

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
T H E

# bulletin

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November/December 2018





## *Up Front* from the President



As I write this *Upfront* it has only been a few days since I was notified that I would be remaining as President of our Association for the 2019-21 term of office. It

has been my privilege to serve as your President and I am honored to continue. I am very proud of the work that the Executive has accomplished on behalf of our membership; however, it is important to acknowledge that there is still much more to be done. Together with Vice-President Trent Langdon and the other members of Provincial Executive, we all will work to address your concerns and continue to advocate on behalf of the membership and students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We all know how important education is to the fabric of our province and how it is the best path to moving beyond our current economic challenges and into the brighter future that we all desire and our children deserve. To that end, I have continued to bring our very important message to various stakeholders and special interest groups around the province. I have addressed several Rotary Clubs and there are plans to speak to others.

Provincial Chambers of Commerce are also an important audience for our message and I am scheduled to address several in the coming months. My message to these groups is that when education is treated as an investment there are social, health, and economic benefits to the province. There is a critical difference between viewing education as an investment in our collective futures and viewing it as an expense.

When we view education as an expense, the pattern is to reduce the expenditure, to reduce what is provided, to reduce what our students receive. As an investment, the pattern is to support the system, to support our children, our students and all of our futures.

Our responsibility extends beyond the classroom and we must continue to be advocates for what we believe our children deserve. Not the best education possible under the circumstances, but the best possible education. Period.

One of the things that I miss most about my previous role in education is that I do not get to interact as often directly with students. As a teacher this is something that I, and I expect most of you, see as a very positive feature of being a teacher. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, I make a point of speaking to groups of students and discussing how I feel my job as NLTA President is an important one. Some of these students look at me with

curious expressions and I challenge them to explain why my job is important. The first question I ask them is, "Who are the most important individuals in our school system?" After a little bit of prodding the students eventually land on the correct answer – and that would be them. I then explain what my job is – to ensure that our schools, and teachers, have what they need to educate students. They often ask that if they are the most important individuals in the school system, then why am I not trying to get them what they need. Again, after a bit of discussion, the answer becomes clear. If teachers get what they need, students get what they need. In short, my job is important because they are important.

With the holiday season soon upon us I want to wish each and every one of you a safe and relaxing break. Much success and happiness for 2019.

Until next time,



# THE bulletin

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## CONTENTS

### Features

- 8 Programs & Services**  
*NLTA Funding for Professional Learning Opportunities*  
by John Veitch

- 10 What Difference Will It Make?**  
*Reporting Violence in Your Workplace*  
by Miriam Sheppard

- 11 Your Workday: Yours to Protect**  
by Miriam Sheppard

- 12 Group Insurance**  
*Group Insurance Part One: Are You Covered?*  
by Darrin Pike

- 15 Hats Off!**  
*Music Special Interest Council 2018 Award Recipients*

- 16 In the Music Classroom**  
*A Practical Application of Google Forms in the Music Classroom*  
by Dr. Ann Marie Lane

- 18 Research**  
*Student-Centered Learning in Science and the Potential for Inclusion*  
by Patrick Wells & Joy Ricketts

- 20 Autism in the Classroom**  
*Top Three Sensory Challenges in the Classroom: From Lived Experience*  
by Trudy Goold

- 22 Of Special Interest**  
*Health Education Council News*

### Departments

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Up Front from the President | 2  |
| On Location News            | 4  |
| News and Events             | 23 |

## EDUCATION WEEK LA SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION 2019

Go the Extra Mile  
Aller plus loin

Opening Ceremonies to be held at Memorial Academy in Botwood on Monday, March 4.

Information and resources will be mailed to schools early in the new year.



# PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

### School Rep Seminars 2018

A series of school rep seminars took place this fall in Plum Point on October 12-13, Clarenville on October 19-20, and Deer Lake on November 2-3.

The sessions consisted of an overview of the organizational and operational framework of the NLTA, a "Wheels on the Bus" activity to allow school reps to show their knowledge of the NLTA's programs and services, a review of the roles and responsibilities of the school rep, small group sessions on the relationships of school reps with branches and provincial executive, role plays and case studies on various scenarios that school reps may be involved in, current topics and issues/concerns, an update on collective bargaining, and a question and answer session.



NLTA President Dean Ingram bringing greetings at this year's school rep seminars.

School reps who attended had the opportunity to take part in an online scavenger hunt to review the NLTA website. Three school reps were selected at random from all who participated and received an NLTA prize package.

Feedback from each of the seminars was very positive and will be used in the planning of the next round of school rep seminars.



School reps taking part in a "Wheels on the Bus" activity at the school rep seminar in Plum Point.



NLTA Administrative Officer Miriam Sheppard answering questions at the school rep seminar in Clarenville.



NLTA Assistant Executive Director Stefanie Tuff reviewing the organizational and operational framework of NLTA at the school rep seminar in Deer Lake.

## The 2019 Prime Minister's Awards competition is now open

Teachers play an important role helping to build the next generation of successful, caring, and creative Canadians. We all remember a teacher that changed our lives. The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence, Teaching Excellence in STEM, and Excellence in Early Childhood Education honour exemplary teachers and early childhood educators who are preparing our youth for the innovation economy.

Prime Minister's Awards recipients can receive:

- Cash awards worth up to \$5,000
- A certificate from the Prime Minister
- National recognition and promotion of their best teaching practices

Consider nominating an educator for a 2019 Prime Minister's Award! Download your nomination package and a poster today by visiting [www.pma.gc.ca](http://www.pma.gc.ca). Submit your nomination electronically or by mail before January 14, 2019.

## Le concours des Prix du premier ministre 2019 est maintenant partie

Les enseignants jouent un rôle important pour créer la prochaine génération de Canadiens qui réussissent, qui s'occupent des autres et qui sont créatifs. Nous nous rappelons tous d'un enseignant ou d'une enseignante qui a marqué nos vies. Les Prix du premier ministre pour l'excellence en enseignement, pour l'excellence en STEM, et en éducation de la petite enfance, servent à honorer les enseignants d'exception qui préparent nos jeunes dans une économie d'innovation.

Les lauréats du prix peuvent recevoir :

- Des primes en espèces d'une valeur allant jusqu'à 5 000 \$
- Un certificat du premier ministre
- La reconnaissance nationale et la promotion de leurs pratiques exemplaires en enseignement

Veuillez songer à nommer un candidat ou une candidate pour le Prix 2019 du premier ministre! Téléchargez votre dossier de mise en candidature et une affiche dès aujourd'hui en visitant notre site Web à [www.ppm.gc.ca](http://www.ppm.gc.ca). Déposez votre nomination électroniquement ou par la poste avant le 14 janvier 2019.



**Kids Eat Smart  
Foundation**  
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

## SUSTAINING OUR KES BREAKFAST CLUB

The start of the school year seems like a distant memory as our thoughts turn to the holiday season and long snowy winter days. Our KES Breakfast Clubs are in full swing now. We are thankful to our volunteers, donors and school community for ensuring breakfast is ready when kids arrive at school in the mornings.

Every KES Breakfast has an average cost of \$1. Funding to support our KES Breakfast Clubs comes from many sources. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has made a commitment of \$1.1 million annually over three years through a multi-year agreement. We raise approximately \$1 million through our Corporate and Community Partners and fundraising efforts of the Foundation. Our schools raise approximately \$1.4 million in their local communities.

We understand it's not always easy for teachers, principals, school staff and volunteers to take on additional fundraising activities to support your KES Breakfast Clubs. However, your support is critical to sustain our Breakfast program. We are truly grateful that you have embraced events like our TD Walk to Breakfast and Breakfast Blitz, or have developed your own fundraising activities that work for your school.

