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CONDENSED VERSION

Up Front from the President



“Teachers are superheroes. It is far from easy but easy isn’t why they chose the profession.”

~ Author Unknown.

I am very confident in saying that all of our collective wisdom would not have predicted in September of 2019 how the province’s education system would change and be forced to adapt from March 2021 onward. Since that time every educator, every student and every family with school-aged children has faced challenges that no one anticipated. Despite all of these challenges, it is the work of our province’s educators that have maintained student learning. I see and hear constantly of the efforts and labors of teachers who are going above and beyond, often at great personal cost to them and their family’s well-being to keep this “ship afloat.”

Many of you have experienced more periods of anxiety about your work dynamic than ever before. Undoubtedly this has rolled into your personal lives as well. It is okay to feel anxious. It is okay to feel that you aren’t as on top of things in your classroom as you would like to be. We are all learning to navigate this together. We are all trying to balance being the best we can be for so many and trying to balance all of our responsibilities within the realities of a COVID world.

Recently a friend of mine told me I needed to stop doing so much “complaining.” After I listened to her for a while I asked her a simple question: “Do you care about your family?” She said yes of course. I asked her if she cared about her colleagues at work. She works in healthcare. Naturally, the response was affirmative. I then asked if she thought that the dynamics of her workplace compromised the health and safety of her family or her colleagues, would she speak up? Then she paused. When the Association raises concerns it is because the province’s teachers care very deeply, not only about their own families, but also about the integrity and safety of the learning environment for students. We

raise concerns about things that we care most about. Teachers DO care! The workplaces that teachers have are the same environment that our students learn in. They are not and will never be separate entities.

Since I wrote my last “Up Front” article much has changed. I am writing this now looking out my office window watching a city employee clear out the road that passes by my office window. In between listening to the roar of the equipment, I am struggling as I consider what many of you are dealing with as you get ready for students re-entering schools. The advocacy for making our schools safer for all has been ongoing since last March. It will never stop. Progress has been made, but is the glass half full? Is it half empty? People will look at things differently. But maybe the focus needs to be not on being full or empty, but rather on how do we get the water to fill that glass?

I have to believe that COVID-19 will pass. I have to believe that in the coming months our province’s teachers will receive the vaccines that will change our trajectory in a return to a new normal. In the interim, the outbreak of a new variant in our province has provided an opportunity for a reset. We have seen some adjustments and while there are others that are needed, it is a start. To quote Albert Einstein, “Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony. In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity.”

That opportunity is there. If the right thing to do is worth doing, it’s worth doing it right.

Be proud of what you have done and never let the importance of taking time for you and your own health and well-being be forgotten.

Until next time.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of The Bulletin looks a little different, a result of us at the NLTA pivoting and adapting to conditions placed upon us by COVID-19 restrictions. With increased Alert Levels, many schools still closed for in-class instruction and our own office closed for the time being, the March/April Bulletin will be a condensed, online issue.

All the best,

Jennifer



THE REDUNDANCY/REASSIGNMENT AND LAYOFF PROCESS (FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER AND LEARNING ASSISTANTS)

As the “Spring Staffing Season” approaches, both teachers and teaching and learning assistants (TLAs) should familiarize themselves with the process of redundancy/reassignment and layoff. The information provided below outlines this process and offers advice on what teachers and TLAs should do in the event that they are affected. While the process is essentially the same for both job classifications, there are some subtle differences that are noted throughout the information provided. Finally, whenever an individual is in doubt or has questions, they are always encouraged to contact an Administrative Officer at the NLTA.

May 7th is the **DEADLINE** for teachers to be notified of layoff. **May 28th** is the **DEADLINE** for TLAs to be notified of layoff. **ALL** teachers and TLAs should be familiar with the process for redundancy/reassignment and layoff as outlined under Article 9 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 47 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement).

Article 9 outlines the process that school districts are required to follow as they prepare and finalize staffing plans for the 2021-22 school year. The Collective Agreements can be accessed under “Publications” on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca.

Teachers and TLAs should be informed of and take steps to ensure that the redundancy process is properly followed in their circumstances.

During any year in which there is a reduction or a realignment of teaching and/or TLA units in a school, a position(s) in a school may be designated as redundant. The actual removal of a position(s) can be accommodated through one of two means: i) through the natural attrition process, created by retirements or resignations and the school district’s decision not to fill the vacancies that have been created; or ii) through the redundancy/reassignment/layoff process, as outlined in Article 9. Even when the number of retirements and/or resignations are equal to or greater than the number of units that are scheduled to be removed from a school due to redundancies, it is still possible that redundancies may occur for programming reasons. Redundancies in a school can have implications not only for teachers and TLAs in that particular school, but also in neighboring schools as well.

