

THE
bulletin

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THE BEST WE CAN

by [Lesley-Anne Browne](#)

Dealing with groups of children has helped me better understand what some teachers experience in their classrooms. When previously working with children, through swimming lessons and coaching, I had the advantage of having parents present. It is totally different dealing with a group of children when their parents are not with them. At my daughter's recent birthday party a series of events helped me better comprehend and sympathize with what many teachers have to deal with on a daily basis.

Everything at the party went as planned until one little girl decided to throw the popcorn around the room. The entire contents of the bowl were emptied onto the furniture and carpet. Upon discovering this, and not knowing who the culprit was, I announced that it was not a polite way to act while a guest in someone's home. The culprit stomped to my daughter's bedroom where she squatted in a corner and sulked.

Throughout the evening there were bouts of sulking and behavior that I had never experienced from a child before -- footprints on the wall, crawling under the dining room table, food squashed into the floor. If this had been behavior from an adult I would have known exactly what to do. But since I was "responsible" for the child until her parents returned I could not cast her into the cold night, however tempting the thought.

When the same child asked if she could have some suckers from the candy jar, of course the answer was yes. Although I could not figure out how she could get one in her mouth with the wad of bubble gum that was there already. When she asked if she could take some home I told her they were already in her loot bag. This seemed a satisfactory answer for a time until she started stuffing suckers into her pockets and watching me out of the corner of her eye. I wanted to grab her by the scruff of her neck and tell her to stop stealing. But I did not! I watched, in disbelief, and tried to understand the behavior of this child.

When it was "finally" time to go home, I led her to the candy jar where I put extra suckers in her loot bag. I told her that from now on if she wanted something to ask for it, that stealing was not right. By the look on her face I felt hopeful that I had reached her and that my actions would help her make the right choice next time. She smiled sheepishly, nodded to me, and then asked if she could also have some more bubble gum. I feared at this point I had not taught her a lesson. I had probably reinforced the behavior and the belief that she will get whatever she wants no matter what her actions.

I did a great deal of soul-searching after that and even discussed it with other parents. I tried to find the positive side and that perhaps I had done some good. I realize, however, that hoping she understood my point is a high expectation.

In the scheme of things my experience was quite minor, but I know I would not want to deal with it regularly. My hat goes off to teachers who encounter children and events like this every day and handle them with skill and knowledge. The level of patience, understanding and self-control of teachers has to be great to do what they do on a daily basis. The rest of us just do the best we can.

Teachers are expected to reach unattainable goals with inadequate tools. The miracle is that at times they accomplish this impossible task.

Haim G. Ginott



ON LOCATION

Provincial / National / International NEWS

CORNER BROOK

2000 Christmas Card Contest winner announced

Sarah Sanford, a Grade 5 student at St. Gerard's Elementary in Corner Brook has been chosen as winner of the 2000 NLTA Christmas Card Contest. Sarah will receive a \$75 cash award and a framed copy of her winning entry. Her winning design will appear on the NLTA's official Christmas card which will be sent to schools, businesses and other groups in December 2000. The theme for the 2000 contest was Christmas in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Second place was awarded to Andrew Hull, a Grade 5 student at Cowan Heights Elementary in St. John's. Third place was awarded to Keith Russell, a Grade 5 student at Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts. The Communications Committee of the NLTA chooses the theme and judges the entries for the Christmas Card Contest. A total of 334 entries were received this year.

Upper Gullies

Students display art projects

Students from Upper Gullies Elementary took part in the Young Marks (East) 1999 program from December 10 to January 16. Students from the Avalon East School Board were invited to take part and 37 students from Ms. Sophia Slaney's and Mr. Glen Coates' Grade 6 classrooms made contributions both individually and in groups.

The Young Marks (East) 1999 -- Imagining the Future, is an initiative of the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre Art Gallery. Staff at the gallery found that there was a period of time in December and January when the gallery wouldn't be used. They decided to offer the space to students from schools in the Avalon East School District.

The students took the theme "In the Future" and examined the ecology of the ocean, fashions of the future, and transportation of the future. A fishing net was hung on the wall and some flat works were attached to it. A mutated dolphin in stained glass mounted on a tree stump was submitted by one group and was placed in an old medicine sea chest. The net was then draped into the chest. Paper-mache, plasticine and many other types of materials were used by students to represent their ideas of the future. Each individual or group submitted a written/print interpretation to accompany their art work.

"Students had an opportunity to transform their images into visuals," said Ms. Slaney, one of the teachers who organized the program at Upper Gullies Elementary. "They were also able to view the works of students from other schools and get their perspective of the future."

One student stated: "What I really liked about working on the exhibit was that it was realistic. The stuff we made could actually happen in the distant future."

CLARENVILLE

Hook, Line and Net 2000

STEM-Net, in partnership with School District 8, will host this year's Hook, Line and Net conference in Clarenville from June 27-28. "Building on the fantastic success of the 1999 conference and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from last year, we are setting our sites on the best conference yet," says conference chair Bill Jameson. "There will be a wide variety of hands-on sessions, presentations, panel discussions, kid camps, high calibre speakers and of course, the usual Newfoundland after hours fun."

Steve Dotto will be presenting the Keynote address on Tuesday evening. Mr. Dotto is the talented host and executive producer of Dotto's Data Caf, Canada's favorite computer "how-to" show. Airing each Sunday, Dotto's Data Caf is an exciting hour of computer related topics composed of reviews of current computer trends, guest appearances, interviews, interaction, contests and a level of expertise and humor that make the show an enjoyable and informative experience. Originating out of British Columbia, the show is currently in its 8th season and is broadcast across Canada on such networks as the Discovery Channel, and internationally in many countries around the world.

GrassRoots will once again be a major aspect of the conference and 40 GrassRoots projects have been set aside for teachers who would like to present on the exciting Internet projects taking place in their schools. Industry Canada SchoolNet will provide funding of over \$330,000 for GrassRoots projects completed by teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1999/2000 school year. Not every school participates in the voluntary program which means that while some schools apply for thousands of dollars in funding, others never apply. The opportunity to present a GrassRoots project at Hook, Line and Net 2000 is first come, first serve, and any teacher who would like to receive complimentary admission to the conference is encouraged to apply online at the conference web site at <http://www.hln.nf.ca/2000>. If you are not personally involved in GrassRoots, or your school is not yet involved in GrassRoots, the conference will provide a tremendous opportunity to learn about the program, how to apply for funding and how to run a project with your class or in your school.

In addition to presenting GrassRoots projects, educators are also encouraged to offer their skills as presenters or hands on workshop leaders. The online forms to present are easily located from the main page of the web site. Don't miss out on this exciting event!

ST. JOHN'S

Teaching Excellence Fellowships awarded

Pat Wells and Jim Moore, both teachers at Bishops College in St. John's, have been offered fellowship at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

Both Wells and Moore were chosen for their leadership research in areas of education that can be integrated by the Queen's Faculty into its B.Ed. teaching program, for the benefit of teacher candidates.

There are only ten National Teaching Excellence Fellowships awarded across Canada and they tend to recognize teachers who have been presented with the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Last May, both Moore and Wells were awarded the national honor along with 13 of their colleagues from

across the country.

Mr. Moore was scheduled to travel to Queen's University in February, while Mr. Well will visit in late March.

School gets art smart

For the second year in a row, St. Pius X Elementary in St. John's is taking part in the Arts Smarts program which is funded under the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. The program allows professional artists to integrate art within the regular academic curriculum.

Through the program the school has been involved in an extensive program of visual and performing arts based on the Rennie's River. The river is alive and full of natural vegetation, fish, and trails. Thousands of people visit it yearly and it is in the back yard of the school. "It is an inspiration for the children to be surrounded by such a rare and beautiful environment," states Andrea Cooper of the Arts Smarts program at St. Pius X. "The river spills into their entire curriculum."

During the month of January, dancer Janine Burke worked with the Kindergartners as they explored movement using their bodies to physically interpret the ecosystem of the river.

In February, painter Elayne Noble worked with the Grade 1 classes to model animals out of play-dough, as the children learned about animals they might find on a farm. Also in February, artist Andrea Cooper taught the Grade 3 classes collages using the comparison between a healthy body and a healthy environment.