This year's TD Walk to Breakfast, held in October, was an incredible success. We had over 150 schools participating – the most ever. This province-wide event raised close to \$200,000 in support of our Breakfast Clubs. It is through your efforts that these events happen.

Breakfast Blitz 2018-2019 will happen on February 28, 2019. This is a great opportunity to get the entire school community involved. Schools ask family, friends, and community members to donate a non-perishable breakfast food item in support of your KES Clubs. We have a list of food items that are available to schools. The Foundation supports this event with posters and schools may request an electronic version, social media, and radio advertisements.

The Kids Eat Smart Foundation NL website has a "donate" button that is available to everyone. If a person chooses to donate online, they may designate their gift to your KES Club. In this case, 100 per cent of the donation will be sent to your school. It's an easy way to donate, get a tax receipt and ensure their gift is sent to your school. They may donate at [www.kidseatssmart.ca/donate](http://www.kidseatssmart.ca/donate). Donors understand and appreciate knowing that a \$20 donation is breakfast for a child for a month and that \$190 is breakfast for a child for the entire school year.

Thank you for your continued support of your KES Breakfast Clubs. We will work together to ensure our children start their days with a healthy breakfast. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact us at 1-877-722-1996 or [info@kidseatssmart.ca](mailto:info@kidseatssmart.ca). For great recipes, tips and ideas to help your KES Breakfast Club, please follow us on Facebook and Twitter @KidsEatSmartNL.

## CTF Imagineaction applications sought for 2018-19 school year

To all registered Imagineaction users, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) is happy to announce that they are up and running once again for the 2018-19 school year.

As you begin thinking about the types of projects you might be undertaking, CTF would ask that you continue addressing the six Imagineaction themes: Connect, Engage, Thrive, Lead, Live, and Care.

However, beginning this 2018-19 school year, given that Imagineaction is a resource which is part of the CTF's Social Justice Program, and that CTF is a social justice seeking organization, they would also ask that you consider the following three criteria when coming up with your project ideas:

On a local level: What is the vision or mission statement of your school or school board/district? Does your project align with this vision/mission statement?

On a national/Canada-wide level: Does your project contain an element of Social Justice or Human Rights education?

On a global level: Can you encourage your students to start thinking globally by connecting your project to the (UN) United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? The SDGs can be found at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

Other factors to consider as you prepare your submission include: the importance/potential long-term effects or benefits of the project; detailed plans and descriptions; and curriculum connections. Here are just a few among many strong projects in the Imagineaction "Showcase" which you might want to look at as you begin planning your potential project:

- "Speaking Our Truth" (Prince Albert, SK)
- "Edmund Partridge Community Kitchen" (Winnipeg, MB)
- "Foire de santé mentale" (Victoria, BC)
- "Daisies for Diabetes" (Red Lake, ON)

The Canadian Teachers' Federation is very excited to start receiving your applications, and to begin reading about all of the wonderful Social Justice projects you will be undertaking!

## Copyright Update

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Copyright Consortium has recently shared new copyright awareness materials for use by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member organizations.

Online resources can be accessed on the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca). Go to "Publications" and click on "C" for Copyright Information.

## NLTA Member Information Update Contest Winners Announced

Thank you to all NLTA members who participated in our recent Member Information Update Contest. Over 6,000 teachers were sent personalized emails on a weekly basis and each week those who completed their information were entered for a chance to win a **\$100 VISA** gift card. The weekly winners were as follows:

**October 26:** **Sandra Tippet**, Phoenix Academy, Carmanville

**November 2:** **Suzanne Hogg**, Exploits Valley High, Grand Falls-Windsor

**November 9:** **Lori Bishop**, Crescent Collegiate, South Dildo

**November 16:** **Jillian Cross**, Jakeman All Grade, Trout River

**November 23:**  
(not available at time of printing)

In early December, all names of those who updated their information will be entered in a draw for an additional prize package of various NLTA promotional items as well as a **\$200 VISA** gift card.

**Congratulations to all our winners and thank you to those who updated their information!**





## NLTA STAFF CHANGES

### APPOINTMENT NOTICES

The NLTA is pleased to announce the following staff appointments:

#### DEANA HATCHER

Deana Hatcher has been appointed to the position of **Administrative Officer, Programs and Services**, effective October 22, 2018. Deana has a broad range of experiences within the education sector. She is a teacher who has served in senior leadership roles within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development including Director of School Services, Manager of Language Programs (Bilingual) and most recently as Registrar of Teacher Certification.

#### JEANINE WARFORD

Jeanine Warford has been appointed to the position of **Assistant to the Executive Director, Corporate Services**, effective September 1, 2018. Jeanine was hired as an **Administrative Assistant, Programs and Services** on September 16, 2015. She graduated from Keyin College in 2012 with an Office Administration Diploma. Before joining the NLTA staff, Jeanine worked as an Administrative Assistant with AMEC Foster Wheeler Americas Limited in St. John's.

### RETIREMENTS

#### SUSAN CARDOULIS

Susan Cardoulis retired from the NLTA on August 31, 2018 following a 28-year career with the Association. She joined the staff of the NLTA in 1990 as Communications Secretary. In 1994 she was appointed Secretary, Teacher Welfare and in 2000 she took on the position of Secretary, Professional Development. In 2015 she was appointed to the position of Assistant to Senior Management, Corporate Services/Programs and Services.

In her most recent position as Assistant to Senior Management, Susan was responsible for reporting on a day-to-day basis to the Executive Director and the Assistant Executive Director, and for human resource matters to the Manager of Corporate Services. She performed administrative and office support activities in preparation and delivery of corporate services and programs and services provided by the NLTA, including providing administrative support to the Executive Director and the Assistant Executive Director. She also provided administrative support in the areas of governance and administration.

The Association would like to wish Susan much happiness in her recent retirement.


## PARTICIPATION NATION

### Countdown to *Christmas* CHALLENGE December 3rd-21st



#### LEARN MORE:

 /SSNLParticipationNation

 /SchoolSportsNL





# NLTA Funding for Professional Learning Opportunities

by JOHN VEITCH

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association recognizes that professional learning is integral to achieving excellence in our education system. Teachers seek professional development opportunities for a variety of personal and professional goals and the NLTA strives to support members in these efforts. In addition to designing and delivering PD for teachers, the Association offers a variety of opportunities and funding to its members for professional development. As you consider your professional learning goals, you should keep the following NLTA initiatives and supports in mind:

## **Centennial Research Award**

Through the Centennial Fund, the NLTA provides financial support for educational research projects initiated and/or approved by the Association. The NLTA funds a maximum of three research projects in any one academic year and preference will be given to classroom-based research conducted within an action research model. Thesis writing or other work for which university credit is being earned will not qualify. Proposals/applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and will be considered by the Professional Issues Committee.

## **Centennial Study Award**

These study grants are awarded to active members on an annual basis to support professional development of certified teachers in full-time studies. The Professional Issues Committee presents at least two awards annually, valued at \$2,500 each, provided suitable applications are received and sufficient funds are available. Applications must be submitted to the NLTA by March 31 for study in the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter semesters following the deadline.

## **Conference for Beginning Teachers**

The NLTA, in collaboration with the school districts and Memorial University, holds a conference for new teachers each fall. The sessions examine classroom strategies and real-life school situations and

are designed to equip teachers with skills to excel in their profession. Space is limited and selected participants receive a travel subsidy and hotel accommodation if required.

## **CONTACT**

The Conference on New Techniques and Classroom Teaching (CONTACT) is a joint project of the teacher associations of the Atlantic Provinces. Sessions are facilitated by teachers on a variety of topics and designed to send participants back to the classroom equipped with new ideas and enthusiasm. CONTACT is held in August each year and applications are due in early May. The NLTA pays the registration, accommodations and meals of selected delegates and also provides travel subsidies.