Any teacher or TLA who has been notified (on or before May 7 or May 28, respectively) by their school administrator or school district personnel that their position is redundant and that they will be reassigned or laid off for the following school year should consult with the designated Administrative Officer in Programs and Services responsible for their school district/region. (The NLTA number is 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599.) The school district assignments for each Administrative Officer are listed below:

NL English School District:	Avalon Region	Avalon East	John Veitch	ext. 244	jveitch@nlta.nl.ca
			Darlene Johnson	ext. 241	djohnson@nlta.nl.ca
		Avalon West	Darrin Pike	ext. 226	dpike@nlta.nl.ca
	Central Region	Central	Deana Hatcher	ext. 270	dhatcher@nlta.nl.ca
		Burin	Bob Johnston	ext. 239	bjohnston@nlta.nl.ca
		Vista	Bob Johnston	ext. 239	bjohnston@nlta.nl.ca
	Western Region		Miriam Sheppard	ext. 230	msheppard@nlta.nl.ca
	Labrador Region		Gabriel Ryan	ext. 232	gryan@nlta.nl.ca
	Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador		Gabriel Ryan	ext. 232	gryan@nlta.nl.ca

Steps in the Redundancy Process

The following are the steps in the redundancy process which teachers and TLAs should ensure are applied to their circumstances (clause numbers noted are from the Provincial Collective Agreement but the provisions and process described are also provided for in the Labrador West Collective Agreement and apply in the same manner within the Labrador West bargaining unit):

Step 1:

Clause 9.01: Defines seniority as the total length of time employed as a teacher in Newfoundland and Labrador, and identifies May 7 (May 28 for TLAs) in the school year as the date of calculation of seniority for the purpose of reassignment and layoff for that year.

Each teacher and TLA should ensure that their placement on the school district’s seniority list accurately reflects their entire teaching service in the Kindergarten to Level III public school system in the province. Time taught outside the province or

outside of the Kindergarten to Level III public school system cannot be credited as seniority. If there are discrepancies between a teacher's calculation of seniority and the school district records, it is the teacher's responsibility to notify the school district as soon as it is discovered. School districts must post seniority lists in all schools by no later than January 31 of each year, listing teachers' and TLAs' accumulated seniority as of December 31.

Step II:

Clause 9.02 (Clause 9.03 for TLAs): Where it is determined by the school district that a teaching position or TLA position in a school is being declared redundant, the senior teachers (or TLAs, as the case may be) shall be reassigned to the remaining positions within the school that they are capable of filling. Subject to capability, the seniority based priority for redundancy/reassignment purposes shall be as follows:

- (a) tenured teachers;
- (b) teachers on a one-year probationary contract;
- (c) teachers on a two-year probationary contract;
- (d) teachers on probationary contracts in accordance with Clause 7.05. (not applicable to TLAs)

This effectively means that the junior teacher (or TLA) should be the person reassigned outside of the school unless the junior person is teaching something that no other more senior person is capable of teaching while still fulfilling the programming needs of the school. ***It is VERY important to note here that reassignment is distinct within the separate job classifications of teachers and TLAs respectively – teachers CANNOT be reassigned to TLA positions, and TLAs CANNOT be reassigned to teaching positions through the redundancy/reassignment process.***

Step III:

Clause 9.04(a) (9.05(a) for TLAs): A teacher (or TLA, as the case may be), who is not reassigned in accordance with Clause 9.02 (Clause 9.03 for TLAs), shall have priority, based upon seniority, subject to capability, to vacant teaching or TLA positions or positions held by junior teachers or TLAs, in the following order of priority:

- (i) within the community;
- (ii) within the nearest community, within the school district, where such a position exists.

A teacher who is reassigned and notified in writing in accordance with Clause 9.12(b) (Clause 9.13(b) for TLAs), has five (5) working days following their notification to notify the school district of their acceptance or rejection of the reassignment. ***It is VERY important to note again that reassignment is distinct within the separate job classifications of teachers and TLAs respectively – whether within or outside of their own***

school, teachers CANNOT be reassigned to TLA positions, and TLAs CANNOT be reassigned to teaching positions through the redundancy/reassignment process.