Theatre artist Baptiste Neis will work with Grade 2 students during March to write and perform a small puppet show revolving around the theme of "the river", while Undrea Norris will work with the same children to create puppets for the show. Jackie Ryan will be working with Grade 3 classes in March to produce cloth fish, which is co-ordinated around their education on the sea.

Other interesting events will include a visit to the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador to learn more about Newfoundland artists. From bird watching to book making, the approaches to learning are educational, varied and fun. Video documentation of all performance work is being recorded and photographs are being taken. The interior of the school is also brimming with the results of artistic productivity, as paintings and sculptures add a welcoming, energetic and enthusiastic warmth to the school.

Artists who have been part of the program at the school to date include Margaret Best, Tara Bryan, Larry Purdey, Linda Snow, and Helen Gregory. Upcoming visiting artists include Bonnie Leyton, Agnes Walsh, Rose Mary House, Jillian Keilley and more.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Call for grant applications

Applications are invited from interested individuals or groups for an award(s) to be made to Geoscience Education Projects in Newfoundland and Labrador. A maximum of \$1,000 will be awarded to one or more deserving projects in this competition. Projects should emphasize Earth Science, in the broad sense of the word, and should be beneficial to the professional development of the Newfoundland and Labrador geoscience community. Projects must be completed between September 1, 2000 and August 31, 2001. Application forms and further information can be obtained by contacting Dr. Mark Wilson, Chair, St. John's 1988 Trust Fund Committee, Department of Earth Sciences, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NF, A1B 3X5, Tel: 709-737-8386, Fax: 709-737-2589, e-mail: mwilson@sparky2.esd.mun.ca. Applications must be received by April 5, 2000. Decisions will be made by April 25, 2000.

Computers for Schools update

The Computers for Schools (CFS) Program in Newfoundland and Labrador has been very busy this school year. In September, the opening of the new Corner Brook depot was organized by the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association (NLSBA) and the NewTel Pioneers. It was held at the site of the new depot at the offices of the School Board on Wellington Street in Corner Brook. In attendance were guests from the local business and education community including representatives from NewTel, NLSBA, Compu College, Royal Bank, College of the North Atlantic, local Rotary Clubs, Household Finance, the Public Libraries Board, Academy Canada as well as members of the CFS Staff and Board. Approximately 30 people took the time to go to the school board building to hear about the new depot opening and the benefits of having a second depot to service the west coast of the province.

The Master of Ceremonies for the event was Dr. Myrle Vokey, Chair of the CFS Board and Executive Director of NLSBA. Dr. Vokey introduced a number of speakers including Gerry Byrne, MP for Humber-St. Barbe/Baie Verte, who delivered greetings on behalf of the federal government. June Alteen, NLSBA President, and Allan Miller, Director of West Coast Operations for NewTel also spoke on behalf of their organizations. In addition, the event included a donation of computers from Household Finance and Compu College to CFS, which were then donated to the local school board. A tour of the depot followed the formal presentations.

The national Computers for Schools program was very pleased to be involved this year in Ben Wicks' annual "Born to Read" literacy campaign. Well-known cartoonist Ben Wicks visited St. John's in October for the last stop on his cross-Canada launch of this project at Sears in the Village Mall. Over 400 school children were on hand to participate in the launch of this year's book "Born to Read and Surf". The book is designed to encourage parents and caregivers to use the Internet with their children as an educational resource in a safe and responsible way. Sears is a great partner in this program and over two million of the books were distributed to schools and libraries across the country.

Ben Wicks' "Born To Read" series is the largest literacy initiative of its kind in Canadian history and promotes the importance of literacy and the role parents and caregivers play to ensure that children are given opportunities to develop and strengthen their reading skills. With the link to the Internet, this year the national Computers for Schools program was involved in the launch events across Canada as well. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the opening entertainment was by Greg Donaghey (the laughing policeman). After brief greetings from Barry Brooks (Manager of Sears), Linda Coles (Department of Education), and Myrle Vokey (Chair of CFS), Mr. Wicks took the stage to do his famous cartoon drawings and entertain the children. Please have a look at Ben's new web site at www.benwicks.com.

CANADA

Everest 2000 -- The Ultimate Challenge

In May 2000, Canadian climber and expedition leader Byron Smith will stand on the summit of Mt. Everest. He won't be alone. Canadian schoolchildren, their teachers and families will have the opportunity to climb along with Byron on the largest virtual field trip ever conceived. With the assistance of official Expedition Broadcaster CBC Newsworld and Science Alberta Foundation, a priceless educational experience is available for daily access.

Byron Smith, from Vulcan, Alberta, and his Canadian Expedition and Education Team will be trekking and climbing in Nepal from March 15 to June 1, 2000. The Education Team includes scientists and engineers who will be conducting electrical energy and human physiology experiments on-line, on-mountain and in conjunction with visits to Nepalese schools and hospitals.

Everest 2000 has contracted Science Alberta Foundation to develop a Canada-wide multi-disciplinary education program that revolves around a series of on-line projects and themes related to the climb. Students will participate in a virtual field trip to the top of Mt. Everest through telecollaborative and classroom activities. Subject specific activities for geography, science, culture studies, information and communication technology, mathematics, language arts and physical education are integrated around three main themes: Goal-setting and Problem Solving; Energy and the Environment; Energy and the Human Body.

The program has been designed to reflect the Pan-Canadian Framework of Science Outcomes (K-12), ensuring its relevance to education objectives in every grade and in every Canadian province and territory.

Children will enjoy the innovative, interactive, hands-on format of the Everest 2000 Education Program. Teachers will appreciate the easy access to relevant, prepackaged lesson plans and activities. Classrooms from coast to coast to coast will have the opportunity to use Internet-based technology, to work collaboratively and learn more about the culture and people of Nepal and about the ethnic and geographic diversity of Canada. In addition, students will participate in an authentic learning experience and gain a better understanding of the impact of science and technology on a culture.

Contact the Everest 2000 web site at [http:// www.newsworld.cbc.ca](http://www.newsworld.cbc.ca). or e-mail info@everest2000.ca.

Michael Smith Awards for science promotion

The Michael Smith Awards honour individuals and organizations who make an outstanding contribution to the promotion of science in Canada, through activities encouraging popular interest or developing science abilities. Up to five awards will be available each year.

Individual winners will receive a personal award of \$5,000. Winning organizations will be awarded \$10,000 to further science promotion activities. Winners will also receive a medal bearing Dr. Smith's likeness.

Any individual, organization or company in Canada may be nominated for the award. Nominees should be people who have made a successful and sustained effort to encourage public interest and understanding of science and engineering, working beyond the formal education system.

The awards focus on people and groups who take science outside the regular school system, to reach people in all walks of life. The Awards Committee will be looking for sustained and significant effort to inspire public understanding and develop abilities in science and engineering. Beyond this basic requirement, there's lots of room for innovation.

Committee members will consider factors such as the program's impact and duration -- what effect has the activity had on its intended audience and for how long? They will also take into account the originality of a program, within a particular region or community. Finally, they'll look at a project's scope: how many people does the program reach? What science and engineering content does it cover?

For a nomination form contact Michael Smith Awards Committee, Communications Division, NSERC, 350 Albert Street, Ottawa, ON, K1A 1H5, Tel: 613-947-2524, e-mail: michaelsmithawards@nserc.ca, or fill in the nomination form provided on the Michael Smith web site at www.nserc.ca/michaelsmith-e. All entries must be postmarked on or before April 1, 2000.



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ON LOCATION REPORT
for The Bulletin

To have your story told in On Location News... please complete this report and submit to:

Lesley-Ann Browne, Editor, [The Bulletin](#),
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association,
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1

Name

Position

School

School
Address

Postal Code

Telephone

E-mail

Event Date(s)

Type of Event

Event
Description

Colorful Quote(s) from Participant(s)

Most Significant Result of the Event

bbbbb



TEACHER ACQUITTED

By [Edward Hancock](#)

A recent court case concerning a teacher charged with physically assaulting a student has found its way, on appeal, to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland. The original judgement by the court and the judgement on appeal both involved an interpretation of Section 43 of the Criminal Code. This section states as follows: Every school teacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.

The Facts

The facts of the case were as follows: A primary teacher with 18 years teaching experience was charged with assault under Section 266 of the Criminal Code. The charge arose out of an incident where the teacher slapped a student on the leg while attempting to get the child dressed in her snow clothes to board the waiting school bus. The student in question was a nine year old girl in Grade 2 with a developmental delay and an approximate mental age of six and a half. Evidence at the trial showed that the student sometimes exhibited behavioural problems, but she understands what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for a child of her age. She understands right from wrong and the difference between the truth and a lie.