## **Developing Successful Schools Institute (DSS)**

The Developing Successful Schools Institute is intended for administrators, teachers and other educators from Atlantic Canada. All NLTA members may apply and first time DSS delegates will be given preference. The NLTA sponsors a maximum of 10 delegates annually and covers registration, accommodations and meals. Travel subsidies are also provided. DSS is held in Sackville, New Brunswick each July and the application deadline is in early May.

## **Grant for Out of Province Professional Development (PD Fund)**

The Professional Development Fund provides grants for PD which is not funded through any other NLTA program. Teachers identify an area of personal professional interest which they wish to pursue through an out-of-province (or in-province between Labrador and the island) professional development session. Applications require prior approval and are due on the third Thursday of each month from September to June. Travel and registration expenses are eligible, to a maximum of \$500, once every five years, provided sufficient funds are available.



### International Conference Presenter

The NLTA may provide funding to active members who are presenters at international conferences. Submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis and considered by the Professional Issues Committee. Retroactive funding is not available.

### Johnson Bursaries

Johnson Incorporated makes \$2,000 available to the NLTA annually to be awarded to teachers in full-time attendance at university. The value of the awards will depend on the number of awards granted by the Professional Issues Committee (e.g. two \$1,000 or four \$500). Applications must be received at the NLTA office by April 1. Bursaries awarded are to be used for study undertaken in the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter semesters following this deadline.

### Project Overseas

Project Overseas is a joint program of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member organizations to provide professional assistance to fellow teachers in developing countries. The NLTA provides funding to support one teacher from this province annually for this initiative. Applications are due in early November. Project Overseas operates as a summer project, usually for two or three weeks in July.

### School Administrators' Professional Development Fund

This fund provides grants to groups of administrators for major professional development initiatives. Proposals for a Professional Development Project will be accepted from the SAC Provincial Executive, SAC Regional Executives, or other teams of administrators. This program also funds individual administrators to enhance their skills and knowledge. Individual proposals for professional development must be part of a sustained plan, which includes sharing with and mentoring other administrators. All project proposals must be received by November 30. Submissions after that date will be considered on an ongoing basis, depending on the availability of funds.

### Special Interest Councils (SICs)

Special Interest Councils are professional learning communities dedicated to life-long learning and the ongoing professional growth of NLTA members. Their mandate includes offering a range of professional development programs, including conferences, institutes, focus groups, teleconferences, and e-learning initiatives. The Association provides funding to SICs to help them achieve their objectives.

### Teachers Talking to Teachers

The Teachers Talking to Teachers Program provides an opportunity for teachers to share expertise and innovative practice with colleagues. The program subsidizes expenses for teachers to travel within Newfoundland and Labrador to provide professional development to colleagues. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.

Teachers are reminded that there may be funding available from outside agencies for classroom initiatives. The NLTA lists professional learning opportunities on its website. [www.nlta.nl.ca/pd\\_opportunities/](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/pd_opportunities/)

As well, Programs and Services personnel can provide sessions on a wide range of topics, including financial wellness, pre-retirement planning, legal issues in education and substitute teacher sessions. NLTA staff also work with school, Districts and the government on specific professional development initiatives.

For additional information about these programs, please contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599. Emailed inquiries to [mail@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.nl.ca) will be directed to appropriate Programs and Services staff.

*John Veitch is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*

## NLTA CHRISTMAS HOURS

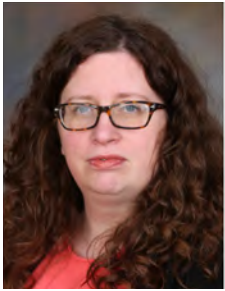
Please be advised that the NLTA building will be **CLOSED** from

**December 24<sup>th</sup>  
to January 1<sup>st</sup>  
(inclusive)**

to allow staff to enjoy the holiday season.

The office will reopen on January 2, 2019.





## *What Difference Will it Make?* Reporting Violence in Your Workplace

by MIRIAM SHEPPARD

Reports of violence in schools are becoming more frequent. Section 4 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) requires employers in Newfoundland and Labrador to, within reasonably practical limits, provide a work environment that ensures the health and safety of employees. In the school setting, this means that, with respect to students, parents/guardians or other individuals who are physically aggressive/violent, school districts have a legal responsibility to ensure that the proper preventive measures, supports and training are in place to enable teachers to work without unreasonable threat to their own safety. What is necessary to ensure employee safety is case specific and depends on the nature of the situation.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012 (Regulations) specifically address the issue of violence in the workplace as a health and safety concern. Section 22 of the Regulations defines violence as “the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of physical force to cause injury to a worker, and includes threatening statements or behaviour which gives a worker reason to believe that he or she is at a risk of injury.” Some teachers work closely with students who have behavioural challenges and have limited ability to regulate their own conduct. While the actions of the aggressors are not always within their control, an intent to act violently or to cause harm is not required to trigger the employer’s obligations. What is necessary to ensure employee safety is case specific and depends on the nature of the situation.

It is important not to normalize violence in the workplace. It is also critical to report violent incidents when they occur. From a legal perspective, OHSA requires workers, while at work, to take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and that of workers and other persons at or near the workplace. Further, where a worker believes that a tool, appliance or piece of equipment, or an aspect of the workplace, is or may be dangerous to their health or that

of other workers at the workplace or another person at the workplace, the worker must immediately report it to his or her supervisor. This duty to report includes workplace violence. Reporting obligations are also found in the NLESD’s and CSFP’s violence prevention policies, which require workers, including teachers, to report all violence related incidents.

Reporting must trigger timely responsive action. When an incident of workplace violence is reported, a risk assessment must be performed. If a risk assessment concludes that there is a risk of violence, the employer must implement procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risk to workers from violence, or to minimize the risk in cases where elimination is impossible. The age and cognitive ability of the student(s) in question will have an impact on the type of options that are appropriate in any situation. As well, it may be necessary to consider different approaches when the risk of violence comes from the behaviour of a parent/guardian as opposed to a student.

In addition to reporting violent incidents to their employers, teachers should not hesitate to report violent incidents to the Association. A Violent Incident Tracking Form can be accessed under the forms listed on the NLTA website ([www.nlta.nl.ca/nlta-violent-incident-tracking-form/](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/nlta-violent-incident-tracking-form/)). Teachers can use this form to document violent behavior and/or conduct in the workplace. Information provided through the Violent Incident Tracking Form is used ONLY for collective bargaining research and the identities of teachers who use the form will not be disclosed.

Reporting violence is not a “when I have time” task. Risks of violence can only be addressed when they are reported and documented quickly and appropriately. Teachers who require assistance from the Association should call an Administrative Officer as soon as possible.

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

# Your Workday: Yours to Protect

by MIRIAM SHEPPARD

Schedule E of the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements prohibits the school districts from “altering conditions as they currently exist for teachers”, with respect to the length of the workday for teachers, the length of the instructional day for students, and the hours of classroom instruction for teachers. Most commonly, this component of the Agreements is considered in the context of the teacher workday. Increasing the length of the teacher workday is a violation of the collective agreement. Some examples of possible Schedule E violations include:

- Extending the length of evening sessions for parent-teacher interviews from the time allotted in previous years;
- Adding new types of mandatory after-school meetings;
- An increase in the frequency or duration of currently existing after-school meetings;
- Changing the starting and ending times of the school day without adjustments to ensure that the overall length of the workday is not increased.

