a book to the class. The book that was chosen was based on a true story – *One Hen*, written by Katie Smith Milway. This is a book about a boy in Africa who borrowed money to buy a hen. He then sold the eggs at the market and made enough money to buy a second hen. He continued to grow his business and eventually made enough money to get a post-secondary education in agriculture. This boy made a big difference in his village in Africa and helped others grow and develop. One of the conditions of his loan was to pay it forward to someone else – and he did.

After the parent finished reading the book, she took two toonies out of her pocket and showed them to the class. She said, “I give this money to you and you have three choices. You can spend this money on yourselves, you can give the money to someone who needs it, or you can try to make the money more. I want you to think about it. Anything that you decide on as a class would be fine. But you must decide together”. So, the money sat on the teacher’s desk for weeks. No one had an idea as to what should be done with the money. Then one day that all changed!

It was a regular morning in the classroom and the students began to learn about a little girl named Nevaeh. The reason for learning about her was because she fit perfectly into the category of amazing and influential children. When Nevaeh was four years old, she was diagnosed with neuroblastoma. Having cancer is not what makes her amazing, it



Kristie St. Croix and her Grade 6 students served over 400 glasses of lemonade during their fundraiser for Nevaeh.

is not what defines her. What makes her such an influential girl is her spirit and her desire to bring joy to others. She wanted to raise money to help other families that have children fighting cancer. How did she propose to do this? She said that she wanted to have “the biggest lemonade stand ever!”— and she did! Nevaeh Denine has hosted a lemonade stand for two consecutive years and has managed to raise over \$60,000 to help others. Sometimes life hands us questionable circumstances that make us question what our existence is really about. One thing is for certain – Nevaeh has brought joy to many people that know her and also to those who only know of her. That day, the students decided that it was time to create joy for Nevaeh – and they did!

One of the students said, “Let’s take one of our toonies and buy a can of lemonade”. The class fell quiet and looked at the student speaking. He continued, “Let’s have a lemonade stand and raise money for Nevaeh”. It made sense. It was the logical thing to do. It was the right thing to do. Give her the joy that she has given to many by doing what she loves – taking a toonie and paying it forward!

With the help of the same parent volunteer who offered the two toonies, their teacher and other fellow students, they put their plan into action. They mixed and served over 400 glasses of lemonade to the entire school. It was a beautiful act of kindness. With their hard work, they managed to raise a significant amount of money to help Nevaeh.

The students soon learned that other schools had heard about their lemonade stand and are now planning the same to help support Nevaeh. How amazing!

It’s simply amazing how one thought and one act of kindness can evolve into such a beautiful thing! Children helping and thinking of other children. Empowering our students to know that they *can* make a real difference in the world. That it is not the amount of money that is raised; it is about the gift of kindness that is coming from deep inside their heart. It’s about giving our time and our love to others that makes the real change. The way Nevaeh did.

*Be the change you wish to see in the world. ~ Gandhi*

*Kristie St. Croix is a Grade 6 Intensive Core French teacher at Mary Queen of the World School in Mount Pearl.*

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# I See!

by BEVERLEY PARK

There's a bit of a running joke in my household. "What? You're wearing glasses? But didn't you have laser surgery?"

A couple of years ago my husband, who seemed to be able to see just fine with the aid of his one pair of glasses, decided to have laser surgery on his eyes. The result: he now owns multiple pairs of glasses – one for reading if the print is a certain font; another if it is larger or smaller; one for using his iPad, one for his e-reader and another for the larger screened desktop. They are all over the house but, unfortunately, never the right pair in the right place. Let me just say that he is NOT a walking ad for laser surgery! He now lives in a permanently blurred world. The reason I mention this is that we value sight as a critical way of experiencing the world and, if asked, we would most likely credit our eyes and our sense of vision as the vital factor in our ability to see. However, that is but one small dimension to truly seeing something.

As a fan of cooking shows I have often heard the cliché that one eats first with one's eyes – suggesting that the taste of food or the eating experience is something more than the flavours we savour, but also the presentation of the food – the way it is garnished, the selection of the plate on which it is served, etc. It is the same for what we observe and experience in the world. The visible manifestation of an object or an event will look the same to different people, but they will "see" different things as they look through the various lenses of gender, of age, of role or religion, for example. I had a fine example of this recently as I welcomed a friend from Afghanistan to Newfoundland where he will be residing for the few months and years as a student at Memorial. As we spent time together during his initial days here I noticed that while we were both looking at the same "thing", he was seeing things very distinctly from how I was seeing them. In a grocery store, for example, what I saw as exotic (figs), he saw as ordinary; what I thought was ordinary (a lint brush) intrigued him.

