



The Best Day of Life

by CLAUDETTE E. S. COOMBS

What is our best day? Think about it. At the end of the day, if we take time to quietly reflect in solitude, what really determines whether or not we judge a day as being good? If we think it is receiving only good news, not having conflict, making progress with challenging situations and feeling well, then we lose the opportunity to really take control of our own happiness and we unnecessarily limit our pleasure in living.

Certainly, having things go just the way we plan, not having complications and experiencing success will make it a lot easier to enjoy the day. It will even give us that extra boost of energy to use in areas of personal satisfaction. However, even when life doesn't seem fair, we can still choose to have a "good day".

Often we let "life happen to us". We don't like the situations, options or outcomes. We recognize that life is unfair and for this day, we choose to ignore how we can make it better. That choice is ours. With a little, or sometimes a lot, more effort we can make this day "the best day of our lives"! If that sounds like it would require the proverbial magic wand, let's explore what it means and how we create the best day of our lives.

How Can We Create our Best Day?

For most of us, most of the time, we have the potential to create positive experiences in each day. If we want happiness, we are able to make it! That doesn't mean that we make all the pain of life disappear, but it does mean that we can choose to focus on the flowers, the rainbows, the pleasant side of relationships and the uplifting music. If these things aren't readily visible, we can actively look for, or produce them. This is our choice. Well, that's all fine to say, but can that really happen or is this just another theory? Do you need proof? Surely we can think of adequate evidence to support the opposite conclusion – that there are plenty of things we can think or do to make our days worse! If you have ever turned to music to console you during a sad time, particularly at the end of a relationship, you quickly learn that most country music songs don't fit the job! So, what does? How do we conquer the negative parts of life and focus on

the joyful elements to make this the best day of our lives? We only need to look at our personal resiliency behaviours to find out.

There are many examples in our, as well as our friends', behaviours. After recovering from breast cancer, one friend bought a bunch of fresh flowers every week for display in her living room. It was her reminder of the beauty that continues to exist. She chose not to live in fear and worry but instead to surround herself with life and hope. Another teacher, after his teenage son died, spent a great deal of time providing fatherly support to many of his son's friends. He chose not to become bitter and angry and always sad. That isn't the easy option. However, it is the option that offers the most for those who wish to find, and enjoy, the positives that co-exist with pain and despair.

Planning for the Best

Pleasant things do sometimes happen unexpectedly. Nevertheless, if we don't want to leave that to chance, we know that it is up to us to make some things happen. We have to plan, prepare, then take specific actions, to "guarantee" our desired outcome. (You are correct. There is not much in life that is guaranteed, but we all know that there are actions under our control that increase the probability of specific outcomes. We can use that to our advantage.)

Consider that special lifetime dream that we envision. How do we make it happen and when it does occur, how do we ensure that it is the best that it can be? The first step is definitely PLANNING. We think about what is needed, taking into account all the minor details and developing an image of what that dream will look like.

The next step is PREPARATION. Putting things in place, collecting resources, drawing on supports, and building in the "just in case" options. Every dream and every plan will likely require different preparations which are unique to its goals and needs.

After we have those tasks clearly identified, well defined and confirmed, we do a further check to ensure that we have covered OBSTACLES. There are some obstacles that we are almost certain to face, oth-

ers are possibilities. Yet the more we anticipate and plan a strategy for addressing obstacles, the greater the probability that we will achieve our dream. We can use a road trip image to depict our linear movement through time to achieve that goal. For some obstacles we need to blast out a pathway, like that through the West Coast mountains where progress had been previously prevented in completing the Trans Canada Highway. For other obstacles we need to find a way over or around them. Sometimes we need that bridge to get over the many rivers in the Central part of our Island. We use tools, skills and perseverance to just get through some of the obstacles, like the East Coast fog! When all of these aren't adequate, we have to be more creative and incorporate the obstacles into our plan. We use boats and ships to maneuver the sea and the rivers to allow boat transportation to, and throughout, Labrador. However, when the water turns to ice, snowmobiles and sleds offer a new mode of transportation along the same path.

Whether we are relying on the skills and resources of others (demolition or construction), or our own skills and ingenuity (persistence, knowledge, imagination), we are more successful in overcoming obstacles when we view them as challenges to our creativity, rather than challenges to our patience, tolerance and balance.

The final, and possibly most critical, step to ensuring that we have a good day, is the DECISION and perseverance to do just that. We will have a good day, even our best day, despite the difficulties of life happening all around us! When we make this decision, and stick with it, we are as close as possible to "guaranteeing" the best day! Without making that decision, we leave ourselves, and our happiness, open to the whims of chance.

Because life isn't just history; because it opens up so much potential; because it allows one more opportunity to correct mistakes or mend a hurt; because there is another chance to re-establish priorities; because it places before us the prospect of achievement; because we can redefine goals and direction; because there are a few more hours to complete unfinished tasks . . . because of all of this and so much more, the best day of life is always TODAY!

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



Online Collaborative Learning Communities

by JIM MURPHY

What are ICLTs? They are Information, Communication and Learning Technologies and they influence every aspect of everyday life. Banking, communicating, shopping and learning have undergone dramatic shifts in the past decade and continue to evolve at break-neck speeds. Institutions offer “distributed learning” as opposed to direct face-to-face learning; click and pay shopping is a daily activity for those who have embraced the digital world; text messaging, e-mail and “Facebook” have moved communications from “real time” to “my time”; and banks offer as many or more services by phone or the Web than in person.

So where does this leave students and educators?

Students, primarily teen and college, latch on to ICLTs naturally and readily. They embrace the technologies; use them, and then move on to the next. For example, Facebook is the leading social networking site based on monthly unique visitors, attracting 132.1 million unique visitors in June 2008 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>). Furthermore, cell phone text messaging has increased exponentially in the last number of years and has become the newest challenge for educators. It is the current communications medium of choice for the teenage generation.