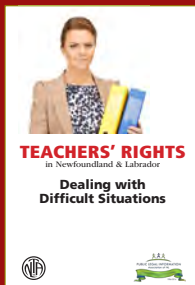
Teachers who have concerns about potential Schedule E violations should contact the Association immediately. Labour relations is predicated on timely dispute resolution and the Collective Agreements provide timelines for filing grievances. With respect to a potential grievance against the school district, (such as a Schedule E case), a teacher has fifteen calendar days to grieve, and this period begins at the time of the occurrence or discovery of the incident giving rise to the grievance.

Failure to adhere to timelines can be fatal to a grievance. The Agreements provide: *If advantage of the provisions of this Article has not been taken within the time periods specified herein, the grievance shall be deemed to be abandoned and cannot be reopened.*

Therefore, it is very important to seek advice and assistance from NLTA as soon as possible as failure to follow timelines may result in the denial of the grievance, regardless of its merit.

All teachers should be vigilant against any initiative which lengthens the school day and undermines the protection afforded by Schedule E. Association members who have questions or concerns in relation to Schedule E should contact the NLTA for advice and assistance.

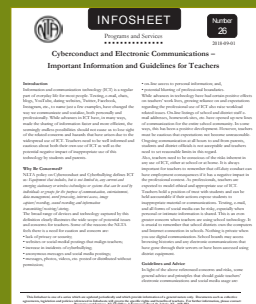
## DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS ON THE NLTA WEBSITE?



**Teachers' Rights In Newfoundland and Labrador: Dealing with Difficult Situations**  
[http://files.nlta.nl.ca/wp-content/uploads/public/documents/brochures/tchrs\\_rights\\_jun14.pdf](http://files.nlta.nl.ca/wp-content/uploads/public/documents/brochures/tchrs_rights_jun14.pdf)

### Cyberconduct and Electronic Communications – Important Information and Guidelines for Teachers — Infosheet No. 26

[http://files.nlta.nl.ca/wp-content/uploads/public/documents/infosheets/info\\_26.pdf](http://files.nlta.nl.ca/wp-content/uploads/public/documents/infosheets/info_26.pdf)



**A video on Social Media for Teachers**  
[www.nlta.nl.ca/socialmedia](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/socialmedia)

There is a full list of **Professional Development Conferences and Opportunities** at  
[www.nlta.nl.ca/pd\\_opportunities/](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/pd_opportunities/)



The Member Services page ([www.nlta.nl.ca/member-services](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/member-services)) contains the Discount Program for Teachers ([www.nlta.nl.ca/discounts](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/discounts)) as well as Group Insurance, Pension Information and details on how to update your NLTA member information.

**Go to [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca) for news/events, publications, information on programs and services, resources, and everything an NLTA member needs to know about their Association.**





## Group Insurance: Part One

# Are You Covered?

by DARRIN PIKE

Since I joined the staff of the NLTA and started working with the Group Insurance program, I have had many positive experiences helping teachers navigate the insurance world. When coping with a major illness, understanding and having some certainty about your benefits can help relieve some of the stress. On the flip side, it has been heart-breaking on occasions when I have had to inform a teacher they no longer have a benefit that they were counting on, which is what has motivated me to write this article, along with “Part Two” which will appear in the next edition of *The Bulletin*. Here in “Part One”, I will focus on benefits teachers are automatically enrolled in when they first become members of the NLTA: Basic Life Insurance (including a spousal/dependent benefit), Basic Accidental Death and Dismemberment, Health, Dental, Long Term Disability, and Critical Illness. While this is not intended to be a full overview of all details of these programs, I will highlight some important points that all teachers should be aware of.

### **Basic Life Insurance (with spousal benefit) and Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D)**

The cost of these benefits is relatively inexpensive. The exact premium is based on the teacher's salary. Basic Life Insurance premiums are typically in the \$4-\$6 range per pay period; AD&D could currently run around \$1 per pay period. Government contributes to the cost of these two programs, which helps to keep the cost very competitive. Under Basic Life Insurance, the coverage/payout to your beneficiary in the case of your death would be twice your annual salary (twice annual pension for retired teachers), and the same coverage would be available under AD&D coverage in the case of death due to an accident.

My experience has taught me a number of lessons about certain realities that all teachers should be aware of. It is important to understand that, if a teacher voluntarily discontinues certain coverages, re-enrollment is not automatic should they wish to resume coverage at some point in the future.

For example, if a teacher were to discontinue Life Insurance during a period of unpaid leave (such as maternity leave), this would result in that teacher upon return to work having to re-apply with medical evidence and insurance company approval in order to be reinstated for benefits. There have been other instances where a teacher has just forgotten to re-enroll in the program after discontinuing. Ultimately, the downside is that, in the event of that teacher's death, surviving family members (if designated as beneficiaries) would not receive that benefit. To put this in perspective, in the absence of Life Insurance and AD&D (in the event of death due to an accident) coverage, a deceased teacher's surviving spouse would only be entitled to receive a survivor's pension, valued at 60 percent of the pension benefit accumulated at the time of the teacher's passing. In this scenario, the family income would be dramatically reduced.

Let's look at an example: a teacher who passes with 20 years of pensionable service is at the top of the scale for Certificate 6, earning \$81,531 annually. Based on this salary and service, the teacher's pension (if he/she were pension eligible) would be approximately 40% of that annual salary, approximately \$32,600. Accordingly, the yearly benefit the teacher's surviving spouse would be entitled to would be 60% of that amount, or about \$19,500. This is a significant decrease in income for the teacher's surviving family members. Life Insurance benefits would assist with funeral costs, potential outstanding debt and help the surviving family maintain their living standard following a significant loss of income. For a cost to the teacher of approximately \$5-\$6 per pay period for basic Life Insurance and AD&D coverage, the teacher's beneficiaries would receive, based on the facts used in my example, approximately \$160,000, or about \$320,000 if the death was due to an accident. In many cases, adding additional, voluntary coverage is essential to adequately compensate for loss of family income, which I will address that in my next article.

### Health

Health is one of the more expensive coverages in the NLTA Group Insurance Program, at a cost to teachers of about \$50.00 (single coverage) or \$75.00 (family coverage) per pay period. Government's current contribution rate is approximately \$21.00 (single coverage) or \$53.00 (family coverage). The number one distressing situation I have seen with respect to Health Insurance has been that of teachers who discontinued coverage during a period of unpaid leave who were deemed uninsurable upon a medical assessment when they sought to re-enter the plan. With the cost of prescription drugs continuing to rise, access to Health Insurance is critical. The NLTA drug program is one of the best programs in the province and continues on into retirement without restrictions until death, which is unlike many other health insurance programs. Currently, there are numerous members of the NLTA Group Insurance Program who are accessing life changing medications that cost over \$50,000 per year per prescription, and this is by no means the most expensive medication some teachers are accessing under our Health Insurance.

The second most concerning experience I have dealt with is that of teachers who have gone through a change in life status (marriage/common law marriage, separation or divorce). In these cases, a teacher has 31 days from the date of the change in status to enroll his/her spouse without medical evaluation and assessment of insurability being required. Also, some teachers discontinue coverage under the NLTA plan because they have alternate insurance through their spouse's employer. However, in such situations, it is important to be aware that, if you become ineligible for coverage under your spouse's plan due to marriage breakdown, your spouse's retirement or change in employment, you then have 31 days to re-enroll in the NLTA plan without a medical evaluation and assessment of insurability.

### Dental

While Dental Insurance is not a program that keeps me up at night, I have seen a number of interesting cases. First, if a teacher withdraws from the Dental program, they can re-enroll at any time but will be restricted for one year to a \$125.00 limit on claims for each person covered. Many teachers forget about this restriction, incur expenses and then find themselves unable to get reimbursed for a significant dental claim. Another point to be aware of is that some dental procedures must be pre-assessed for prior approval of coverage – it is important to remember this before incurring a significant cost that may be ineligible for coverage.

