



MAKING THE TRANSITION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What if...



How much...

How do I...

What if...



1. If I have my education degree, does that mean I am qualified to teach?

Even though you have completed your degree, you are not legally permitted to teach in this province until your Teacher's Certificate has been issued by the Registrar of Teachers, Department of Education. Applications for teacher certification are available from the Registrar of Teacher Certification, Department of Education, P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6; or by calling (709) 729-3020; or from the following website which provides all required information and application forms for the teacher certification process: www.gov.nf.ca/edu/k12/tcert.htm.

2. What if I accept a job and then get another (better) offer?

As a teacher, if you were offered employment in a phone call by authorized school board personnel, you would consider yourself to have a job. Likewise, if you accepted the offer, a board would expect to have an employee. While an oral contract may be harder to enforce, a contract, whether oral or written, is binding on both parties. If a teacher breaks a contract, the employer has the right to request suspension of that teacher's teaching certificate (Section 10 of the Teacher Training Act). Should you accept a contract and then wish to be released from it, you can request this of the board; however, they can require you to abide by the conditions of Article 12: Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 48: Labrador West Collective Agreement).

3. What if I'm offered a 'probationary' contract? Is that the same as a 'permanent' contract?

Unless specifically being hired on a term contract, all teacher contracts are permanent. Teachers with no previous teaching experience in the province are placed on a "permanent" probationary contract for the first two (2) years. In order to be granted tenure, a teacher must successfully meet the employer's expectations during the probationary period and then enter into continuous employment the following year. Tenure brings with it the full protection of the Collective Agreement.



4. How much money will I make in my first year? What other benefits do I get?

Salary scales are published as Schedule C in the Provincial Collective Agreement (Schedule A: Labrador West Agreement) and can be accessed on the NLTA's website (www.nlta.nl.ca; go to "Publications," 'Collective Agreements'). Starting salaries vary depending on a teacher's level of certification from the Department of Education. Most new teachers with five (5) years of university training and an education degree will be placed at Certificate V, Step 1. Take home salary will be approximately 70 percent of the salary listed since amounts are deducted for Income Tax, Teacher Pension Premiums, Canada Pension Premiums, Employment Insurance, Group Insurance, and other such expenses. The annual salary is divided over 26 equal pay periods from September to August.

5. What if I need help after I've started teaching?

The need for assistance is a natural occurrence for everyone beginning a teaching career. Remember that, as a teacher, you are part of a broader professional community which includes your school, your district, and your province. A formal Teacher Induction Program was introduced in the province in 1999 which would pair you, as a new teacher, with a mentor. Ask if it is operating in the district where you are hired. Don't forget your school community – your colleagues on staff, your school district central office (personnel/human resources; programs), your professional association (Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association), and Memorial University's Faculty of Education. There are people in all of these organizations with a responsibility, an interest, and a willingness to help. Just ask!



6. What's the best way to manage my classroom so that there are no behaviour problems?

There really is no one “best” way to manage a classroom, and it is almost certain that throughout your career you will encounter behaviour problems. One of the keys to success in classroom management is to establish a safe and secure environment for students and ensure an atmosphere of cooperation. Provide some choices and freedom within clearly established limits. Such an environment is inviting, encouraging, and fosters responsibility, and it results in mutual respect between teacher and students. Involve students in designing a classroom code of conduct and together make a small list of rules and consequences which everyone agrees with and understands. In short, implement what the latest brain research now confirms and provide your students with as many positive emotional experiences as possible. If you need ideas and techniques for dealing with specific behavior problems, become familiar with the specific practical techniques provided in the cooperative learning literature.

7. How do I make sure that what I'm teaching will reach every student in the classroom?

Meeting the needs of diverse learning styles, multiple intelligences, and ability levels is a real challenge. In planning learning experiences, always remember that all students have preferences and strengths in different ways of learning. Structure your lessons around a variety of learning strategies which provide options for students and have a balance between direct instruction, interactive instruction, and experiential learning. There will likely be students of different ability levels in your classroom. You will need to become familiar with the Pathways framework and how to modify or alter courses to help meet their needs.