The teacher, who was on school bus duty at the end of the school day, was attempting to assist the girl with putting on her snowsuit, but the student was screaming that she was not getting dressed, she wanted her mother to come and pick her up and she started kicking her legs, flailing her arms and screaming at the teacher. The teacher managed to get the girls left leg into the snowsuit, but the girl then kicked at the teacher with her right leg. The teacher slapped the student on the right leg, telling her to stop kicking and screaming and to do what she was told. As a result of the slap, the student stopped screaming and kicking, allowed the teacher to assist her in getting dressed and ultimately boarded the bus for the drive home. While on the bus following the incident, the student told her sister that the teacher had slapped her. The student's mother later noticed a red mark on the student's leg and took her to a neighbor to observe the mark as an independent witness. The neighbor later described the mark as fading and looking like three fingerprints.

Outcome of Trial

The teacher was charged with assault and pleaded not guilty. At trial, she was found guilty on the charge and given an absolute discharge. Although the absolute discharge meant that no sentence was imposed, the teacher and the NLTA were concerned about the guilty verdict in this set of circumstances as well as the Trial Judge's reasons for his finding and the interpretation of Section 43 as applied to the case. The matter was therefore appealed to the Supreme Court which overturned the original finding of guilt and acquitted the teacher on the charge.

Original Conviction

In his original decision, the Trial Judge noted the following: So we take a look at various factors in Section 43 as to what is reasonable in the circumstances. We have to take a look at the nature of the offence and what gave rise to it. And, I have to say this, that with respect to the urgency of the situation, the court feels that there was little or no urgency here.

In commenting upon the seriousness of the slap, the Trial Judge noted: And something which may not be

seen as excessive to one's own child would probably be excessive to someone else's I am going to infer from this normal human experience that caused the defendant to be somewhat frustrated.

In summing up what could be considered the rationale for his decision, the Trial Judge noted: So what I would like to say in this particular case is to emphasize two parts of this case that I think are the most important. One, there was really no critical urgency to this situation. And while restraint is okay, slapping is not.

Finally, the Trial Judge concluded as follows: In a school setting, after school where a child has not harmed anyone, a teacher who slaps a nine year old pupil, not her own child, who is two and a half years developmentally delayed, with sufficient force to leave a distinct but temporary mark, is not protected from criminal liability by virtue of

Section 43.

The teacher was found guilty of the offence but given an absolute discharge. The guilty finding was appealed to the Supreme Court.

Result of the Appeal

The Judge hearing the appeal examined the analysis of the Trial Judge in the case and concluded that Section 43 was improperly applied. He concluded that the act of slapping was an assault under Section 265 of the Criminal Code, but the question in this case was whether the assault was justified by Section 43. Urgency was not a factor in the decision. Section 43 does not attempt to restrict the categories of force which are justified, i.e. restraint versus slapping, or the time frame in which they may be applied, e.g. urgent situations versus non-urgent situations. The Appeal Judge noted that the only criteria established by Section 43 are that the action must be by way of correction towards the child, and that it must not exceed what is reasonable in the circumstance. He then further analyzed the factors that had been set out in a 1984 Saskatchewan case, R.v.Dupperon, where the court had concluded the factors to be considered are as follows:

- the nature of the offense calling for correction;
- the age and character of the child and the likely effect of the punishment on this particular child;
- the degree of gravity of the punishment;
- the circumstances under which it was inflicted; and
- the injuries, if any, suffered.

Each of these factors was then applied to the circumstances of the case at hand with the following conclusions:

Nature of the Offense

The student was being unruly, screaming at her teacher and kicking and lashing out. Such behaviour had to be corrected and the correction would be more effective if applied immediately and contemporaneously with the objectionable behaviour, as opposed to later when a child with reduced abilities may have forgotten or minimized the objectionable nature of her behaviour.

Age and Character of the Child and Effect of the Punishment

The Appeal Judge was satisfied that "a modest physical correction such as that applied here would have a salutary effect upon her behaviour". In fact, the application of the slap was seen to be positive in its effect in that the child immediately complied with the teacher's directions.

The Degree of Gravity of the Punishment

The degree of gravity of the slap was found by the original Trial Judge not to have been excessive. In

addition, there was no evidence of any causal connection between the slap and the marks on the student's leg. The marks could have been caused by the attempts to restrain the student while putting on the snowsuit.

The Circumstances

The Appeal Judge concluded that it was necessary for the teacher to resolve the issue. The bus was loaded with students and waiting to leave and the student's continuing refusal to comply with the teacher's directions would have caused inconvenience to all concerned if the matter had not been resolved. "The modest application of physical force by way of a correcting slap was appropriate in the circumstances. Section 43 does not differentiate between restraint and slapping." He concluded that the Trial Judge had erred and this was an incorrect interpretation of Section 43.

Injuries if any Suffered

It was not proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the student suffered any injuries from the slap. Even if the marks on her leg had been caused by the slap, the slap was not excessive or unreasonable in the circumstances. The slap was applied to correct the student's behaviour, and it had that positive effect. Even if it hadn't, the relevant test is whether the slap was intended to be applied for the purpose of correction of the student's behaviour. The Appeal Judge was satisfied that it was intended for same and that there was no evidence upon which the Trial Judge could base his conclusion that the teacher had acted out of frustration.

Having reached the conclusion that the slap was applied for the purpose of correction, the Appeal Judge also concluded that the slap itself and the force of it were reasonable in the circumstances. The question of urgency is irrelevant. The Appeal Judge noted: If a child is to be corrected by the application of physical force, especially a child of [this student's] age whose ability to associate events and results is more constrained than a child of greater age, the application of that force should be as contemporary as possible to the behaviour that needs correction. The fact that there may have been other forms of correction, even some which might have been more effective and more attractive in the current social milieu, doesn't render the slap illegal.

In concluding his remarks before passing judgement, the Appeal Court Judge further noted: Nothing in this decision should be understood as a condonation of, or a recommendation of corporal punishment as a preferred means of eliciting proper behaviour from students. However, criminal charges against teachers acting in apparent good faith in administering mild corporal punishment in reasonable circumstances, is not the way to foster, in children, a proper respect for teachers, or to foster a team approach between teachers and parents with respect to the huge responsibility inherent in teaching and raising children.

The original guilty finding was quashed and the teacher was acquitted of the charge.

Edward Hancock is Assistant Executive Director with the NLTA responsible for the Benefits and Economic Services Division.



Salary Continuance & Employment Insurance

RULING SETS EI PRECEDENCE

by [Lloyd Hobbs](#)

There has been an ongoing Employment Insurance appeal originating with a teacher in Newfoundland and Labrador which has taken over five years to resolve. The appeal involved the issue of how benefits under the Salary Continuance Insurance option of the NLTA Group Insurance Plan should be treated for purposes of EI. The Association became involved part way through the appeals process and continued to support the case until its resolution in November 1998 with a positive ruling from the Umpire.

The teacher concerned was absent from work on sick leave and, upon exhausting that benefit, applied for Salary Continuance which he began receiving shortly thereafter. As well, he made application for the "Sick and Can't Work" benefits available under the then Unemployment Insurance program. This was approved but later denied as the Commission considered the Salary Continuance program that teachers have in this province did not meet all of the requirements of a non-group plan. Hence, the EI Commission considered the Salary Continuance benefit as "income" and disqualified the teacher from any EI benefits.

By regulation, "a sickness or disability wage-loss indemnity plan is not a group plan if it is a plan that, in the opinion of the Commission: a) is not related to a group of persons who are all employed by the same employer; b) is not financed in whole or in part by an employer; c) is voluntarily purchased by the person insured; d) is completely portable; e) provides constant benefits while permitting deductions from income from other sources, where applicable; and f) has rates of premium that do not depend on the experience of a group referred to in paragraph (a).

At the initial appeal, the ruling was that the Salary Continuance Plan was a group plan and it was on this point that the teacher disagreed. The Commission agreed that conditions a, b, c, e and f existed which would make the teacher's indemnity plan a non-group plan. However, it disputed the "complete portability" clause.