(cont'd. on page 14)

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### Long Term Disability.

Long Term Disability (LTD) is probably the most misunderstood aspect of the NLTA Group Insurance Program, and it is also one of the most expensive, with premium deductions running between \$25-\$40 (1.1% of salary) per pay period for most teachers. All teachers are automatically enrolled in the program. If a teacher discontinues premium payments for LTD at any time, then a medical evaluation and assessment of insurability will be required to re-enroll in the program. LTD coverage is essential for all members, and particularly for newer teachers who have less paid sick leave. LTD provides teachers with income protection in the event of a disabling illness or accident that takes them out of the workplace for a longer period than their accumulated sick leave. No one plans to become ill and disabled from teaching. We should all strive to live as healthy lives as possible, but when the unexpected happens and life deals us a bad hand, it is much easier to cope and deal with the situation if financial concerns are not also at play. If a teacher exhausts their paid sick leave entitlement and does not have LTD coverage, they would be left with very few options (there are 15 weeks of Employment Insurance sickness benefits) and a significant financial hit while also dealing with a serious medical issue. I am always troubled to see the increased worry and stress faced by teachers who discontinued LTD coverage and are unable to re-enter the program due to a medical condition. It is even more heartbreaking when a teacher who thought they had LTD comes to learn that they failed to pay premiums during a period of unpaid leave and then, in a time of need, are not eligible to re-enroll due to their health situation. Teachers should never withdraw from LTD coverage without first having a serious conversation with someone at the NLTA or Johnson Inc.

### Basic Critical Illness

Teachers are automatically enrolled in Basic Critical Illness coverage at a current cost of less than \$2.00 per pay period. The benefit provides a \$10,000 payment to a teacher who is diagnosed with one of 31 different illness. Common illnesses such as cancer, stroke, heart attack, and multiple sclerosis are all included and are prevalent amongst Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. My sense from talking to teachers is that there is a lack of awareness about this benefit, so if you hear of a colleague being diagnosed with a “critical” illness, please encourage them to contact someone at the NLTA or Johnson Inc. Most teachers also have AD&D coverage, which includes a \$2,000 critical illness benefit they might

also be entitled to receive. Some members’ home insurance may also carry a critical illness benefit. All these benefits are one time payments which are not tied to any documented expenses – they are simply paid out directly to qualifying claimants and can provide a source of additional financial support in the event of a critical illness diagnosis.

### Some Closing Comments ...

My final point is to stress the importance of naming both a primary beneficiary(ies) for all coverages for which a benefit is payable upon an insured member’s death. A contingent beneficiary(ies) should also be named in the event that both the insured member and primary beneficiary were to die together. If no beneficiary(ies) is named, benefits would be payable only to the estate of the deceased member and would therefore be subject to the required probate and estate administration processes and taxes before any direct payments to individuals could be made. If a beneficiary(ies) has been named, then the full value of any insurance benefits payable will be paid directly to the beneficiary(ies), tax free, without being required to pass through the member’s estate. To determine whether or not you have named a contingent beneficiary(ies) for applicable insurance policies, or if you need to update your beneficiary designation due to a change in relationship/family status, you should contact a Service Supervisor at Johnson Inc..

Details of each NLTA member’s Group Insurance coverages are available online, and we encourage you to access and review this information regularly via the Members Only website by going to [www.johnson.ca](http://www.johnson.ca). We are also in the process of developing a new NLTA website for Group Insurance to be launched this school year.

To obtain information about all the coverages available to you or to make any changes to your current coverage, you should contact Johnson Inc. at 737-1528 or 1-800-563-1528.

If you have any questions regarding the NLTA’s Group Insurance Program, please contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services.

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*Darrin Pike is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*





# Music Special Interest Council 2018 Award Recipients

The NLTA Music Special Interest Council announced the winners of this year's 2018 Awards at their Conference and BGM held at the Holiday Inn in St. John's from November 1-2. This year's award winners are as follows:

## 2018 CMEA Builders Award for Newer Teachers: Chris Miller

Chris Miller currently teaches classroom music, band and after-school drama club at Admiral's Academy in Kelligrews, CBS. In addition to his work in the classroom, he serves on the board for the St. John's Rotary Music Festival and has previously served as Avalon East representative of the NLTA Music Special Interest Council.

Chris holds Bachelor of Music Education, Bachelor of Music, and Master of Music (Conducting) degrees from Memorial University. Additionally, he has received a Master of Music (Instrumental Performance) degree from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

As a performer, Chris is a member of the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra and has been the Director of Music for The Royal Newfoundland Regiment Band of the Canadian Armed Forces since 2016. He has previously performed with The Royal Canadian Artillery Band, l'Orchestre Francophonie and the Pittsburgh Opera.

## 2018 CMEA Builders Award: Vincenza Etchegary

Vincenza Etchegary has taught instrumental music in St. John's for the past 31 years. She completed a Music Education Degree at the University of Western Ontario and did graduate studies at Brandon University.

Vincenza is currently the instrumental music specialist at St. Bonaventure's College in St. John's. At the College, she directs 170 students in seven instrumental ensembles. Vincenza has been the recipient of both a Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, as well as a Provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher Excellence Award.

Ensembles under her direction have received many prestigious awards including the Canadian Jazz Report Award and first place awards in the NL CBC Radio School Band Competition, the Long and McQuade National Youtube Performance Competition and the CBC Music Class Challenge. The St. Bonaventure's Wind Ensemble has performed for both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict and their video of the CBC Olympic Theme was aired during the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.

## 2018 Jamie Wilkinson Memorial Award: Robert Colbourne

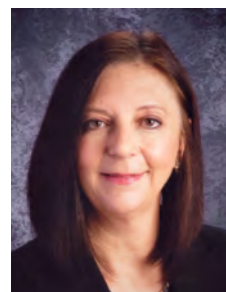
Robert Colbourne holds a B. Mus (voice)/B. Mus Ed and M.Ed from Memorial University and is the choral director at Holy Heart High School in St. John's.

Robert has toured provincially, nationally and internationally with his choirs and recently won 1st and 2nd places at the National Music Festival of Canada.

When he is not conducting the award-winning choirs at Holy Heart, Robert maintains a busy private studio teaching voice, piano and theory through the Royal Conservatory of Music. Robert has also been the vocal director for *Cinderella*, *42nd Street*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Chicago* and musical director for Gussied Up Productions' *The Sound of Music*. Robert has been nominated for Music Teacher of the Year (SOCAN) and in 2011, he was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contribution to music education in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.



Chris Miller



Vincenza Etchegary



Robert Colbourne





# A Practical Application of Google Forms in the Music Classroom

by DR. ANN MARIE LANE

One of the best ways to learn about musical styles is to listen to music. However, listening to music in a classroom is sometimes a difficult task. Noise in the environment, poor sound systems, and lack of focus by students may prevent a quality learning experience.

The use of Google Forms can alleviate many of these issues. Using this technology, students can listen privately with headsets, eliminating environmental noise. Students may listen once, or as many times as needed to complete the listening assignment. This permits students to work at their own pace. It gives flexibility regarding students' learning style. In addition, the technology provides a valid and reliable evaluation option for the Music teacher.

For the purpose of this article, the writer will create a Listening Test for Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever* using Google Forms. The writer presumes the access to Google accounts by students and teachers.