Students seek and enjoy means of networking on a social level, but also network on a more collaborative level. Completing homework assignments via MSN is commonplace and necessary in their world. So how is this different from calling a friend or getting together to discuss an assignment? Well, for one, the Web is at their fingertips and solutions to problems are often found with a quick Google. Secondly, students “love” to share their findings, provide solutions for other students and collaborate on problem solving. They can and will scan and send notes, labs and solutions to problems using their technical expertise. (You must realize that the test over which you ardently worked last year is now scanned and available to every student in the province through some network somewhere!)

They will post them to forums, blog about them, build sites based on them, and share their “WIKI” (What I Know Is...) with whomever would like access. I have witnessed this many times over; old labs and assignments circulated, recycled and reused repeatedly. To the student, collaboration is the key to success. If I do not know the answer, then someone will, or there is a WIKI out there somewhere with a solution.

What is a Collaborative Learning Community?

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, defines collaboration as the ability: “To work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort.” ICLTs have created opportunities to network with peers like never before: “Collaboration between learners via the Internet encourages the building of unique online learning communities that unite learners and teachers all over the world. These learning communities could be local or global, different in number of participants and objectives, and diverse, linguistically, culturally, academically. However, they all share the following specific features: common interests and self-regulation, informal ties and community identification. The dominating processes within the online learning communities are collaboration through peer-to-peer communication, trust building, and information and knowledge sharing. Community-building efforts seem to be a promising approach to enhancing the quality of collaborative learning environments and distance courses.” (www.iienetwork.org/?p=41543)

So, is there a place where educators can collaborate online?

The preceding illustration of the “student collaborative community” serves as an example of students taking advantage of ICLTs to enhance opportunities to network with peers. To varying degrees, many of us participate in collaborative learning communities directly in our own schools in face-to-face consultations or in our communities. But what of an online

community for educators; one where we can post thoughts and documents, call on experts, blog, contribute to forums or offer and seek counsel on a myriad of professional issues that arise in schools and classrooms? Is this plausible and possible?

Many such communities currently exist. The following is a short list of sites available that provide opportunities to collaborate with other educators:

- EDNA, an Australian based education network, provides educators with services and opportunities such as those previously mentioned. (www.edna.edu.au/edna/go).
- Epals is a collaborative learning community with a twist, offering opportunities to interact with teachers and their classrooms. Actually, this site also offers great secure email. (www.epals.com/)
- Teachers.net offers a collaborative network where educators can engage in meaningful collaborative exchanges by grade, subject or level. (<http://teachers.net/>)
- LearningTimes – A collaborative network offering access to a variety of online learning communities. (<http://home.learningtimes.net/>)
- Tapped In is a global educational collaborative platform that allows users free virtual office space. (<http://tappedin.org/tappedin/>)

But I want to be able to access colleagues in my own backyard. Where can I go for this?

First of all, many of the districts here in this province offer opportunities to network through FirstClass and other conferencing clients. There are conferences and groups of which you may currently be a member. Here, teachers interact within their districts through direct messaging, mail, and user conferences. These are great starting points to becoming active in an online collaborative network. However, currently, these networks are closed and only available to personnel within that district and so it can limit the opportunities to collaborate beyond the district level.

How can I collaborate with other educators in the province and beyond?

The aforementioned sites will certainly allow you to access peers in the global sense. They provide opportunities to interact with peers from anywhere. On a more local level, the NLTA has many active Special Interest Councils (SICs) that may provide you with opportunities to collaborate with colleagues (www.virtualteachercentre.ca/sic/). As well, the Virtual Teacher Centre (www.virtualteachercentre.ca), in conjunction with the NLTA and CDLI, is currently building new offerings for teachers, and this will include a new collaborative learning sphere. Here, educators will be able to easily

connect to others in the province and beyond and collaborate using a variety of platforms similar to those available on many currently existing sites.

Where are we going from here?

A successful collaborative learning community will take time to evolve. However, research indicates that the most successful professional development opportunities for educators are ones where they have opportunities to collaborate with peers beyond their schools.

“...78% of the teachers perceive that they learn a great deal from professional development sessions that allow them to collaborate with teachers who have similar teaching assignments in other schools. In light of that information, the need for professional development beyond one’s own school becomes quite apparent.” (Sheppard, 2008)

Imagine the possibilities, then, of connecting with a colleague beyond the school, the district or the province, and deliberating over best practices, sharing documents and networking with your peers. Stay tuned...

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Jim Murphy is Coordinator of the NLTA Virtual Teacher Centre. He can be reached at jmurphy@nlta.nl.ca.



A Gift from Nicholas

by BEVERLEY PARK

The week before school opened I ran into a friend of mine whose son was about to enter Grade 2. While mom and I talked the young boy stood by politely. I thought I ought to bring him into the conversation so I asked the typical: “What grade are you going into? And what school?” As he told me those details mom added as a subtext that he was not, in fact, all that thrilled about the prospect of school and neither he nor she was looking forward to September 5. I feigned shock. With a look of total surprise I started in on a series of “Are you kidding? You’re going to *that* school? You’re in *that* class? You have *that* teacher? You have to be one of the luckiest boys I know! Didn’t you hear? Of all the classes, all the teachers, all the schools in the city, in the province – maybe even in the whole country – THAT is THE best! WoW!

“Nicolas’ Grade 2 teacher likely had no idea that he went to school that morning *expecting* to see the very best teacher on the planet!”

As I spoke I could see the change in that little boy. I hoped that my antics might have some effect – if even briefly to give my friend a break. I walked away and forgot about it. Fast forward to a week later and I am checking my voice messages. The disembodied voice on the machine says: “You have six new messages and four saved messages.” There were the typical messages and requests for call backs, and then this little voice that, by the way, is now one of my “saved” messages. “Hi, this is Nicholas. You were right. Grade 2 is great. I love it.”

Aside from the warm feeling from that little voice I was also given something else...an awareness that sometimes we have to re-create our reality. In previous articles I have dealt with the topic of self fulfilling prophecies – that idea that “If you think you can, or you think you can’t, you’re right.” There are days when we are all like Nicholas – either because we know that what lies ahead of us is not of our choos-

ing and we walk through the door of our school or classroom already defeated. Or, despite the fact that we do not know what is ahead, we have made up our minds that it won’t be good!