In his November 6, 1998 ruling, Umpire Ronald C. Stevenson stated: **Is the definition of portability satisfied by a plan that is only portable among school boards in Newfoundland? Or is it only satisfied by a plan that a teacher may take with him if he becomes employed within the teaching occupation anywhere in Canada? This appears to be a test case. I will give the provisions of the Act a liberal interpretation and hold that "within the same occupation" means, with respect to an occupation that is subject to provincial or territorial licensing or regulation, within the same occupation in the province or territory where the claimant is licensed or otherwise qualified, is employed, and is enrolled in a wage-loss indemnity plan. Under that interpretation the plan here in issue is not a group plan. The Commission's appeal is dismissed.**

As a result of this ruling and a positive ruling in a similar case, we are now advising teachers who have exhausted their sick leave and are in receipt of Salary Continuance that they are also eligible for sick benefits from Employment Insurance. This is a 17 week benefit of which you may be required to serve a two week waiting period.

As with all rulings, they are constantly under review and challenge. Therefore, the information in this article may be changed in the future by other challenges or by amendments to the regulations. If you have a concern related to Employment Insurance, you may contact an Administrative Staff Officer of the Benefits and Economic Services Division of NLTA. As well, there is a booklet entitled "[Teacher's Guide to Employment Insurance](#)" which is available upon request or it may be accessed on line at www.nlta.nf.ca under "publications".



Teachers' and Principals' Duties

THE SCHOOLS ACT

by [Edward Hancock](#)

A new Schools Act came into being in December, 1997. The NLTA often receives inquiries from teachers relating to provisions of the Schools Act. This article (the second in a series) deals with the duties of teachers and principals under the Act.

Teachers' Duties

Section 33 of the Act lists teachers' responsibilities in seven sub-sections. These are as follows:

- a) providing instruction to students and encouraging and fostering student learning;
- b) promoting goals and standards applicable to the provision of education approved under this Act;
- c) teaching the courses of study and education programs that are prescribed or approved under this Act;
- d) regularly evaluating students and periodically reporting the results of the evaluation to the student and his or her parent;
- e) under the direction of the principal, maintaining and supervising order and discipline among the students while they are in the school or on the school grounds and while they are attending or participating in activities that are determined by the principal, with the teachers of the school, to be school activities;
- f) where the teacher is employed in a French first language school, promoting cultural identity and French language in the school; and
- g) carrying out those duties that are assigned to the teacher by the principal or the board.

As can be seen, these responsibilities are general in nature. Further specifics on these responsibilities will be found in the School Board by-laws and policies/procedures and are subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement.

Principals' Duties

S.24 (1) requires a School Board to appoint a principal for every school in the district. Responsibilities of the principal, subject to the direction of the School Board, are listed in S.24 (3) as follows:

- a) provide instructional leadership in the school;
- b) ensure that the instruction provided by the teachers employed in the school is consistent with the courses of study and education programs prescribed or approved under this Act;
- c) ensure that the evaluation and grading of students is conducted in accordance with generally accepted standards in education;
- d) evaluate or provide for the evaluation of programs offered in the school;
- e) manage the school;
- f) maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and at those other activities that are determined by the principal, with the teachers of the school, to be school activities;
- g) promote co-operation between the school and the communities that it serves;
- h) provide for the placement of students in courses of study and education programs prescribed or approved under this Act;
- i) provide for the promotion and advancement of students;
- j) evaluate or provide for the evaluation of teachers employed in the school;
- k) annually provide a report with respect to the school;
- l) ensure a student record is established and maintained for each student in the school;
- m) where the school is a French first language school, promote cultural identity and French language in the

school; and

n) carry out other duties assigned by the board.

Again, the duties as listed in the Act are somewhat general and further specifics would be found within the School Board's by-laws and policies/procedures.

Presence of Teacher

Unless assigned to other duties by the principal or absent because of illness or other unavoidable cause, a teacher shall be in school during a period in the morning and in the afternoon immediately preceding the time set for the opening of school, as required by the by-laws of the board (S.31). Teachers should be aware of the specific time requirement within their own board by-laws. Further, for the purpose of determining payment of salary, teachers are considered to have taught on a day or part of day when the school is closed for inclement weather, lack of heating, fire, health reasons, or causes of a similar nature (S.32).

School Register

A teacher is required to maintain a school register in the form prescribed by the Minister of Education (S.34). Teachers should also be aware that a copy of a register maintained in the school is, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, admissible as evidence in court in a prosecution for an offence under the Schools Act (eg. compulsory attendance) (S.35).

Suspension of Students

S. 36 (1) provides that "a teacher may suspend a student from a class period in accordance with the by-laws of the board". A teacher is required to report such a suspension to the principal "as soon as practicable, but in any event before the end of that school day" [S.36 (2)]. A school principal is empowered to enact more serious suspensions and, where a principal suspends a student from anything more than "one or more class periods", the parent(s), the student and the School District Director must be notified in writing [S.36 (3-9)]. (Further details on the suspension and expulsion provisions of the Act can be found within the article on the Schools Act in the [January/February 2000 issue](#) of The Bulletin.)

The Schools Act provides the legal basis for the School Board to assign duties to principals and teachers. As with most pieces of legislation, the provisions of the Schools Act lay out these duties in a somewhat general fashion. School Board by-laws and policies will, subject to the Act and to the Collective Agreement, provide further specifics on these responsibilities. All members should be aware of these provisions and of the fact that responsibilities are further impacted by other pieces of legislation (e.g. Child Welfare Act) and by the civil law in such areas as negligence and liability.

Further articles in this series on The Schools Act will deal with parents' rights and responsibilities, School Board duties and powers and School Councils. Questions concerning any provision of the Act should be addressed to Administrative Staff in the Benefits and Economic Services Division at the NLTA office.



Three-Week Pay Period Gap

All teachers are reminded that this year there will be a three week gap between the last pay period for the 1999-2000 school year and the first pay period for the 2000-01 school year. This situation arises every 5 to 6 years (the last occasion was in 1995) as per Article 22.01 of the Provincial Collective Agreement.

Teachers are paid their annual salary in 26 equal installments throughout the school year. The twenty-sixth pay period for 1999-2000 falls on August 17, 2000. The next pay period (which is the first pay period for 2000-01) would normally fall two weeks later on August 31, 2000. This would then create twenty-seven pay periods in the 1999-2000 school year. In keeping with the provisions of Article 22.01 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (21.01 in Labrador West), that August 31 pay period will be eliminated and the first pay period for 2000-01 will occur on September 07, 2000. All subsequent pay periods in the 2000-01 school year will then follow as usual at their regular two week intervals, starting with the September 07 pay period.

Any questions related to this matter should be addressed to the Benefits & Economic Services Division , ph: 726-3223 or 1-800 563-3599, ext. 226, 230, 231, or 232 at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association or the Teacher Payroll Division, ph: 729-6835 or 729-0343 at the Department of Education.



In The Workplace

PERSONAL PROPERTY

by [Don Ash](#)

Personal property of just about every teacher finds its way into the classrooms and schools of this province. Many teachers bring their own computers, CD players, books, and resource material to schools to supplement the limited resources available. The purpose of this article is to caution teachers about the risks of loss associated with bringing personal property to school.

Article 34 of the Collective Agreement deals with the loss or damage to teachers' personal property or equipment. Article 34.02 (a) specifically states: **Where a teacher is authorized in writing by the School Board to use his/her own tools, equipment, or other materials in the performance of teaching duties, the School Board shall compensate that teacher for any loss or damage to these tools, equipment or materials provided that loss or damage did not result from the teacher's negligence.**

Recent school fires in the province have resulted in significant losses of teachers' personal property. In the absence of written authorization of the School Board to bring personal equipment to the school, the School Board does not have the legal obligation to compensate for any loss suffered. When a School Board does so, it is purely on a voluntary basis. Individual teachers have received some coverage under their homeowner's insurance policies for materials "temporarily removed from the premises" (i.e. the home). However, many items which teachers use in schools are deemed not to be covered under such personal home insurance provisions, since these items are not temporarily away from the home but are permanently kept in the school. Treasury Board officials have informed us that it is Government practice to pay a teacher's deductible on their homeowner's policy or \$500, whichever is lesser in the circumstances, when a loss occurs.

School Board insurance does not cover the loss of a teacher's personal property. Subsequently, it is advisable to seek written approval from the Board prior to bringing expensive equipment or material to the classroom.