To create the Listening Test using Google Forms, log in to your Google Drive. Click the "Google Apps" icon in the upper right-hand corner, scroll down and click "Forms". Click "Blank" form. Click "Untitled form" and write "Listening Test #1 – Sousa Stars and Stripes Forever". Click "Untitled form" in the top left-hand corner of the page. The title should automatically appear in this area. If it does not appear, write the title.

Click "Form description" and write your directions: "Listen to the music selection below. Answer all questions. Click Submit when completed."

Select "Add Section" icon in the right menu of the page. A new section labelled Section 2 will appear in your document. Click "Untitled section" and write: "Music Selection: Sousa / Stars and Stripes Forever".

To add a video to the Listening test, go to YouTube. Search for a performance video of Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*. Open that video. Right click the URL and copy it. Return to your Google Form. Click the "Add Video" icon in the right menu. A Search Video window will open. Click URL. Right click and paste the URL in the window that reads "Paste

You Tube URL here". Click "Select". The video will appear in your document. Click the circle with the 3 dots found in the top left corner of the video and select "Center Align". The video will be centered on your page. Click "Description (optional)" and write "Listen to the Music selection and answer the questions in Section 3". Click "Untitled video" and write "Sousa: Stars and Stripes Forever".

You next create a Question Section in the Google Form. Click the "Add Section" in the right menu of the page. A Section 3 will be added to your document. Click "Untitled Section" and write "Questions: After listening to the music selection above, answer all of the following questions. Click Submit when completed." Click the "Add question" icon at the top of the menu on the right of the page. An untitled question blank will appear. Click "Untitled Question" and write your first question: "The ensemble you hear is a/an" as the main body of the question. On the right side of the page select "Multiple Choice" as your type of test question. Write "Vocalist" as Option 1. Write "Choir" as Option 2. Write "Orchestra" as Option 3. Write "Band" as Option 4. Click "Required" in the lower right-hand corner. The dot will become coloured when "Required" is active.

To add more questions to your Listening Test, click the "Add Question" icon, and continue as above until you complete all test questions. Listening test questions may be created based on any elements of music.

To create a Google Quiz, go to the top of your form, and click the "Settings" icon next to the "Send" button at the top right corner of the page. Click "General". Click only the following items in that window: "Collect email addresses", "Response receipts", and "If respondent requests it". Under "Requires sign in", only click "Restrict to users". In the Settings menu bar click "Presentation". Only click "Show progress bar", and "Shuffle order". The "Shuffle order" feature allows each student to receive a unique version of the test. This adds to the valid-

ity of test answers. In the Settings menu bar click “Quizzes”. Only click “Make this a quiz”. Under “Release grade”, click “Later, after manual review”. Under “Respondent can see”, only click “Missed questions”, “Correct answers”, and “Point values”. Click “Save”. All settings will be saved for the selections you made under “General”, “Presentation”, and “Quizzes”.

To change the look of your test, click the “Colour Palette” icon at the top of the page, and make selections.

To preview your test, click the “Preview” icon in the top menu. The test will appear as your students will see it.

To make an Answer Key for your test, go to the Listening Test, and click the body of the first question. Click “Answer Key”. Click the correct answer for that question. In the top right-hand corner, select the point value for that question.

Do this for every question of your test, being sure to add point value, correct answer, and required for every question.

When you are ready to give your test, click “Responses” at the top of the test. Click the toggle button, “Accepting responses” to allow test access, or “Not accepting responses” to deny test access.

To make your test available in your Google Music Classroom, click “Send” in the top menu bar. Click the URL icon. Click “Shorten URL”. Click “Copy”. Close that window.

Go to your Google Classroom. Select the class that will complete the Listening Test. Click the “Add” icon + in the bottom right of the page. Click “Create assignment”. Click the URL Link icon. An “Add link” window will open. Right-click and paste the test URL into the space provided. Click “Add Link”. The link is now added to your Google Classroom. Click the Title line and write “Listening Test #1: Sousa - Stars and Stripes Forever”. Click “Instructions” and write: “Click the link below. Listen to the Music selection. Answer all questions. Submit when completed”. Click “No due date” and select the test date from the drop-down calendar menu. Click “Assign”. Students will now be able to link to, and complete the Listening Test using Google Classroom.

To create a test score spreadsheet, go to your Google test. Click “Responses”. Click the “Create spreadsheet” icon. Click “Create a new spreadsheet”. Click “Create”. A spreadsheet will open with student test scores. The test scores spreadsheet saves time.

After test scores have been recorded, the scores may be released to students. To do this go to your listening test. Click “Responses”. Scroll down the page

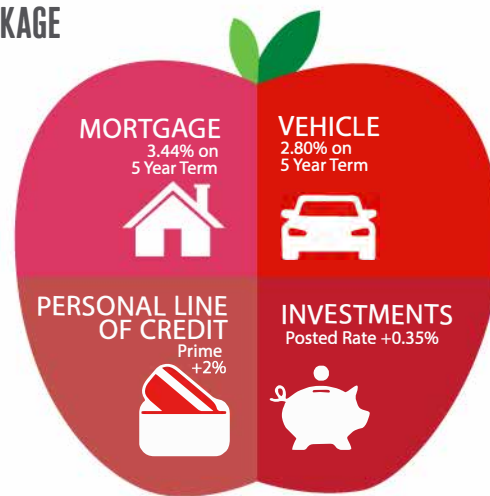
to the “Scores” section. Click the “Release Scores” button found at the top-right of the Scores. Each student will receive via e-mail an individual test score, missed questions, and correct answers. Students have immediate and valuable feedback about their learning.

Google Forms allows the utilization of technology in all music classes, permits students an individual approach to learning, and assists with the development of listening skills. In addition, the technology saves valuable time for music teachers, creates a unique test for each student, and provides a reliable and valid assessment in music listening.

*Dr. Ann Marie Lane has taught Music at all grade levels K-12 and at the university level for over 20 years. Music performance ensembles under her direction have achieved top ratings at local, regional and national competitions. She has multiple research publications in national journals in Canada and in the USA. She is currently Music Education Specialist at Baccalieu Collegiate in Old Perlican.*

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# Student-Centered Learning in Science and the Potential for Inclusion

by PATRICK WELLS & JOY RICKETTS

**I**nclusion. This word evokes different responses from teachers, administrators, parents, and even students. Whatever your feelings on this process, we feel education should be inclusive. For traditional teachers who find themselves the focus of almost every lesson, we suggest an accommodating shift to a student-centered teaching stance. We will address the shift in teaching stance using a personal example shortly; first, we set the stage by attending to some important details about inclusion and connections with science.

## **Inclusion and Human Diversity**

According to the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009), inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. In Newfoundland and Labrador, inclusion officially started in March 2009, and presently, the student diversity in classrooms remains a cause for concern. Biologically speaking, human diversity is natural – we are all genetically, psychologically, and cognitively different (Myers & DeWall, 2017). Teachers teach students, not classes. Thus, the natural diversity of learners stretches teachers' ability to meet their needs; increased class size and multi-grades classrooms compound this tension. Fortunately, inclusion and science teaching are both processes with this in common: they can address content, approaches, structures, and strategies with a shared vision to educate all children (UNESCO, 2005).

## **Science Can Naturally Be Inclusive**

Diversity cannot defy nervous system basics – we are all sensory beings of diverse abilities. How does exploiting students' senses create increased engagement and learning? A sensation is a fundamental component of memory formation with more types of sensations leading to better memory formation and memories grow knowledge (Myers & DeWall, 2017). We found that science activities flip the focus of the lesson away from the teacher to the students; mak-

ing their participation active and sensory. Further, science lessons that focus on students' use of senses play to the strength of science as a subject.