I know that you are likely thinking that life isn’t as simple as a conversation with a 7 or 8 year-old. You’re absolutely right. It isn’t as simple because it is a conversation with yourself. People can tell you to have a good day. People can tell you to feel better. Only you can make it happen. And among the many, many encounters we have, with dozens and dozens of people – students, parents, colleagues – sometimes we neglect the all important encounters with ourselves. Whether it is in the shower, or the last thing you do before you go out the door in the morning, or if the circumstance permits it, on the drive to school, take a moment to ask yourself what kind of day you will have; what kind of people you will meet; what kind of encounters you will experience. Your answers to those questions will influence what happens. Nicolas’ Grade 2 teacher likely had no idea that he went to school that morning *expecting* to see the very best teacher on the planet! But because that was what he was looking for, that’s what he found! That was (and is, for him) the reality! So if you are expecting to meet pleasant people and have positive encounters, you will! If you expect to meet obstructionists, everyone will seemingly get in your way.

A favourite quote of mine is that “all encounters between people will be humanizing or de-humanizing – and it will be the same for both.” You cannot make someone feel good without also having some of the “feel good” spill over to you. You cannot humiliate or diminish someone without you yourself being diminished. *Didn’t I use this last year in an article?*

I love serendipity and coincidence, small moments that can lead to big ideas. I love that I met Nicolas that day! I’m sure if you ask his mom, he’s no Saint, but like Saint Nick, what he gave me that day was a gift.

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

2008 PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR



REGISTRATION FORM

Name

Home Address

Postal Code

Home Telephone

Social Insurance Number

School Name

School Telephone

Email

Please check which session you will be attending:

- ~~Oct. 2-3 – Hotel Gander, Gander~~
- Oct. 16-17** – Greenwood Inn, Corner Brook
- Oct. 23-24** – Mt. Peyton, Grand Falls-Windsor
- Nov. 6-7** – Holiday Inn, Stephenville
- Nov. 13-14** – Holiday Inn, St. John's
- Nov. 20-21** – Holiday Inn, St. John's
- Dec. 4-5** – Holiday Inn, St. John's

Will your spouse be attending? Yes No

Name of spouse (if attending)

Earliest eligibility date for pension

Have you attended a previous pre-retirement seminar?

Yes No

- Note:*
- Teachers within two years of retirement (on or before June 2011) are eligible to attend.
 - All participants must pre-register.
 - You will receive confirmation prior to seminar.
 - Travel costs will be paid according to policy and only to the nearest seminar.
 - Teachers are advised to bring a calculator.

Please submit registration form to:
Melanie Jaster
Benefits and Economic Services Division,
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL A1B 1W1
Fax: 709-726-4302; 1-877-711-6582 (toll free)

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

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Date Received	Confirmation Sent	Information Package Sent

Project Overseas 2008

A Life Changing Experience

by DARYL RIDEOUT

I was very fortunate this past summer to have been selected to participate in Project Overseas, a program offered by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) with the support of the NLTA. This is a program that allows Canadian teachers to travel throughout the world to offer Professional Development to our colleagues in developing countries. This year, there were 13 teams – 50 teachers in total, who traveled throughout the world. I was lucky to travel to Dominica, The Nature Isle of the Caribbean. I traveled with three other Canadian teachers, to work with our colleagues in the field of Information Communication Technology, Math, Music and Literacy.

The trip started with a four-day orientation in Ottawa, which was sponsored by CTF. Throughout the four days, we had many sessions that covered things like culture shock and on issues concerning working abroad under adverse conditions such as heat, poverty and disease. There was time for team building – a very important element when working and travelling with a group.

Our team then spent two days in Barbados en route to Dominica. We relaxed and got to know each other a little better and needless to say, we spent many hours on the beach! What a way to start this journey.

Upon arrival at Melville Hall Airport in Dominica, we were met by Francis, the Public Relations Officer for the Dominica Association of Teachers (DAT), who would be our driver for our visit to this beautiful island. From the moment we touched down to the final minutes of our stay, we were treated well by the Dominicans. Everyone was so appreciative of our efforts to help and we all felt very comfortable and honored to be there.

While we were in Dominica, we stayed in a very nice residence – a three-bedroom house that had mango, banana and star fruit trees in the back yard. Talk about FRESH FRUIT! We were very comfortable and well looked after by DAT. They took care of everything for us – from tours, to tips on what to do and what not to do, as well as making sure that we had

everything we needed to deliver the programs that we had planned. We each worked with a local co-tutor who assisted us in the delivery of our courses. They too were very anxious to learn all they could from us.

We delivered our programs at Convent High School in Roseau, which was about a 10-minute drive from where we lived. The school was on the borders of the Botanical Gardens – quite a nice setting indeed.



Daryl Rideout with a group of Grade 6 students who were preparing for an entrance exam to junior high.

We had four days before we were to start our courses, and during that time, we met and planned with our co-tutors. We got to learn about our surroundings – locating the bank and the grocery store were our top priorities and we got to know some of the local people. There were several social functions arranged for us, which was greatly appreciated!

There were countless positive experiences during my four weeks abroad. The highlight was working with the teachers and helping them to develop skills that would allow them to integrate technology into their curriculum. They were inquisitive and very receptive to us working with them. I made lasting friendships from the group that I worked with. There was a very formal, not to mention elaborate, opening and closing ceremony, which was attended by many officials from the government. I was interviewed on the radio by DBS – the Dominica Broadcasting System. During the interview, listeners could call in to ask

questions about my role in Dominica and they were anxious to know my views on the education system there. We toured Dominica – a beautiful, unspoiled tropical island that has plenty of volcanoes, rain forests, sulfur springs and the most incredible people I have ever met. We had a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer for Education and we talked about what needs to be done to make the education system more effective. Our opinions and views were openly accepted and appreciated. We attended a cultural choral event that featured the Sixth Form Sisseau Singers, a well-known group of 36 singers who put on quite a show. I was impressed. I had the opportunity to travel to several other Caribbean Islands while I was away and all of it made for a most rewarding experience.