We have asked Johnson Incorporated to explore the possibility of providing a rider on teachers' home insurance policies to allow for coverage of personal belongings in school. Johnson Incorporated was receptive to this idea, but home insurance is based upon individual policies and teachers would have to request such a rider through their individual agents. We advise you to contact your own insurance company to request a rider to be placed on items of a personal nature that you have brought to school.

NLTA's policy and position is that adequate resources and materials should be provided by the employer. We realize the reality is that resources/materials are often inadequate in our schools. Subsequently, many of our teachers take it upon themselves to supplement the materials provided by the Department of Education. The Association continues to lobby for increased resources. In the meantime, you should ensure that your personal property is protected.

Any questions or comments can be addressed to an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services Division, with the NLTA.



NEWS FROM PD

by [Beverley Park](#) & [René Wicks](#)

The Professional Development Division of the NLTA provides quality professional programs for members of the Association and supports them in meeting the challenges of teaching in times of change. This report summarizes some of the initiatives in which the Professional Development staff have been involved during the current school year.

Leadership Program

In conjunction with School District 9, Avalon West, the development of the Leadership Program for principals and vice-principals continues to enjoy positive response from participants. Following up on the initial institute there have been full days sessions on specific topics including re-designing staff meetings, effective school teams and time-stretching. The topic addressed in the January session was conflict management. Avalon East, the largest District in the province, has expressed an interest in a similar program for 2000-2001.

Professional Development Facilitation

In addition to programs initiated at the NLTA, our PD staff responds to requests from the field for PD programs designed and facilitated to match the needs of a particular school, group of schools, or District. This is a part of our ongoing work and is carried out as availability permits. Over the past few months we have seen an increasing demand in requests for sessions on Team Building, Leadership, Learning Styles, and "Situational Analysis and Planning". Along with our committees, which are located throughout the province, both island and Labrador, it is this work which takes us "on the road".

Standing Committees

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES IN TEACHING COMMITTEE:

This committee generally oversees the work of the PD Division and its programs. This year it is located in Marystown. Members are: Elizabeth Murphy (Chair); Dolorosa Murphy; Gordon Brockerville; Adrianna Jarvis; Fred Shirley; Truman Greenham; Georgina Lake; Beverley Park and René Wicks (Staff Consultants).

EQUITY ISSUES IN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Located in Hopedale, Labrador, the committee will do much of its business via tele-conference. The first face-to-face meeting was held January 21-22 in Hopedale. At that time the committee addressed such topics as: access to PD by teachers on the coast; Northern issues in the NLTA context; and representation of minority groups in the Association. There is also some concern about the imbalance of males and females offering themselves for leadership positions both in schools and in the organization. Also, there have been a number of inquiries from across Canada on dealing with homophobia. Members of the committee are: Bill Wheaton (Chair); Laura Dawn Angnatok; Danny Ford; Trudy Flowers; Dean Coombs; and Beverley Park (Staff Consultant).

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Located in St. John's, this committee maintains responsibility for the Association's involvement in all matters related to curriculum and programming. This has been an extremely busy year for this group and there have been five meetings so far. A major ongoing issue is Pathways, the provincial policy on inclusion. The committee has continued to coordinate a lobby for adequate resourcing for this framework and

committee members have been involved in several forums and working groups with Department of Education personnel and school district program specialists.

Most recently, the committee has coordinated the Association's response to a draft Special Education Policy. Other issues to be addressed include testing and assessment, APEF involvement, education for gifted students, and business intrusion in our schools.

Members of the committee are: Ken Kavanagh (Chair); Anita Noseworthy; Margaret Ryall; Gail Perry; Keith Samuelson; Kara Bourgeois; Florence Costello; and René Wicks (Staff Consultant).

PD Advisory Report

The provincial Advisory Committee on the Coordination of Professional Development has submitted its report to the Minister of Education. Among the 16 recommendations, some of the highlights include: implications for a new delivery model; access to professional development; recognition of professional development; a process for monitoring and assessing professional development initiatives; and the establishment of a coordinating body.

Teacher Certification

At the last meeting of the Provincial Teacher Certification Board the Labour Mobility Agreement, as it applies to the teaching force, was reviewed. There are implications for changes in regulations and legislation and the timing is now right for a review of our provincial regulations. The Registrar for Teacher Certification has agreed to draft a discussion paper on a number of related topics. This, along with the NLTA's paper titled *New Directions for Teacher Certification: A Proposed Model for Self-Governance*, prepared last year, will form the basis for discussions on future directions in Teacher Certification.

Internships in Rural and Remote Areas

With the support of the Johnson Foundation, the NLTA, in conjunction with Memorial University's Faculty of Education, is sponsoring three student interns in rural and remote areas of the province. The sponsorship pays for travel, accommodation and meals during the intern's 13 week placement. Following are the placements for this year: one intern, Ms. Dana Murphy, is in Cartwright, Labrador; two interns, Mr. Rodney Squires and Mr. Craig Luedee are in Ramea.

Ministerial Panel on the Delivery of Education in the Classroom

At the beginning of the school year the Minister of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador established a Ministerial Panel to investigate and make recommendations on the allocation of teachers throughout the province and the breadth and depth of the province's curriculum. The panel, co-chaired by Dr. Ron Sparkes and Dr. Len Williams has been asked by the Premier to provide recommendations by February 28, 2000 that will help shape the classrooms of the future in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On December 13, 1999, the NLTA submitted its official report to the Ministerial Panel. In this report the Association made 55 recommendations on such issues as a balanced curriculum, pre-school and early intervention, testing and evaluation, distance education and telelearning, resourcing for curriculum implementation, teacher allocations, funding mechanisms, and professional development. On December 20, 1999 representatives from NLTA participated in a full day provincial forum which involved representatives from all educational stakeholders.

Virtual Teacher Center

Recognizing the geography of this province and the very unique needs of our many teachers in small, isolated communities, the Association has developed a proposal for the establishment of a web-based Virtual Teacher Center. This center will provide professional development experiences to teachers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and will be developed in collaboration with Memorial University

of Newfoundland, the Department of Education, and STEM~Net.

The long-term goal is to provide ongoing professional development, as well as inservicing of new programs. A major objective is to link some of the offerings of the Virtual Teacher Center to credit from Memorial University and to teacher certification.

In December, the proposal was presented to all Assistant Directors for Programs, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Education, and Department of Education consultants. All groups have offered endorsement. On February 11, two NLTA staff members, along with representatives from Memorial University and STEM~Net, met in Ottawa with personnel from Industry Canada and Open Learning Technology to explore the possibility of federal funding.

Special Interest Councils

This has been a very successful year for our Special Interest Councils. This fall seven SICs held provincial conferences, all with excellent programs and rates of attendance. The largest gathering was hosted by the Primary Council in Gander, with approximately 800 teachers attending the two-day event. Other councils hosting conferences were Humanities, Special Services, Music, Learning Resources, School Counselors, and School Administrators. This is a marked increase in activity for these organizations, which have been challenged in the past by limited substitute teacher time for professional development. Other SIC Conferences are planned for the Spring, so please check The Bulletin for listings.

Response to Special Education Policy Manual

This fall, the Department of Education circulated a draft policy manual and requested feedback from the field. Given our extensive involvement in issues around Pathways to Programming and Graduation, it was felt that we should provide as detailed a response as possible. The draft policy was circulated to Executive, and three working groups were established around the province to provide input. These submissions were collated by the Professional Development Division and the response was submitted to the Department on January 12, 2000.

Behavior Challenges: A Supportive Shared Approach -- Handbook and PD Modules

PD staff have been part of a working group with teachers and Department of Education personnel to revise an existing document and provide a practical handbook for teachers on such issues as school wide discipline, classroom management, problem solving and support, and program planning. Other issues include school policy development, safe school teams, expectations for student behavior, violence prevention strategies, and the legal framework. The plan is to release this handbook in conjunction with a series of professional development modules which will be developed by Department of Education personnel and the NLTA PD Division. This work grows out of recommendations contained in the Classroom Issues Report of 1995.

As a related initiative the NLTA will soon be publishing and distributing a handbook entitled A Chance for Childhood: A Handbook about Child Abuse for Teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Beverley Park and René Wicks are Administrative Officers in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.



COMMUNICATING CAREFULLY

by [Claudette Coombs](#)

Welcome back to our series on Improving Relationships. This article focuses on developing a better understanding of how communication can enhance or hinder harmonious relationships.