Science is an empirical way of knowing (Crowther, Leaderman, & Leaderman, 2005). Experiential science activities encourage all students to use their motor skills, involve their senses in observation, and form perceptions that will naturally engage their current subject knowledge. This process may cause personal cognitive conflicts, naturally generates questions and may encourage students to find answers to questions through personal research (such as Google). Science is a way of knowing that is evidence-based and experimenting or problem-solving addresses the characteristics of the nature of science such as creativity, the value of objectivity, using math, and reporting findings to others (Crowther et al., 2005). So how do class activities help?

For many students, involvement in the process of science is a refreshing break from lectures and is crucial for the social construction of knowledge (Colburn, 2000). Construction of knowledge happens during the process of science activities and can be inclusive when all students participate. However, the time required for creating inclusive science lessons is a serious consideration for K-12 educators. Further, the change in teaching stance necessary for conducting more activities is not synonymous with flicking a switch. What follows is an example of our experiences.

## **The Action Research Experience**

Two years ago we conducted action research to examine student-centered experiments co-created with members of the Holy Spirit Science Department. One of those experiments required students to expose different coloured fabrics to a heat lamp; this helps to discover how albedo impacts temperature change (Figure 1). We noticed that some students prefer to sense heat change by touch rather than reading a thermometer and for others, visualizing the numbers and lines was difficult; this is where the change in teacher-stance makes an impact.



Figure 1 – Albedo lab apparatus with the LabQuest 2, this also works well with alcohol thermometers.

During the activity we worked closely with all groups and encouraged the students to use their senses; we allowed the students to feel the fabrics before, during, and after heating. As the students touched and utilized other senses, it set the stage for sensory interaction known for the formation of stronger memories (Myers & Dewall, 2017). We circulated the room to ask questions that challenged students' thinking. Students also asked questions based on their individual experiences and the problems created by their observations. We found these discrete conversations were vital for shy or anxiety-ridden students and helped all students as they tried to understand albedo from their unique sensory perspectives.

Interestingly, some students wanted to know how the numerical data from the thermometers related to their personal sensory experiences. This demand created an opportunity to connect sensory experiences with data, graphs, and trends as line equations with slopes from the LabQuest 2 temperature sensors; an example of the integration of science with math and evidence of one aspect of the aforementioned "nature of science."

### Student-Centered Learning Can be Challenging

Student-centered learning is an expectation of the new science curriculum. The example above outlines several positive outcomes of student-centered learning. However, there were some challenges encountered during this lesson such as the need to have student-specific grouping strategies and the need to rehearse the lab activity. Science subject knowledge was also essential for awareness of safety considerations, managing equipment, and monitoring procedures to ensure their timely completion.

We found the start of the experiment produced a flurry of activity where not everything goes as planned for all students and the level of engagement in the process varies. Close contact with the students permitted us to find issues and attempt to address them; not all our efforts were successful. Our action research

showed that some students prefer direct instruction and their needs require consideration. We still wonder if well-planned science experiments and activities meet the needs of all learners? Carol Ann Tomlinson answers this question: *Differentiation is simply a teacher attending to the learning needs of a particular student or small groups of students, rather than teaching a class as though all individuals in it were basically alike.*

### What About You?

Many reading this will correctly point out that our class, with two teachers and thirty-six students, differ from their own. We agree, but would point out the curriculum is a unifying guideline of learning outcomes for all students. The question remains: how can teachers consistently provide an environment that meets the needs of all students in the classroom using appropriate learning experiences? We suggest you start by trying more student-centered learning activities and make a point of creating more one-on-one moments with your students.

While collectively engaged in the processes of science with the albedo experiment, we found that students are a vital source of teacher learning. We also found student-centered teaching to be challenging, yet rewarding. Our rewards were learning about the students during moments of one-on-one discrete high-quality learning, made possible by the change in stance towards student-centered learning.

If we navigate our teaching in the direction of student-centered learning, we will embrace more learning styles while growing a class culture of social support; this is a strong movement towards inclusion. A dedicated professional learning effort will help you progress towards inclusion and reach out to all learners. We believe the challenge resides in creating a professional learning network that provides support. During our teaching, we would lean on each other and find support from others in our school. If you are not part of a network, we suggest you start looking for collaborators in your school. You will find support in the districts (NLESD and CSFP), the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, NLTA special interest councils, local experts, and parents or guardians. Each level has experts who are eager to help.

We wish you well in finding more inclusive one-on-one moments in 2018-19.

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Patrick Wells is the Science Department Head and Joy Ricketts is an Instructional Resource Teacher at Holy Spirit High School, CBS. Resources and references for this article can be found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gm-dnBkvGHR5rynXy36qDNqQTko8jOh8nvTiab2WbO-U/edit?usp=sharing>

Some of the most important learnings about ASD come from – you guessed it – people with lived experience. Trudy Goold is an adult autistic who is part of a national self-advocacy group that works tirelessly to break down barriers, improve access, and build acceptance for a stronger community. I asked Trudy to share with us her sensory experiences in the classroom so that we may hear her perspective. Keep in mind every person's experience is unique, but most self-advocates indicate that sensory experiences were the most widely misunderstood or overlooked as they reflect on their school experiences.

~ Kendra Lane, Director of Operations, Autism Society of Newfoundland & Labrador

# Top Three Sensory Challenges in the Classroom: From Lived Experience

by TRUDY GOOLD

There are many sensory challenges that the average classroom can present. This can cause issues with the student's ability to absorb information because of the sheer amount of input coming in. In sharing this information, I am hopeful it will provide some insight into the common sensory challenges experienced in the classroom.

## 1) Sounds

The amount of noise that a sound-sensitive student (whether autistic, ADHD, or other) has to decipher in the classroom can be both distracting and painful. Things such as the buzz of fluorescent lights (which can also be a visual issue, with the flickering), the voices of other children, the voice of the teacher(s), the sound of people moving in the classroom and through the halls, the sounds of traffic outside, the sounds of any electronics, just to name a few. There are so many sounds in that environment – some that others may not even notice – and the response from each student may be very different.

For example, someone may have trouble with particular voices, which could involve either differentiating them from white noise or an inability to tolerate certain pitches or volumes. I, for example, have difficulty with absorbing information that is given in audible format; in order to comprehend and hopefully remember things, I often need to close my eyes. I can also hear quiet conversations going on very easily, and they can distract me from what I'm doing (whether that is listening to the teacher or trying to do my work).

## 2) Visual

Sensitivities to visual stimuli can include issues with the brightness and/or intensity of lighting (either too dim or too bright), problems with light flickering/flashing (i.e. fluorescent lighting and emergency vehicle lights), problems with light frequencies (certain reactions to particular colours or intensities), or issues with amounts of visual information in the environment (too many things to look at causing distraction or inattention, while not enough things to look at meaning that concentration wanes). Sometimes avoiding eye contact can also be a sensory issue where too much visual input overwhelms everything else. As a personal example, it's very rare for me not to wear sunglasses both inside (except my apartment) and outside, even on cloudy days. This is simply because most lights are too bright for me and, in particular, I find that looking at blue light at night hurts me more than looking at red light.

## 3) Movement

A number of autistics experience challenges with movement and touch, and there can be times when the amount of concentration needed to avoid fidgeting/moving/gesturing can prevent someone from being able to focus on anything else. As an example, if someone is having a hard time figuring out where their hands are in comparison to the rest of their body (something that does happen), not only will their focus on the lesson be disrupted, but they will have additional trouble if there is any writing involved. Additionally, if they can't tell how their limbs are moving, they're going to trip over air and run into things, and appear very clumsy. I struggled



enormously with physical education when I was in school; I was (and still am) completely incapable of catching anything thrown to me, whether via hands, feet, bats, etc. My “gross-level” hand-eye coordination/manipulation is disastrous. Others might have “fine-level” issues – a problem when it comes to writing, or even typing. Or “mid-level”, when you combine the two types of coordination, which can cause issues with things like drawing and painting, among others.