Living in a developing country and working with local people is a life changing experience. Seeing my colleagues work in the poor conditions that they do, and yet to still have the drive and motivation to help their students be the best that they can be is inspiring to say the least. Some of the teachers that I worked with had never received any sort of professional development, other than what I was offering and there were some teachers who had been teaching since the ages of 14 and 15. Most teachers did not have any formal training and they were quite eager to take in all I had to share with them. Not only did they learn from me – I also learned quite a lot from them. This experience has helped me to see the bigger picture just a little more clearly – that helping our students feel good about themselves, to feel empowered and to be effective contributors to society can be achieved with very limited resources. These teachers are very dedicated even though they have very little to work with. They are proud to be teachers and they want the children in their care to be successful. Working with these wonderful teachers and hearing their stories has inspired me to continue to do my best as I work with my students.

I have been involved in many national and international projects throughout my 20 years of teaching but I have to say this project has been the best experience of them all. It allowed me to share my knowledge with fellow teachers who were so willing to listen, share and learn and I, in turn, learned so much as a result of my participation. It has also sweetened my appetite for working in developing countries in the field of education. I am sure there will be more experiences to follow.

I would like to thank the NLTA for their support and for allowing me to be a part of this project. Special thanks go to Beverley Park of the NLTA for her support and encouragement.

Daryl Rideout teaches at Vanier Elementary in St. John's.

Volunteer Overseas with CTF!

Would you like to assist teachers in a developing country? Are you interested in learning more about global education issues? Can you see yourself volunteering in Africa, Asia, or the Caribbean?

If yes, Project Overseas (PO) might be for you!

CTF needs English and French-speaking Canadian teachers at the primary, elementary, and secondary levels who are interested in volunteering to offer in-services in a wide range of subjects in countries throughout Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Each year about 50 Canadian teachers are chosen to volunteer on CTF's Project Overseas. On PO, Canadian teachers give their time and talent to offer professional development in-service programs in partnership with teacher organizations in developing countries. Based on requests from CTF's partners overseas, teams of Canadian teachers are formed in January and in-service projects take place in July and August.

Application criteria include:

- be a member of a provincial or territorial teacher organization that supports PO;
- hold a valid teacher's certificate;
- have completed at least five years teaching in Canada by July 2009;
- be a Canadian citizen;
- be in excellent health and able to work in developing country conditions (a doctor's letter is required);
- show evidence of flexibility, mature judgment, and a strong willingness to put the team and project needs above personal needs;
- hold a Canadian passport valid until at least December 2009, at the time of application (proof that a passport application has been made will be accepted).

PO is a volunteer experience. Administrative, travel and living expenses are borne by CTF, provincial and territorial teachers' organizations (which are CTF members), CIDA, and the Wild Rose Foundation. No salaries or honoraria are paid to participants in PO and the sponsors do not cover costs associated with substitute teachers or release time.

TO APPLY:

Further information and application forms are available from:
 Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL A1B 1W1
 Tel: 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 (toll free in province)
 Fax: 726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582 (toll free in province)

Deadline date for applications: **November 7, 2008**



Inclusive Education

Issues at the System Level

by CAROLYN WHEELER SCOTT

In the 1970s I attended a three stream urban school. My classmates and I were sorted into three different hierarchical classes and, for the most part, we remained in our “streams” through high school. However, when I started my teaching career in the early 90s the tide was turning towards mixed ability teaching and the structure of urban classrooms began to change. As the model of “streaming” and segregation was left behind, it soon became evident that teachers were feeling overwhelmed in dealing with the diversity in their classrooms.

Not much has changed in the intervening decade. *Focusing on Students: The ISSP and Pathways Commission Report* (2007) wrote that “overwhelmingly, teachers are calling for training in how to understand and accommodate the diverse learning needs of students” (p. 113). The commission further stated that “the effectiveness of teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners will be enhanced through the provision of appropriate teaching resources and strategies” and that “teachers need to be trained in differentiated instruction so as to accommodate effectively the needs of all students in today’s diverse learning environments” (p. 67). But what does this mean? What is differentiated instruction? What resources are needed to support it?

Differentiated instruction is an instructional theory that promotes the success of all students. Teachers take into account diverse student factors when planning and delivering instruction and they structure the learning environment to address a variety of learning styles, interests and abilities.

A variety of instructional and management strategies support differentiated instruction and include multiple intelligences, Bloom’s taxonomy, cooperative learning, anchor activities, graphic organizers, varied text, literature circles, tiered lessons, learning contracts, independent study, varied homework, compacting, and so on.

Learning the theory of differentiated instruction and its many supporting strategies is not an overnight process. The topic is vast and will require ongoing

professional development and gradual classroom implementation. Teachers will require a number of years to move from novice to expert practitioners in this area.

Teacher training is not the only resource a school system may use to support a diverse student population. Important for effective implementation of differentiated instruction is a curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of inclusive classrooms. The ISSP and Pathways Commission “envision[s] a model of support that ... has a curriculum framework that reflects the principles of universal design and is staffed by teachers who are skilled at differentiating instruction” (p. 118).

“Empowering the classroom teacher requires a shift in how we structure support services in schools.”

Universal design for learning is the creation of instructional materials and methods that make learning goals achievable by students with a diverse range of abilities. Universal design is hallmarked by flexible curricular materials and alternative activities for students. “As much as possible these designed-in alternatives ... do not have to be added by teachers. However, effective use of the materials requires that the teacher be familiar with the various teaching strategies necessary to reach students of widely varying abilities” (Orkwis, 2003, p.1).

The ISSP and Pathways Commission calls “for a shift towards empowering the classroom teacher with resources, knowledge, and skills with which to differentiate instruction and create what will be acknowledged as inclusive environments” (p. 117). This does not mean that the classroom teacher “knows all” and “does all”. The sheer volume of knowledge available in teaching and learning means no one individual can “know it all”. Education, like other professions,

has developed areas of speciality to cope with the knowledge base. Our schools have access to speech language pathologists, educational psychologists, guidance counsellors, special education teachers, ESL teachers, itinerant teachers for the visually impaired, itinerant teachers for the hearing impaired, behaviour support specialists, itinerant teachers for numeracy, department heads, and so on. A classroom teacher cannot be expected to have the knowledge base of all these professionals.