His perspective made me look otherwise at things I saw every day but to which I had become blind. The

idea came to me again in a novel I was reading by Karen Shepard in which she wrote, "Paying attention to the familiar is as valuable as discovering something new". What I saw as typical or familiar (friendly and helpful people), my friend, newly arrived, saw as extraordinary kindness. It was a wonderful lesson for me. It occurred to me that it would do us all good to "see" differently...to open our eyes to how others might see and experience our common reality. As a teacher the first thing that comes to mind is seeing the school from the point of view of a student. Consider for a moment how your students see your classroom or your school differently than you or the other adults in the building? Do the girls or young women have a different view of the reality there than the boys or young men? What might you see "differently" if you were a Muslim student walking through the corridors? If you were a transgender student how might you view the signs designating the washrooms? This could be extended to a multitude of situations such as trying to see things as a parent newly immigrating to Canada might.

While it is true in professional settings it is likewise true in families and in society in general. While it is not an easy thing to do – see through your eyes but someone else's mind and heart and lived experiences – I believe that if we could do so, the result would be empathy, more positive interactions and less misunderstandings. I am sure that there have been times when you could have benefitted from someone seeking to see things from your perspective, as a woman or man, as a teacher or parent, as a consumer or a client. I know I have had such times. They're the times when my inner voice is saying "S/he just doesn't get it!" or "If only s/he could see what I see".

We see things as we see them because of who we are. And that changes with time and experience. I am not the same as I was ten years or five years or one year ago. Neither are you. But we would both do well to once in a while take stock of that fact...to acknowledge that the change we think we see is not in what we observe, but rather it is within us. As we change, we see differently. As I struggle to express it I am reminded of T.S. Eliot who articulated it so masterfully: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

With thanks to Bakhshi for helping me see better!

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

# *The Journey Begins* Conference for Beginning Teachers



In February, the NLTA, in partnership with the NL English School District and Memorial University's Faculty of Education, hosted 27 beginning teachers at a conference designed as a unique learning, sharing and networking experience. *The Journey Begins* marked the number of "first" steps as teachers had completed one full term with their students and colleagues. The conference explored the broad themes of professionalism and effective instruction and gave these new professionals an opportunity to interact with their NLTA President, the Director of Education and other Association and District staff. MUN was represented by the Field Service Co-ordinator in the Faculty of Education. It is said that every picture tells a story...this is the story of competent and caring professionals with very promising careers.





#### CANADIAN FORUM ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

July 11-12, 2016

Westin, Montreal. *Wellness in Our Schools: Time To Act!* This event is intended for classroom teachers and all those working in education and wellness. Participants will examine issues related to wellness in our schools including: Mental Health and Stigma; Technology Related Stress; Teacher Wellness; Student Wellness; Perspectives on Stress – Language, Sexual Identity, Indigenous For more information and to register visit [www.ctf-fce.ca](http://www.ctf-fce.ca).

#### SITI (SUMMER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION) 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 proposal to <https://goo.gl/g9gcp9>. To register visit <https://stemfestnl2016.sched.org>. For

further information email Tom Kennedy, TESIC President, at [tom@tesic.org](mailto:tom@tesic.org).

#### PHYSICAL & HEALTH EDUCATION 2017 NATIONAL CONFERENCE – PHE CANADA & PESIC

May 4-6, 2017

St. John's. *Theme: Rock Solid Foundations... Energizing Futures.* More information to follow.

#### CCPA CONFERENCE (CANADIAN COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOC.)

May 16-19, 2017

Sheraton Hotel, St. John's. More information to follow.

## Dates to Remember

### June 2016

Jun 10-11 NLTA Executive Meeting  
Jun 15 **Deadline:** Notification by board of acceptance/rejection of Deferred Salary Leave requests  
Jun 16 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

### July 2016

July 31 **Deadline:** NLTA Scholarship applications

## Province-Wide Election for NLTA President and Vice-President

In accordance with the NLTA By-Law XV.A., the 2016-17 Electoral Committee has announced the date for the Province-Wide Election for the 2017-19 NLTA President and Vice-President as **Tuesday, December 6, 2016.**

The Nomination Form for the Office of President and Vice-President, which includes a package of information on the policies and procedures for the conduct of the election, is available from the NLTA Office.

## NLTA Summer Hours

**June 27 - September 2**  
**Monday to Thursday**  
**8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**  
**Friday**  
**8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**



## NLTA Scholarships

The NLTA will award six scholarships to dependents of active, retired, disabled or deceased members of the NLTA. The award will be made upon completion of secondary school and through application to the NLTA. Scholarships are valued at \$1,000 and are awarded based on the criteria used by the Department of Education for the selection of provincial scholarship recipients.

To obtain an application form visit the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca) and click "Forms" or contact the NLTA at 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599 or [mail@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.nl.ca)

**Application Deadline: July 31, 2016**