8. What if I just don't see eye to eye with some of the other teachers on staff?

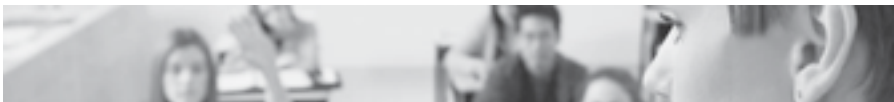
One of the challenges of any workplace is to be able to work well with colleagues. This is best achieved when common goals are shared and divergent thinking is valued. There will be times when an individual may struggle to be heard on issues of personal and professional principle. Here are some thoughts for consideration:

- Have you examined the issue from someone else's perspective? Are you truly able to value the position of the other people involved? Does your position need to be re-examined?
- Can you be true to your principles of practice without impacting how the other teacher(s) will function?
- If not, try having a collegial conversation with the person(s) concerned; seek assistance from someone else... always with the knowledge of the person involved; and, if absolutely necessary, prepare your concerns in writing and provide a copy for the person(s) with whom you have the difficulty. That person is entitled to be aware of your actions and to respond appropriately.
- Refrain from making this a conversation item with other staff, students, and parents. Be loyal to the absent!

Remember the NLTA Code of Ethics. It is your guide to professional behaviour.

9. As a brand new teacher, what is my relationship with others in the system – the principal? the board office staff?

The principal is there as a colleague to support you at all times in your efforts to establish your teaching career. You can call upon the principal to help you solve problems, to share successes, to make contacts, to lend an ear, to give advice, and generally to support your efforts in the classroom and the school in general. In some schools there will be department heads to help with specific curriculum support issues. School districts provide support for professional development and curriculum resources and, as a new teacher, you should work through your school to establish the link with appropriate school district personnel.

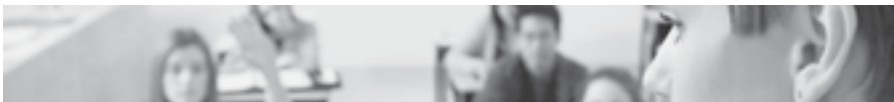


10. How do I establish a good working relationship with parents and the community?

The support and cooperation of the parents of your students will be one of the best aids to your teaching. If you reach out to the parents early in the school year before a problem occurs, you will have an excellent chance of gaining that support and cooperation. Parents and the community in general welcome calls from the school as often they feel they want to help but need to be shown some direction. Call when things are going well... not just when there's a problem!

11. What if I make a mistake?

The question is not "if" but "when." Everyone makes mistakes, and in the transition from being a student and learning how to teach and taking on that full responsibility, you are sure to do a few things that are not strictly as they should be. Remember "to err is human. It is important, however, to acknowledge mistakes and try to correct them" whether that be a simple correction of information or a major shift in the way you do things. A daily or weekly reflection on your practice is an important part of your analysis of what you're doing well and what mistakes you may be making. Ask for feedback from colleagues, too – both in identifying and assisting with mistakes. Where students are concerned, never pretend to know everything! Tell them if you simply don't know something. They'll quickly find out if you're bluffing!



12. What if I discover that teaching is just not for me?

Hopefully, you will have had enough experiences to know whether teaching is a good choice of profession for you before you get to the classroom. Don't confuse a bad day (we all have them once in a while) with a bad professional choice. But, should it happen that you really believe you need to get out, take it slowly – do it properly and protect yourself both personally and professionally. Talk to your principal, or if necessary, someone at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. Employee Assistance personnel can confidentially provide counselling; the Benefits and Economic Services Division will advise you regarding your contract obligations and assist you as necessary to minimize any long-term negative impact of these circumstances.



If you have any further questions, please contact Beverley Park at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association at 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, Ext.241.

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