Empowering the classroom teacher requires a shift in how we structure support services in schools. The ISSP and Pathways Commission found that 60.4% of classroom teachers surveyed felt that “the responsibility for teaching students receiving Pathways support belongs to special education teachers” (p 95). In schools where classroom teachers and special education teachers operate as separate entities – with little collaboration and consultation – classroom teachers are not receiving valuable support and information needed to teach to diverse learner populations. In today’s classrooms collaboration and consultation between classroom and special education teachers is vital. Classroom teachers have expertise in the area of curriculum and special education teachers have expertise in the area of accessing curriculum. Together, their knowledge base is a powerful tool.

The structure of classrooms and the knowledge educators have about how students’ learn has changed since I began school. As a result, educators are requesting professional development that supports teaching to diverse learning communities. However, in-service in differentiated instruction alone will not provide the full level of support teachers require. To support diverse learning environments teachers would benefit from a universally designed curriculum, an understanding of how that universal curriculum supports teaching to a diverse learning community, and a collaborative approach to teaching and learning.

There is a Chinese proverb: “He who stops completely before taking the next step will spend a lifetime standing on one leg”. Educators have taken a giant first step towards an inclusive education system. Gone are the segregated “opportunity” classes of the 1970s and in their place is the “Pathways” model of special education placement options. The implementation of the “Pathways” model means that students who would once have been channelled into segregated classrooms are now taught in general education classrooms. Today, there are only a small number of students whose circumstances deem that they receive their schooling in alternate or segregated settings. However, to assume that having a

cascade model of services means that we have done all that we need to do to support an inclusive education system would be a mistake. *Education and Our Future: A Road Map to Innovation and Excellence*, the report of the Teacher Allocation Commission (2007), emphasized that “teachers must understand the curriculum intended and the various teaching methodologies required” (p 83). By adopting the majority of recommendations of the Teacher Allocation and Pathways Commission Reports, the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education has acknowledged and begun to address the need for increased professional development, resources, and systemic structures designed to assist educators to teach to a diverse learner population. Once “standing on two legs”, the teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador will have a solid foundation to continue their work in inclusive education.

Carolyn Wheeler Scott is Itinerant for Inclusive Education with the Eastern School District.



Underachievement of Capable Females Interventions Within the Educational Context

by WAYNE NESBIT & KAYLA MURPHY

For decades females have faced, and continue to face, external and internal barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. Today, Canadian women have educational rights and many work outside the home, but inequalities are still present in leadership roles, pay equity and perceptions of women's abilities. Society encourages narrow role definitions and behavior options for women.

The underachievement of gifted women is a very complex issue with roots in cultural, social, psychological, and educational contexts. In her article "Why Are There So Few Eminent Women?", Linda Silverman calls attention to several valid issues pertaining to women's struggle to obtain prestige: *It takes only a cursory glance at her story within history to realize that with no independence, no access to education, no property rights, no opportunities for gainful employment in "men's" fields, no birth control, no relief from "women's work", and no support from society (not even from other women), it is nothing short of miraculous that any woman managed to get beyond her lot in life.* (1995)

It is little wonder that history has not recognized nor afforded a prominent place to female achievement, given the predictable derision and ostracism faced by women throughout history who crossed traditional boundaries. The phrase "That's not very lady like," has not passed into history.

It is a fact of history that women, until recent times, were viewed as intellectually inferior to men. Carolyn Yewchuk (2000), studying the relationship between intellectual capability and historical attempts to impune female intelligence, had this to say: "If you go back a century and read some of the stuff that was written about women and intelligence, it curls your hair. Some of that thinking is still around."

Linked to traditional acculturation is the difference in the way in which women and men have traditionally perceived success. While men stereotypically defined success in terms of educational achieve-

ment, occupational status, income level and material belongings, women traditionally defined achievement with a different focus – child nurturance, personal satisfaction as a mother, and promotion of a stable home-life. Traditional thinking forbade women to aspire to any vocation beyond maternity.

A major contributor to female underachievement is the fear which females have of being rejected if they depart from the traditional female role. Henfield and Witherspoon (2006) report that many girls who proudly exhibited academic excellence in preview stages of their schooling gradually abandon lofty goals in an effort to avoid isolation and exclusion.

For women who do decide to further their education or pursue a career they must often face the "double day" issue. That is, today's woman must balance her career/educational aspirations with her family commitments. Even so, it is still the case that women are the first to be blamed for family breakdown, especially if they work/pursue studies outside of the home.

Educational Barriers

The most effective way to prevent high achievement is to deny a person education. This is the situation in which women found themselves for years. As the barrier to school attendance for females was dropped, the reception which girls received at school very closely reflected the behavioral expectations defined for females by society in general. The docility and conformity inherent in the traditional social stereotype continue to confront gifted girls in school.

The Role of Teachers/Schools

During school years, one of the child's major role models will be the teacher. The teacher will either help children to achieve, or contribute to their underachievement. Teachers need to examine their belief systems in an in-depth self-study and acknowledge any personal bias before they are able to make changes

and remove gender bias from their teaching strategies, materials and student expectations.

Strategies/Interventions

- *Improve female students' self-concept and self-esteem*
Ensure that all pupils see that the combination of being bright, achieving and female is possible. Discuss this issue with males and females.
- *Have high and positive expectations for females*
Students are more likely to take risks when they feel safe, valued and respected in their environment by their teachers and peers. Teachers should make every effort to recognize students' unique characteristics, strengths, and needs.
- *Mentors and role models*
Teachers should avail of successful females in their community who can share their experiences with students. Also, female teachers should not underestimate their influence on students as role models of achievement.
- *Select teaching materials that have a balanced gender focus*
Make every effort to avoid teaching materials and resources that convey and reinforce gender stereotypes. Also, integrate examples of female achievements from numerous fields into the curriculum whenever possible.
- *Encourage female student participation in extracurricular activities and leadership roles*
Participation in extracurricular activities and opportunities to be leaders help develop female confidence, responsibility, interpersonal skills and independence; which are important characteristics needed for educational achievement.
- *Facilitate Math and Science development*
Teachers should encourage interest and participation in these subject areas, treat both genders as equal in these areas of study, and make every effort to change the perception that math and science are masculine domains. Recruit female students to participate in advanced courses.
- *Encourage risk taking*
Often, the fear of failure as well as the messages these students receive to be passive, reserved and polite, holds them back from taking risks. Females must realize that developing interests and skills are accomplished by taking risks.
- *Organize female peer support groups*
Such groups encourage girls to develop their abilities and connect with others who share their interests. In such groups girls might be exposed to non-traditional careers in a supportive atmosphere.
- *Advocate on behalf of gifted girls – especially with their parents, their teachers, their classmates, and themselves*

Educate parents about the education of females. The attitudes that parents hold about females influences their behaviors. Principals, counselors and classroom teachers must provide career information in which achievement goals are emphasized equally for both girls and boys.