Communication is a multi-step process occurring between the sender, who has a message in mind and uses a combination of methods to send it, and the receiver, who may already have some pre-determined ideas about the message being received and will interpret it according to current context, past experiences and knowledge. Unfortunately there are too many points of interference where the process breaks down and the intended message is never accurately received. To ensure that communication is a tool used to strengthen relationships, we can examine the parts of the process and identify strategies for improvement.

Why Do We Communicate?

Communication meets many personal needs including: sharing information; showing interest; giving attention; or expressing emotion. It helps if we understand why we are communicating: at this time; with this person; on this topic. We also benefit from knowing the response we want, or expect. There is always a purpose behind any form of communication. We greet strangers to acknowledge their presence. We express grief to indicate the significance of a loss. We hug our partner to show love. If we don't know why we communicate, we encourage ambiguity and misunderstanding and we may be ascribed totally inaccurate motives!

This is especially true when the apparent message is not the intended one. For example, we may be hurt by a partner's comments or actions but our reaction is one of anger and blame. Without exploring appropriate ways to express the hurt, or to find avenues to alleviate it, we start a new process of miscommunication. Instead of making the hurt go away we have guaranteed more hurt. Understand why you are reacting to a comment or behaviour, then have the courage and honesty to admit it. Responding with: "Knowing you feel that way about me, really hurts " moves the conversation in a different direction than: "You think you're perfect, well I have news for you "

How Do We Communicate?

To find out the answer to this question, don't just listen -- also observe. When you really "look" at communication, it is not surprising that message delivery really tells the tale. Tone, volume, emphasis and speed give a much stronger message than words alone. Look closer and you see that speaking, even with all the added bonuses, isn't necessary to get a message across. Body language is the real giveaway to deciphering an intended message. Eye contact, gestures, personal space, movement and behaviours combine to give an impression which is quickly interpreted. The body and words might not match in: "No, I am not upset!!!" Think about the following responses to non-verbal communication: "What's wrong with you today?"; "Hmm, seems like you're in the mood for !" Without words, a message has obviously been transmitted and interpreted and has generated a response. Pay attention to body language. Whether deliberate or not, it is giving a message. Verbal and non-verbal information should be consistent and express the intended message.

How Does the Past Interfere?

We can each recall unpleasant interactions. Retaining those memories and attributing the same negative

motives to a new person or situation, unfairly sabotages a current relationship. To promote successful, fulfilling encounters it is necessary to accept the uniqueness of each contact. This conversation is not the same as the one last year, last month, or even the one yesterday. New experiences have been added, more knowledge attained and another opportunity is waiting. This relationship deserves the chance to deal with its own challenges, without also having to right the wrongs of the past or pay for someone's earlier mistakes. Remember our ultimate goal of improving relationships by using better communication skills and altering our reaction pattern.

We enter most conversations with an opinion of the topic, messenger and situation. That mental bias interferes with how we listen and interpret truth and significance. We often allow a previous impression to dictate the value of a new situation. Recognize the past for what it is -- history! We can use history to learn lessons and direct positive outcomes. By changing our role, interpretation and response we can ensure that we don't repeat unpleasant historical interactions -- even when presented with similar situations.

How Can I Better Send My Message?

Message transmission, especially in a potential controversy, can be improved if we: put the message clearly in front of the receiver; remove interference from other issues or emotional outbursts; are specific; and stick to a single message. Other issues must be dealt with -- but not now. Sometimes we take advantage of anger, arguments, or perceived rejection to throw in everything.

Consider this example: In this communication, I want to ask you to help me clean up from dinner. I don't want to blame you for the extra work that I do because you don't help. I don't want to remind you that you haven't helped in the last week, even though you agreed to do that. I don't want to complain about the unfairness and my resentment because you come home and relax while I do the work. All I want to do now, is to ask you to help me clean up from dinner. Are we able to make communication that clear?

Unfortunately, we don't often say what bothers us. Things build up and out comes the overwhelming history on an unsuspecting partner or at an unpredictable moment. The reaction? Surprise. Shock. Embarrassment. Resentment. Anger. Unresolved, undiscussed issues in the relationship will eventually appear in our actions. We know that our partner is upset, furthermore we know that distress is directed at us. But why? Resolving the distress may be an impossible task without verbally clarifying the problem.

When an emotional situation escalates we experience greater difficulty in communicating effectively. Conversation may be peppered with: "You always/never "; or "every time ". Such extreme statements are rarely accurate but they do represent an emotional response and a long standing problem with plenty of accumulated resentment. To minimize complications, deal with one thing at a time, use specific examples, separate fact from fiction, and avoid sweeping claims.

How Can I Send A Better Message?

A clear and consistent message, delivered in a comfortable setting and manner, encourages the receiver to respond honestly. Know your message and your expected response before the conversation. Effective communication presents an easily understood message to a receiver who knows why s/he is involved and feels comfortable in responding.

How Can I Better Receive A Message?

Attentive listening is essential. Common reception problems include: interrupting, leaving the message incomplete and you guessing what was really meant; using listening time to prepare a counter attack; and only attending to the words, ignoring available non-verbal information. When you aren't sure about the message or the expectations being placed on you, ask questions. Do whatever it takes to ensure the message you hear is really the one that is intended.

Common communication problems result from: sending unclear, mixed or incomplete messages; interpreting, judging and responding to messages before receiving all the information; and failing to check the reception. Examine your interactions and design an action strategy to remove the obstacles and enrich your relationships.

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



Stages of Normal Reading Development

DYSLEXIA: PART II

by Dr. Catherine G. Penney

In 1994, Louise Spear-Swerling and Robert Sternberg described the stages of normal reading development and showed how poor readers failed to progress beyond the early stages. Their model of reading disability is useful in explaining how individuals with different "symptoms" can have the same underlying problem -- difficulty in learning to associate letters and sounds.

The first stage in reading development (typical of preschool and kindergarten children) is Visual Cue Word Recognition. A young child "reads" a few words such as their own name or brand names of commercial products. This is not real reading as the child depends on the context in which the word is printed. For example, the brand name of a favourite toy, drink, or cereal would not be recognized without the product logo. In this stage, the child has not grasped the alphabetic principle -- the idea that letters represent the sounds of words. Instead, the child memorizes an association between the appearance of the word (including the logo) and its meaning.

At age five or six, children begin to realize that letters represent sounds in words, and they learn to associate certain letters with their corresponding sounds. This is the beginning of Phonetic Cue Word Recognition. Many five-year-olds can understand that "c" is for "cat" and "cake" and "cookie". Once the child grasps some simple letter-sound relationships he or she can learn to read and write simple words. Children can often recognize the names of family members or pets -- especially when written on gifts or party invitations.

In the early Phonetic Cue stage, knowledge of letter-sound associations is rudimentary and children rely heavily on context for word identification. The word "pumpkin" may be read correctly in the Halloween story because there are pictures of pumpkins, and the word is encountered many times. But, the child may not be able to read the word "pumpkin" out of context, and may read isolated words like "people", "purple", and "peanut" as "pumpkin" because they all begin with "p".

With progression in the Phonetic Cue stage, knowledge about letter-sound associations improves and the child becomes better able to decode a word from the letters rather than the context. But context remains important. Errors in oral reading of text will often be similar in spelling and will also make sense in context. For example, the word "cake" might be read as "cookies", or "house" as "home". Sometimes, the errors will not be appropriate to the context, but will reflect better use of letter-sound knowledge. For example, a child who sees "purple" might say "people" even though this does not make sense.

As knowledge about letter-sound associations increases during the early school grades, the child progresses to Controlled Word Recognition. A major accomplishment of this stage is that the child has enough knowledge about letter-sound associations to "sound out" unfamiliar words. In this stage, the child can accurately decode words which have not been seen in print before, although the decoding may be slow and effortful and may still depend partly on context. Achieving controlled word recognition means that the child is an independent reader who needs assistance occasionally for foreign or highly irregular words. The errors at this point tend to be errors in pronunciation, usually of irregularly spelled or pronounced words ("cham - pag - nee" for "champagne", "sof - ten" for "soften", "ya - chet" for "yacht", and so on).