Some of these challenges can be solved with reasonable ease. Allowing stim/fidget toys (personal choice, but examples include stress balls, things a student finds soothing to touch, visual images they enjoy, etc.) can really help with concentration. If students close their eyes or look away while they're being told things, that may actually allow them to process what's being said more efficiently; I have to do this myself sometimes. If they appear to need to move, suggest subtle movements (jiggling legs, squeezing stress balls, pushing hands against the desk, etc.). Those won't solve all the sensory issues, but they may help ease the stress at least a bit to make everyone's lives easier.

Sensory challenges are difficult to describe – and even more difficult to figure out if a person is not able to communicate them articulately. The most important thing is to be aware of the potential impact that sensory challenges can have on a student's behavior and their ability to learn in particular environments. It's a very relevant part of being autistic.

*Trudy Goold was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 2012, when she was 35. Shortly afterwards, she set up an autism blog to help pay forward some of the help she got in learning things about autism from the blogs of other autistic adults. In 2015, Trudy joined the Autism Advisory Group for Autism Canada, and through them, she became the Newfoundland and Labrador advocate representative to the Canadian Autism Partnership Project in 2016. Since then, she has joined the board of the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (November 2017) in the advocate's position. Trudy is also a science-fiction/fantasy writer who is owned by one cat at present.*

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# OF SPECIAL INTEREST...

Special Interest Councils are professional learning communities dedicated to life-long learning and the ongoing professional growth of NLTA members. Their mandate includes offering a range of professional development programs, including conferences, institutes, focus groups, teleconferences, and e-learning initiatives. Councils communicate with their membership using a variety of current technologies. As part of their mandate, the councils will respond to curriculum and program concerns, develop position papers on critical issues, work with government on curriculum development and advise the NLTA on matters of importance.

Currently there are 12 special interest councils as follows:

- Council of Special Services (COSS)
- Health Education Council
- Math/Science Council
- Music Council (MSIC)
- NL Counsellors' & Psychologists' Association (NLCPA)
- Physical Education Council (PESIC)
- School Administrators Council (SAC)
- Second Languages Council
- Small Schools Council
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Teacher Librarians Newfoundland Labrador (TL-NL)
- Technology Education Council (TESIC)

If you wish to become a member of one of the existing councils, you have only to contact the president of that council, and you will be sent the necessary membership information. Opportunities also exist for you to become an executive member of one of the councils, thereby allowing you to take on a valuable leadership role within the Association. Contact information for the SICs can be found on the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca). Click on "About NLTA" and scroll down to "Special Interest Councils".

**If you have any questions, concerns or ideas re the NLTA Special Interest Councils, contact:**

Ian Crewe, Administrative Officer

Programs & Services, NLTA

[icrewe@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:icrewe@nlta.nl.ca)

Tel: 726-3223

or toll-free at 1-800-563-3599, ext. 232

## Health Education Council News

The Physical Education Special Interest Council and the Health Education Special Interest Council partnered with the NLESD to offer a full day PD on October 30 at St. Teresa's School in St. John's. Thanks to all the teachers and MUN observation students who attended the morning session which consisted of learning about and through Models-Based Practice with particular emphasis on Teaching Games for Understanding, Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility, and Cooperative Learning.

Taking Health Education out of the classroom was the focus for the afternoon session as we learned about and through games that met outcomes from health curriculums from grades K-6.



Check out [healthednl.com](http://healthednl.com) for the latest in resources, information and professional development opportunities for health educators! The NLTA Health Education Special Interest Council offers health educators a website to keep up to date on the latest research, activities, or professional learning available. Health Educators can also improve their knowledge and get ideas for the classroom with valuable resources in Healthy Eating, Mental Health, Physical Activity, Gender/Sexual Identity, Substance Use, Sexual Health, Injury Prevention and Comprehensive School Health. For example, "Teach Resiliency", a website developed by PHE Canada for teachers, is a fantastic resource for connecting teachers with practical, evidence-formed resources and tools to support mental health education in the classroom. Furthermore, on our website, you can access our "WOW! World of Wellness" newsletter to keep up to date on everything happening in Health Education in our province.

Want the latest in Health Education news, information, and resources? Check out our twitter page [@NLTA\\_Health\\_Ed](https://twitter.com/NLTA_Health_Ed). For searching and keeping up with the latest, use the hashtags #nlteachers #healthed #health education #teachmental-health.

## Welcome to our new Executive Members

**Secretary: Angela Norman** is a K-6 Physical Education and classroom teacher at Woodland Elementary in Trinity Bay. Contact: [angelanorman@nlesd.ca](mailto:angelanorman@nlesd.ca)

### School Health Promotion Liaisons:

**Peggy Orbasli** is the School Health Promotion Liaison consultant (SHPLC) supporting schools in the Avalon East area. Contact: [peggyorbasli@nlesd.ca](mailto:peggyorbasli@nlesd.ca)

**Emily Doyle** is the School Health Promotion Liaison consultant for Avalon West, Burin and Vista. Contact: [emilydoyle@nlesd.ca](mailto:emilydoyle@nlesd.ca)

**Member at Large: Stuart MacGillivray** is a Grade 4 French Immersion teacher in St. John's. Contact: [stuartmacgillivray@nlesd.ca](mailto:stuartmacgillivray@nlesd.ca)

# NEWS & EVENTS

## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS COUNCIL CONFERENCE & AGM

May 8-10, 2019

Glynmill Inn, Corner Brook. Theme: *Fostering Excellence and Equity for All: Moving Towards New Possibilities*. More information to follow.

**For a full list of conferences and professional development opportunities, visit the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca/pd\\_opportunities/](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/pd_opportunities/)**

## Dates to Remember

### January 2019

- Jan 11 **District Deadline:** Educational Leave applications
- Jan 15 **Deadline:** 2019 Christmas Card Contest entries
- Jan 15 **Deadline:** Receipt of nominations for Barnes, Bancroft, Allan Bishop and Special Recognition Awards
- Jan 17 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications
- Jan 25-26 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting

### February 2019

- Feb 14 Janeway Day in the Schools
- Feb 21 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

### March 2019

- Mar 3-9 Education Week
- Mar 7 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting
- Mar 8-9 NLTA Joint Council Meeting
- Mar 21 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications
- Mar 31 **Deadline:** Centennial Study Award applications
- Mar 31 **Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year

## APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL LEAVE?

Applications for Educational Leave for the 2019-20 School Year are available on the

NLTA website at

**[www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca)**

Application is made to the District. District deadlines are as follows:

**NLESD:** January 11, 2019

**CSFP:** January 11, 2019

## 2019 Convention Deadlines

### January 24, 2019

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

### February 24, 2019

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

### March 24, 2019

Mailing of Convention issue of *The Bulletin*.

### April 23-26, 2019

Biennial General Meeting.

### April 25, 2019

Final deadline for receipt of nominations for Provincial Executive.

**BGM information can be found on the main page of the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca)**



## Call for Nominations NLTA Awards 2018-19



Each year your Association honours several of its members with four prestigious awards:

**Bancroft Award**

**Barnes Award**

**Allan Bishop Award**

**Special Recognition Award**

If you feel that someone within your school qualifies for nomination for one of the awards for the 2018-19 school year, please contact your school representative who will forward the name and information on this person to your branch president or the appropriate special interest council president.

All nominations must be completed or printed from the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca) and must be submitted by January 15th in order to be considered.





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