Educators must increase their efforts to eliminate the sexist biases that continue to be fostered in today's classrooms. To effectively and positively influence the underachievement of females, a whole school approach is recommended. King (1977) first coined the term "glass ceiling" to describe a persisting obstacle to female achievement. We must be careful not to create a glass ceiling in the process of educating female students.

Dr. Wayne Nesbit is a Professor at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University and Kayla Murphy is a graduate of MUN, currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Special Education program. This article is a summary of a research paper by the authors. The full paper and references can be accessed at www.nlta.nl.ca.



Enabling the Dreams of Others

by IAN DAVIDSON

One of the most important messages we can teach our students in the 21st century is that although we may live in different corners of the world, we are all connected. The more we share our skills, talents and economic largesse with our less fortunate international cousins the better off our whole world will be in the future. In keeping with these beliefs, I have recently accepted an offer to work with the non-profit group “Two Villages” as an educational liaison. Our goal for 2008 is to fund the building of a community seed bank in Wollo, Ethiopia. Through this project we hope to give our Ethiopian friends control over their own destiny and enable their dreams of a better future. As educators, I believe we should strive to make international philanthropy second nature to our students if we want to leave the world a little better at the end of the day.

Two Villages

Troy Mitchell and Krista Percy co-founded Two Villages in 2005. Their common interest in addressing international concerns led to the development of a community-based approach to fundraising. Essentially, Two Villages seeks to engage our community (village) to complete a project addressing the needs of another community (village) in the developing world. In 2008, we are expanding on our concept of “community” to include the entire province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Two Villages group was founded to effect change in impoverished areas of the world through community ownership and cooperation. With the assistance and linkages of international organizations such as CARE Canada, USC Canada and World Vision, we identify projects within a specific district or village and raise monies to fund their development. To date, Two Villages has successfully funded the building of a much-needed school in the Sindhuli District of Nepal. They also paired 10 schools in Newfoundland and Labrador with 10 schools in Zambia giving students an opportunity to attend school, increase their earning potential and

ultimately give them hope to one day escape their life of poverty. Our next goal is to link students across the island, via the use of an innovative online learning community (rafi.ki), with the ultimate goal of raising funds to build a community seed bank. In keeping with the mission of our group, “Two Villages”, theirs, and ours will be linked by generosity.

The Wollo Community Seed Bank

What exactly is a seed bank? To be honest, before I joined the Two Villages project team I did not know. A seed bank stores seeds as a source for planting in case seed reserves elsewhere are destroyed. It is a type of gene bank. The seeds stored may be food crops, or those of rare species to protect biodiversity. The reasons for storing seeds may be varied. In the case of food crops, many useful plants that were developed over centuries are now no longer used for commercial agricultural production and are becoming rare. Storing seeds also guards against catastrophic events like natural disasters, outbreaks of disease, or war.

Rationale for Volunteer Participation

The main fundraising activity associated with the Two Villages seed bank project is slated to happen on October 15, 2008 and will see participating schools host a rice day. On this day, the student body can donate funds and receive a bowl of rice in lieu of buying lunch. In addition to the rice day, student volunteers are free to organize any events they would like to raise monies for the Two Villages project. The big question for a lot of schools will be why they should encourage their student leaders to embrace this project. Speaking from the perspective of experience, I would like to offer the following reasons for your consideration.

Global Citizenship

As educators we must learn to value our emerging role of educating global citizens who see themselves not simply as Canadians, but also as human beings

bound to other human beings in ties of concern and understanding. Participation in the organization of a rice day is a powerful way to show students they are members of a broader community.

Scholarship Application

For those special children who take the lead on organizing rice day in their schools, their lives will be changed forever. They will now have international fundraising experience and the enhanced strength of character that comes with helping those less fortunate. At Two Villages, we believe that new veins of scholarship application will be opened to these student-leaders and their resumes will be more appealing to post-secondary institutions and future employers.

Enabling the Dreams of Others

Perhaps the most important rationale for participation in this program is rooted in the concept of hope. These students, and the entire student body, have the opportunity to enable the dreams of a community in Ethiopia and give their families hope for a better tomorrow. Powerful? You bet.

To close, we believe that in helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us. Those of us fortunate enough to be born in North America need to realize that our world is changing. Increasing numbers of countries are developing at rapid rates and will soon be competing with us for global resources. The time to reach out to these people with the helping hand of friendship, philanthropy and knowledge is now. An old friend of mine recently shared the following quote with me when he learned of my participation in the Two Villages project; I would now like to share it with you to bring closure to this article: "Until we reach beyond our families to children in need, we will continue to neglect the needs of children closest to us by passing on to them a world that is unfit to inherit." How is that for motivation?!

Ian Davidson is Assistant Principal at Clarendville High School.



So You Think You CAN'T Dance

by KELLIE BAKER

Have you ever heard the statement “I was never any good at gym, so I don’t expect my child to be”? It’s often used as an excuse for students not applying themselves in other subjects like Math or French as well. Do you feel like such statements trivialize the course? Do you feel that it’s unjust? Do you feel students are all individuals and that what they are able and interested in learning may be different than that of their family members? Then why do we, as Physical Educators, do the same thing when it comes to units such as dance? We may never have said “I was no good at dance, so how can I teach it?” or “I can’t dance, so I can’t teach my students to dance.” But that’s the covert message we are sending when we don’t teach dance.