Independent readers like to read and will read almost anything. They practice their newly acquired

capability and further increase their skill. Gradually, the child passes from Controlled Word Recognition to Automatic Word Recognition. Automatic Word Recognition develops at different ages for different words. At the Automatic Word Recognition stage and all later stages of reading, a reader can encounter infrequent or technical words that have to be "sounded out" syllable by syllable because the reader has never seen these words before in print. But automatic word recognition is achieved by some first- and second-graders for highly frequent words.

Struggling to decode many words, the child in the Controlled Word Recognition stage, typically reads haltingly and with poor expression. The focus of attention is on individual words, not on the ideas. So much effort is required for word identification that there is no mental capacity available for understanding complex sentences or complex ideas, or for retention. Once word identification becomes automatic and does not require a lot of mental effort, mental resources are released which can be devoted to higher intellectual activities: extracting the meaning of sentences; focusing on the sequence of ideas or events presented in the text; and, most important of all, learning and remembering the meaning of what is read.

As children progress in the Automatic Word Recognition stage, they focus more on the meaning of the text rather than on the individual words, and are increasingly concerned with understanding and learning what they read. Thus, they develop into Strategic Readers. They notice words or ideas that don't make sense. They reread passages they don't understand and check the meaning of unfamiliar words. They learn to skim a chapter to get the overall message or to find some piece of information. They learn to read for different purposes -- for entertainment, to obtain information for a school assignment, to study for an exam, to be able to discuss something with their friends.

Academic demands to read with understanding and to retain what is read increase steadily through junior and senior high school. By senior high school, students should be Proficient Adult Readers who engage in higher intellectual activities in connection with their reading. They should be able to read critically and analyze what they read, to integrate ideas from different sources and detect logical or empirical inconsistencies between different parts of an argument. They learn to compare styles and ideas of different writers. They relate what they read to what they already know and they use their existing knowledge to help them interpret and apply what they read.

The next article in the series will show where and how dyslexics fail to progress through the stages of normal reading development.

Dr. Catherine Penney is a Professor with the Department of Psychology at Memorial University of Newfoundland.



WHY I CAN'T TEACH

by David B. Hickey

Like the latest reincarnation of the Williams Commission on Education, I too am forever trying to find where to pin the blame for our failing education system. The culpable demons are legion: government's financial hypocrisies and its bureaucratic bungling; society's hedonism; society's inertia; the churches for eroticising power relationships and for rewarding mediocrity. Or maybe it's the poisoned air and the fluorescent lights, the foolish textbooks and the neglectful parents. Or Seniority? TV? Joey, the Brians, and Clyde? Surely, somewhere in this catalogue we can find the culprit.

But no, as usual, the truth lies in paradox. For, missing from this list is the one to whom the most blame belongs – the hard-working teacher. The truth may not be obvious, but it is inescapable: the education system fails today because teachers – the genuine ones – continue to march willingly into the coliseum. Gleefully they embrace the lions. And over and over again, they are dispatched. Like sheep. Or horses. Recall Boxer, the workhorse in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Whenever something, anything, goes wrong anywhere on the farm, Boxer proclaims: "I will work harder!" If he could just get those hooves to hold the whip, no doubt he'd use it on himself. Unfortunately, so would far too many of the teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Psychology of Inferiority

Recently, I attended a school board workshop for department heads and lead teachers. The workshop was held to launch the latest Department of Education/School Board sponsored initiative. Translation: more 'expectations' committed to paper; more 'accounting' for our daily bread; more but here I digress. The fanciful substance of that workshop is irrelevant. What struck me most deeply was the voice of the veteran teacher, challenging a complaint by a younger colleague who had had enough devolution in his direction. The older teacher worked to the front of the assembly and proclaimed (not exactly in these words, but this is what she meant): "I've been a slave of this board since the beginning of my career. I've taken on uncountable volunteer duties. And I will continue to do so! You misers who complain of being over-worked, under-appreciated shame on you! I'm not afraid of work. I will work harder!"

For years I've been hearing teachers talk this way. The truth is, I've uttered similar statements in the past, often prefaced with, "I like my job " or "I'm committed to the kids ". And, as a consequence, I thought of myself as honourable, doing the noble thing. Which, at last, brings us to the nub of the problem, the real reason, Dr. Williams, that our system of education fails: too many teachers – and one is too many – think that they have to allow others to write their job descriptions for them. The psychology operating here is almost sublime. The martyr-teacher 'overcomes' the psychic indignity and the physical burden imposed from outside by welcoming that very burden; as if picking up your cross somehow fully justifies your being crucified.

Autonomy is not even a dream anymore. Yet, we claim that is what we want our students to ultimately achieve. So, what are we really teaching? By example we are teaching the worst kind of passivity; the mindless complaisance that says, "I'm unable/unwilling/too damn scared to see my job in the larger context and to decide for myself what society and what humanity needs to fulfill its dreams." The psychology of inferiority says: "I will not examine critically, I will not dare to challenge my betters. They should define my role as teacher, and I must be docile so that my students are docile too."

The first step back to autonomy is to remember that it is necessary to first make a space before you try to fill one. Teachers must claim the right to make their own spaces. How long will it be before we truly realize that the hierarchy exists not to invent solutions but to solicit them, not to preach precepts but to make smooth the way of the teacher-learner? Don't we know that education exists to serve the poem I teach, not a political agenda?

Who presumes to tell me how to deliver my program? Is it someone who shares with me, daily, the unique dynamic of the classroom, where all students are stumbling about in a common soul's darkness or else a TV – and pop culture-induced false light? Are my superiors, daily, struggling with the intransigence of a form of knowledge and, at the same time, trying to convince students to take up that same struggle?

Who really understands the structure of my workdays? If I don't take a volleyball team to a tournament on the other side of the bay, or if I don't preside over a creative writing club or if I don't attend another growth and development committee meeting, it could be because I'm engaging the world of my subject from another dimension, one less public, less politically shiny. If I choose rather to read the "English Journal" or "New Yorker" magazine, does that mean that I am not properly on board the education juggernaut?

To think that I somehow need to be policed is to presume that commitment can be drilled into me. To think that without an overseer, I will not communicate a love of learning to my students is mistaken. No one can understand the needs of teachers except teachers. Let us never underestimate the radical nature of this last statement.

If teaching is a vocation, as I believe it is, then it is counter-productive to listen to the siren songs of other non-teaching voices. Teaching is special. To elaborate on 'special' is to go off into airy realms indeed. Still, without constant focus on the spirit of this calling, we short-change our students and our colleagues. The younger teacher is too often seduced into putting his or her energy in non-teaching areas such as extra-curricular activities and quasi-administrative duties. Because I have the energy to devote to tasks that at one time were the sole responsibility of administrators does not mean that my energy should go there. Rather, I should be given sufficient time to create curriculum. Instead of that, I am ordered to act as technician for the objectives and texts that come out of Confederation Hill.

No one can teach under these conditions. Sure, you can give assignments, grade them, rank the grades and pass out the diplomas. I've known this for a long time. I used to say, by way of excuse for this absurdity: "All that is learned is forgotten but education remains." Nonsense. What really remains, for the vast majority of students, is a skewed notion of how to get ahead in life and a cancerous conception of how to run an institution. Thus the farce plays on into the next generation.

As if dealing with this Frankenstein job description were not burden enough, we are now in the midst of an explosion of mere paper-progress. We appear to be in a frenzy to document our every brain wave. And then we force everyone else to process the stuff. The syndrome sickens: make policies make waves make policies make waves make teachers react make policies make waves . Lost in all this is the true mandate: to serve the needs of the classroom teacher as defined by the classroom teacher. Ask an educator what his or her job is and you'll never hear this – or anything like it. (Though the contortions we go into when confronted with this challenge are a marvel to see.)

The Parent Trap

For centuries now teachers have confused public education with private parenting. The two have really very little in common. Teachers who can't separate their parenting from their school teaching must finally take responsibility for the failures of this system. And what is worse, we are now trapped in this role. School teachers are expected to be all things to their pupils – their boss and their best friend. We are no longer the custodians of a form of knowledge; now we must give succour for all the ills of civilization. What silliness. And what arrogance.

What I'm going to say next will endear me to no one. Nevertheless, I believe it is time to recognize that teachers fail when they do not own their subjects. And school boards fail when they allot resources to any end other than ensuring that teachers own and teach in their subject domains. If somebody is not able to properly teach my daughter, is it because their time is spent parenting the 30 to 130 students they're paid to teach? Or is it because they have not been granted the space necessary to own their subject? Whichever the case, those responsible for this failure are also responsible for perpetrating the private tutoring scam that flourishes in this province.