So, how can you offer dance with such barriers as your own biases, the belief that some students are going to be disruptive because of the topic, the fact that you have sent the message for many years that dance is not important by not including it in your program, lack of knowledge, lack of resources and stress over planning a unit of work with which you are unfamiliar? I ask these questions based on personal experience. In university one of my Profs had to take me aside and speak to me about the overt reluctance and lack of effort I was putting into the Creative Dance course. Folk Dance was a little better as I was paired with a good friend and through all the horsing around we actually learned a few dances on the side. My teaching career began, but fortunately for me, dance was not a required theme. As class after class came in and out of the gym and I became increasingly proficient at helping students become more skilled and knowledgeable movers who cared about themselves and others there was always a feeling that I wasn’t offering a complete program without dance. I finally decided that I had taken the chance before to offer units in which I was not confident in my knowledge base so it was time to take the same leap with dance. Does this sound familiar? Is this you or a colleague? Is it your turn to take the leap?

Accept the fact that you have a negative bias towards dance and work to change it. Take a reflective look at your program and know that students are disruptive in a variety of classes and that this is an ongoing stressor, not inherently unique to specific units. Aspire to reach those students who may experience increased opportunities to shine if you added dance. Ask the School Board’s P.E. itinerant, Department of Education, the Physical Education Special Interest Council (PESIC) and peers for information on proven resources. The music teacher at your school may be willing to partner with you to provide a cross-curricular unit perhaps helping you to secure funding for print/music/DVD resources. Decrease the stress by asking dance groups around your community to volunteer their time to teach you and your students.

“Aspire to reach those students who may experience increased opportunities to shine if you added dance.”

Specifically, start slow and increase your comfort level as well as that of the students. A resource that should be in all NL schools is Christy Lane’s *Multicultural Folk Dance Treasure Chest* and it’s full of easy, medium and advanced dances from around the world. It has two books with explanations of the steps, two CDs of the music and two “how to” videos that explain how to teach the dance and show the dance in its entirety. The first two dances, the Hora and Hukilau are a great starting point. Athletes in your classes who have ever had to do the “carioca” will already know how to perform part of the sequence for the Hora. It’s amazing to see how quickly the students will learn the dances. Make it more relevant for students by giving the option of allowing them to choose their own music. Just be

careful that the music is screened first. The Hora is actually easier to perform to AC/DC's "She Shook Me All Night Long", but probably not the most appropriate for school settings.

Another set of helpful resources that can also be used by classroom teachers is *65 Energy Blasters* and *6 Fit Kids' Workouts* by Judy Notte Howard which teach a variety of dance moves including Aerobic Dance, African, Athletic, Hip-Hop, Kardio Funk, and Latin. Once students know these moves they can begin choreographing their own short dances. An article entitled "Telephone Choreography" can assist in the process of how to begin choreography for even the most reluctant students. Again, school funding for the purchase of these DVDs may be made easier since it can be purchased as a school wide resource. One teacher at my school finds these DVDs most valuable for helping students hone their listening and comprehension skills and they are active all at the same time!

Dances that the whole school can learn and use to begin assemblies, or as a school wide afternoon "Pick Me Up" in the hallways are the YMCA, Cha-Cha Slide, Agadoo, and Chicken/Bird Dance. Although you don't want these to become the full extent of the dance unit, they provide a quick, fun, school wide opportunity for everybody to get up and dance on the spur of the moment. If you don't have these dances it is the perfect opportunity for a student to take a leadership role and create a CD. It's pretty amazing for a student to create something that they then see and hear the whole school using.

Jump in with both feet and get started! And, just like dance, once you've started, you can't stop. Good luck and have fun. You will be rewarded by the students' successes!

Kellie Baker is a Physical Education Teacher at Macpherson Elementary in St. John's.



Technology in Teaching with a “Focus on Revision”

by LAUN SHOEMAKER

A document camera or visual presenter is essentially a video camera that when connected to a media projector, serves as an overhead projector. The document camera projects the image of an item on its stage onto a large screen. The benefit of this technology is that teachers can show the whole class the image of a real product, remark on various aspects of the item and avoid time loss, off-task behavior and potential damage that can arrive when artifacts are passed around the classroom.

In February 2008, Grade 6S at Larkhall Academy received approval on a jointly funded project (Larkhall and Eastern School District) for a document camera, media projector and equipment cart. The project, titled “Focus on Revision,” centered on Outcome 10: “Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing to enhance their clarity, precision, and effectiveness” generally and highlighted Outcome 10.4: “Show a commitment to drafting and redrafting texts.” The equipment was proposed as a means of doing real-time whole-class peer editing while writing samples were being produced. Students would use the document camera to show their work to the class. Following this reading the group could make suggestions based on six traits writing models. The students reviewed pieces that included creative writing, essays, letters, hypotheses, math and other journal entries. In fact, any piece of writing became an opportunity for group feedback. Because the class could view the in-process writing sample, they could make comments on specific aspects and avoid simplifications (“Uh, it was good!”) that don’t make for meaningful revision. Similarly, the ongoing presence of the sample minimized inattention and helped peers to build on other’s remarks. Improvement ideas were consequently well defined; writers could make changes with a clear direction and even insert verbatim phrases.

Some enhancements to the instructional process were also noted:

- i) A recorder should be assigned to each presenter. Often, presenters received a high volume of feedback which made it impossible for them to incorporate all suggestions into their drafts without a written record.
- ii) The idea of learning from other’s mistakes was poorly followed during the project. Reviewers would make recommendations for an improvement to a weakness that was later revealed in their own writing sample. Eventually, the instructor paused at the end of presentations to reflect on general advice for common strengths and flaws which were exposed during sessions. These generalizations were noted on chart paper and kept handy for future use. Periodically this reflective period encouraged change in student work and chart notes were often referenced in later discussions.
- iii) Perhaps the biggest challenge was that transfer between whole-group and small-group peer editing was poor. While students had seen the peer-editing process modeled in an itemized format during the whole group sessions, this step-by-step process did not transfer well when pairs worked on editing. Most recommendations in small group forums came down to revising conventions. This problem can likely be addressed with a wall-mounted peer-editing poster for whole class conferences and an identical letter-size checklist for use during small group meetings.

Acknowledging the above refinements to future teaching with this method, the project was quite successful in accomplishing its mandate. The instructor reviewed the evolution of writing on three major and dissimilar assignments. These three works showed startling change in many cases, with the greatest improvements being to organization, word choice and sentence fluency. The students were very motivated during discussions because the writing samples were authentic. Commitment to revision and whole writing process, however, depended largely on student interest in the topic and the purpose of their writing. Alas, technology can’t change everything.

Laun Shoemaker is a Grade 6S ICF teacher at Larkhall Academy in St. John’s.

The New Copyright Act and the Educational Use of the Internet

The Government of Canada has introduced a bill to amend the Copyright Act – Bill C-61 – that includes an important amendment respecting the educational use of the Internet. This bill, once passed by Parliament, will provide a legal framework to allow the use of publicly available Internet materials by educators and students, in their educational pursuits, without fear of copyright infringement.

Bill C-61 provides clarity for educators and students where before there was uncertainty about copyright. Bill C-61 assures Canadian teachers and students the ability, during their routine educational activities, to use material made publicly available on the Internet without breaking the law. In essence, the educational use of the Internet amendment makes legal the common everyday activities currently occurring in our schools, colleges, universities, and technical institutions. This includes activities such as copying publicly available material from the Internet, incorporating it in assignments, and exchanging it electronically with teachers or other students. Clearly, the amendment is essential in a day and age when federal and provincial/territorial governments are simultaneously increasing our levels of connectivity, positioning the country to be a leader in the information age, and supporting the use of the Internet in classrooms.

The bill's educational use of the Internet amendment is an attractive solution for Canada. There is a broad consensus within Canada's education community in favour of an amendment on educational use of the Internet, like the one found within Bill C-61. National education organizations representing seven million Canadians – from teachers to school boards, parent groups to educational institutions – have been vocal about the need to have fair and reasonable access to public available Internet material. Bill C-61 delivers on this need.

The bill's educational use of the Internet amendment is a fair and reasonable compromise for both copyright owners and users. The amendment would

apply only to authorized educational use of publicly available materials, materials like those on educational Web sites such as the Canadian Encyclopedia, or on government Web sites like that of the Canadian Space Agency. The proposed amendment would not apply to Internet materials that are not publicly accessible. This allows content creators and copyright owners to continue selling and receiving payments for their work as they intend. The educational use of the Internet amendment in Bill C-61 is therefore a fair and reasonable compromise for copyright owners and users. It is a positive step towards maximizing Canadians' learning opportunities using on-line technology.

For further reading on the amendment and Canada's Copyright Act, visit www.cmec.ca/copyright/indexe.stm.

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NL COUNSELLORS' & PSYCHOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION (NLCPA) ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM

October 22-24, 2008
 Battery Hotel & Suites, St. John's. Theme: *Prioritizing Counselling & Intervention in Our Schools*. For more information contact: Leona Gillard, NLCPA Communications Coordinator, leonagillard@esdnl.ca, Tel: 709-786-9056; or Trent Langdon, NLCPA President, trentlangdon@esdnl.ca, Tel: 709-786-0280.

TEACHING WITH THE BRAIN IN MIND

November 6-7, 2008
 Delta Conference Centre, St. John's. Internationally renowned "brain-based learning" guru and educator Eric Jensen will be presenting this two-day workshop entitled *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*. For further information contact George Tucker, NLTA Administrative Officer (PD Division), gtucker@nlta.nl.ca; Tel: 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 245.

THE EDUCATION SHOW

November 12-13, 2008
 Toronto Congress Centre. Canada's only national level industry trade event! The Education Show platform brings the educational products and services marketplace under one roof. Four feature zones: Healthy Education, Green, Technology, and School zone. Teacher's Appreciation Night – November 12 from 4-8 pm. This complimentary evening includes drinks, food, give-a-ways, gift bags and access to all of our exhibitors and will feature a presentation from Toronto Police Services: "Teacher Safety – How to Protect Yourself." Our theme this year is *Healthy Schools – Healthy Education*. For more information contact Courtney Day, tes@cogeco.net.

2008-09 Convention and Province-Wide Vote Deadlines

November 25, 2008

Deadline for receipt of poster information from candidates.

December 3, 2008

- All nominations for Office of President/Vice-President must be postmarked by this date for publication in Election issue of *The Bulletin*.
- Photograph, biographical sketch and election statement of nominees for Office of President/Vice-President must be postmarked by this date for publication in Election issue of *The Bulletin*.

December 30, 2008

Deadline for mailing of election posters to schools.

January 3, 2009

Mailing of Election issue of *The Bulletin*.

January 4, 2009

Final deadline for receipt of nominations for Offices of President and Vice-President.

January 15, 2009

Proposed change, amendment or repeal of NLTA By-Laws to be actioned by Convention must be presented in writing to the NLTA.

February 3, 2009

Province-wide vote for the election of President and Vice-President.

February 15, 2009

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

February 17, 2009

Run-off ballot for the election of President and Vice-President (if required).

March 15, 2009

Mailing of Convention issue of *The Bulletin*.

April 14-17, 2009

Biennial General Meeting

April 16, 2009

Final deadline for receipt of nominations for Provincial Executive.

Dates to Remember

October 2008

- Oct 16 **Deadline:** Professional Development Fund Applications
- Oct 16-17 Pre-Retirement Seminar, Corner Brook
- Oct 17-18 School Rep Seminars, Deer Lake and Plum Point
- Oct 23-24 Pre-Retirement Seminar, Grand Falls-Windsor
- Oct 31 School Rep Seminar, Clarenville

November 2008

- Nov 1 School Rep Seminar, Clarenville
- Nov 7 **Deadline:** Project Overseas Applications
- Nov 6-7 Pre-Retirement Seminar, Stephenville
- Nov 13-14 Pre-Retirement Seminar, St. John's
- Nov 15 **Department Deadline:** Teacher Exchange applications to Australia, Britain and USA
- Nov 20-21 Pre-Retirement Seminar, St. John's
- Nov 27 NLTA Executive Meeting
- Nov 28-29 Joint Council Meeting