Schools must now drop the parenting schtick and become more academic. It is unfortunate that so many

teachers belittle the academic enterprise. Encounters at university with jaded, ego-driven professors and Byzantine academic departments ought not to diminish the contributions of genuine scholarship. Teachers who do not value scholarship, do not value learning. To own a subject is to be up to date on the scholarship in that field, not the pedagogy of that field. It is ludicrous to think that what is picked up in four years at university is sufficient for a 30 year teaching career.

Whether it is poorly educated teachers – let's accept that this is possible – or a system that perverts beyond recognition the spirit of the vocation, the solution is the same: we must still take back our profession from those who have usurped it. We will never satisfy the cries for accountability if we do not drive the institution that is supposed to guarantee it. (An example of the kind of change we need is a system where principals are elected from the faculty and must step down after a designated time.)

We must stop seeing ourselves as servants of self-styled curriculum gurus, and stop thinking that curriculum content is static. If our masters will not introduce sabbatical-like improvements, we must improvise them ourselves by withdrawing our services from those voluntary activities that so many of us have been brainwashed into believing are essential to our calling. And, to those teachers who argue that extra-curricular activities are the heart of the school and that without them the school day would be drudgery, I reply that you are the very people responsible for holding back the profession of teaching and dooming us all – students and teachers alike – to the very drudgery you want to escape.

The only real difference between teaching in the public school system and teaching at university is that public school teachers must be exceptional communicators and must do all they can to encourage learning. (It is a gross distortion of reality to suggest that learning is or ought to be like playing. Play does not encourage learning, it encourages more play.) But make no mistake – we do not encourage learning by shrinking content or by putting our resources in fake psychology. The latter is a perversion of pedagogy, not a refinement of it. In fact, the principles of sound pedagogy are simple: 1) understand why you are teaching (philosophy); 2) understand what you are teaching (subject knowledge); and 3) understand group dynamics (communication skills). After these three, it is only necessary to foster commitment, and autonomy will do that.

Currently, we are trapped in a role whose parameters continue to expand at the same time that the difficulty of its primary task increases. If we do not learn to narrow and sharpen our focus we will not prepare students for anything. It does not make sense to think that preparing students for what we commonly call 'life-long learning' can replace the need to know the facts and the context of one's history and culture. Let parents do the parenting; we will specialize in knowledge and its acquisition.

I have identified two reasons for the failure of education: our shared psychology of inferiority and the common illusion that we must be parents to our charges. Solutions to the problems caused by these two critical mistakes will only come out of a heightened professionalism. As it stands now, we are a leaderless and hence a witless herd. We go where the winds blow us. We mouth the platitudes of our superiors. Where we should be defining education, defining learning and, therefore, defining the role of teacher, we stupidly serve a corrupt social order and a desiccated educational philosophy. Meanwhile, the NLTA plays cheerleader to a losing team.

David B. Hickey is a teacher at Roncalli Central High School in Avondale.



Editor's Choice

for Resources on the Web

Check out these web sites

www.earthday.ca

Connects you to great activities and projects, the history of Earth Day, Earth Day Canada's programs and resources, Top 10 Pollution Solutions, EcoTrivia, useful web links, success stories and much more.

www.giss.nasa.gov/research/observe/

surftemp

This site, by the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, discusses the increase in global surface temperatures. It reiterates that NASA scientists believe that global warming is, at least partly, a consequence of human-made gases, especially carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere.

www.who.int

The World Health Organization (WHO) site provides details about how your health may be affected by climate change. Check out the main page for links to what's new, health topics, and reports from the World Health Organization.

www.whatis.com

This is a great site containing information about the Internet, computers, and information technology. It provides 2,000 individual encyclopedia definition/topics and a number of quick reference pages. The topics contain about 12,000 hyperlinked cross-references between definitive topics and to other sites. Great site when you need easy reference to those numerous technology/computer terms.

Classroom Teachers Emergency Lesson Plans

For elementary and high schools, this book contains over 90 lessons and projects to spark your class with "learn by doing" student-centered activities. Written by Jivin' Johnny (aka John Philips), a teacher for 31 years, the book is a collection of emergency lesson plans for those "Blue Mondays and Forever Fridays". It was written to help the supply teacher, the novice and the veteran who may be looking for a fresh approach in presenting important material. The "direct-from-real-life lessons" include Feeding the Folk, A Visit to Southpaw, Portrait of Your Town, Global Village, Twins, Triplets and Quads, and much more.

To obtain a copy send a cheque/money order for \$21.88 to Lesson Plans, Johnny Press, P.O. Box 756, Midland, ON, L4R 4P4.

CALENDAR

OF UPCOMING EVENTS



SAC AGM and Conference

April 5-7, 2000

Hotel Gander. Contact Wayne Witherall,

Tel: 709-256-8662, Fax: 709-256-8551; or George Tucker, Tel: 709-726-3682 (s) or 709-753-4001 (h),
Fax: 709-726-1012.

Technology Education Conference

April 12-14, 2000

Hotel Gander. Contact Tom Kingston, Tel: 709-466-2713, Fax: 709-466-1006, e-mail: tking@stemnet.nf.ca.

Art Conference

May 18-19, 2000

Airport Plaza Inn, St. John's. Contact Cindy Wheeler, Tel: 709-655-2022, Fax: 709-655-2037, e-mail:
cwheeler@stemnet.nf.ca.

Program Specialists SIC Conference

May 24-26, 2000

Grand Falls-Windsor. Contact Christine Cole or Wayne Hallett, Tel: 709-489-2168, Fax: 709-489-2543, e-mail: ctcole@stemnet.nf.ca or whallett@stemnet.nf.ca.

New Frontiers, New Traditions

July 6-8, 2000

St. John's. Join colleagues in a national conference whose aims encompass the development of interest of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), the recruitment of young women into STEM career paths, and the retention and leadership of women in these fields by ensuring their career objectives are met. The event, 8th in a series of national conferences, is being organized by Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter and Memorial University's Chair for Women in Science and Engineering. For information check www.mun.ca/cwse, or contact Carolyn J. Emerson, Conference Chair, Tel: 709-737-7960, e-mail: emerson@engr.mun.ca.

Lethbridge - Morley's Siding Come Home Year

July 15-23, 2000

The Lethbridge - Morley's Siding Come Home Year Committee extends an invitation to all current and former teachers of the area to return for Come Home Year celebrations. A special evening is being planned in your honour. Contact Wayne Dawe, Tel: 709-467-2250, e-mail: wdawe@stemnet.nf.ca, or Lori Murphy, Tel: 709-467-9702, e-mail: lmurphy@stemnet.nf.ca.

NCTM Conference

July 19-22, 2000

World Trade and Convention Centre, Halifax. An international conference for teachers of mathematics (Primary - Grade 12), sponsored jointly by the Nova Scotia Mathematics Teachers Association and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Over 200 workshops, sessions, and mini-courses will be offered by leaders in mathematics from across North America. Program booklets will be sent to schools in May. A block of rooms have been reserved at the Delta Hotel. To book a room, telephone 1-800-765-1726.

Teachers may register for the conference by calling 1-800-235-7566, using a credit card for payment.

North Atlantic Forum 2000

September 24-27, 2000

Corner Brook. North Atlantic Forum 2000 is the second in a series of international conferences examining innovative approaches to economic development at the community, regional and national levels around the periphery of the North Atlantic. Sponsored by Memorial University of Newfoundland and College of the North Atlantic, the conference will explore the relationship between economic development and the themes of local governance, organized labour, education and training. For further information contact Harvey Weir, Executive Director of Continuing Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Tel: 709-737-7921; Fax: 709-737-7941; e-mail: hweir@stemnet.nf.ca.

Eastern Horizons Conference

October 19-22, 2000

Hotel Newfoundland, St. John's. Co-sponsored by the NLTA Learning Resources Council and the St. John's Branch of the Children's Literature Roundtable. This conference will be a celebration of Canadian children's and young adult literature featuring presentations by a variety of Canadian authors, illustrators and educators, highlighting some of the best literature from across the country. Contact Heather Myers, Children's Librarian, A.C. Hunter Public Library, St. John's, Tel: 709-737-3317.

Note: Contact the Professional Development Division at the NLTA for any changes or additions to NLTA Special Interest Council workshops/conferences.