Step IV:

Clause 9.04(c) (Clause 9.05(c) for TLAs) states that, notwithstanding Clause 9.11, any teacher or TLA who refuses reassignment in accordance with Clause 9.04(a) (Clause 9.05(a) for TLAs) in any particular year shall not be entitled to further consideration for reassignment in that year. A teacher or TLA who refuses reassignment in accordance with Clause 9.04(c) (Clause 9.05(c) for TLAs) can apply for transfer to vacant positions during the remainder of the school year and will be considered along with others who have applied for transfer to the same position. If the individual is unsuccessful in obtaining a transfer to another permanent position before the end of the school year, the teacher or TLA shall be deemed to be laid off and placed in recall, subject to Clause 9.10, as of the end of the school year (see Step V below).

NOTE: With respect to Clauses 9.02 and 9.04 (Clauses 9.03 and 9.05 for TLAs), in determining capability to fulfill the requirements of the job function, the school district shall consider the overall ability of the teacher to perform the functions of the position in accordance with the currently modern standards required for the position. As per Clause 9.07, reassignment shall be to a comparable position, where possible.

Step V:

Any teacher or TLA who is declared redundant and not reassigned (including those who refuse their reassignment), is deemed to have been "laid-off" and placed in recall. Any teacher or TLA placed in recall shall be offered any vacant comparable positions that arise during the subsequent three (3) years following the layoff before such positions are advertised (Clauses 9.11, 9.12 and 9.13). For the purpose of recall, a layoff does not take effect until the end of the contract year (the last day of school for teachers and TLAs). ***It is VERY important to note here that recall is distinct within the separate job classifications of teachers and TLAs respectively – teachers who have been laid off CANNOT be recalled to TLA positions, and TLAs who have been laid off CANNOT be recalled to teaching positions.***

It is the responsibility of the individual teacher or TLA to inform the school district of their interest in and availability for recall in the subsequent three years following layoff. .

If you have any questions or need further information contact mail@nlta.nl.ca.

School District Teacher Online Profiles:

In determining a teacher's capabilities, in accordance with the collective agreements, the school district does rely upon the information contained in a teacher's online profile. It is important, and strongly recommended, that all teachers create, review and update if necessary the information in their online profile to ensure that it is complete, accurate and reflective of their teaching experience and qualifications to date.



Positive Collegial Relationships

by IAN CREWE

Living with COVID-19 for the past year has caused much stress and anxiety for everyone – in both our personal and professional lives. Indeed, for many NLTA members, levels of stress in general have been steadily increasing for the past number of years, for a variety of reasons. When stress increases in the workplace, one of the outcomes of said stress can be conflict between colleagues.

Positive relationships and respectful interactions with colleagues are important in all workplaces, and this is no less true for schools than for any other professional environment. However, schools are unique and dynamic workplaces. The teaching day is intense, demanding and highly scheduled. In the context of this reality, we may all feel tensions building and our patience starting to wear thin from time to time. We should all try to be alert to this, and take a step back when necessary to remind ourselves of the guidance and support available for maintaining positive relationships with our fellow teachers.

Respectful, constructive relationships among teachers are important in our profession. The NLTA Code of Ethics provides guidance and outlines basic principles for appropriate professional conduct between teachers and the public (pupils and parents), teachers and school boards, teachers and colleagues, and teachers and their professional organization. When positive relationships break down, tension and negativity may result. NLTA provides assistance for teachers dealing with member-to-member conflict; however, too often it seems that the call for help comes long after the problem first surfaced. Sometimes, neither party is speaking to the other by the time assistance is requested. The information that follows outlines some advice for teachers on how to deal with a breakdown in collegial relationships, and how to access assistance in this regard.

When conflict occurs, it is always advisable to approach the other party first to attempt to resolve the issue or concern between colleagues. This is consistent with generally accepted standards of professional behavior and the Code of Ethics (Teacher-Colleagues section (ii)). Indeed, experts in conflict resolution agree that the most effective and enduring solutions are to be found when the parties to a dispute work together to reach an acceptable outcome, thereby maintaining control of the end result as opposed to surrendering this discretion to a third party decision maker. The first option is to handle the issue through discussion or problem solving with the other person. It is as important in such situations to keep an open mind and “listen to understand” the other side of the issue as it is to communicate your own perspective. However, sometimes there are legitimate reasons that this does not happen – concerns for safety

or repercussions, avoidance, or a hope that the conflict will just “go away” may make it difficult, in some situations, for individuals to work out their issues together.

When it is improbable or impossible for conflict to be resolved through direct discussion between members, teachers may want to consider requesting assistance from NLTA staff. Association policy provides that, once local efforts to settle a dispute have been exhausted, “a teacher may seek the assistance of the NLTA to resolve the issue by contacting an administrative officer of the NLTA”. Administrative Officers in Programs and Services and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Coordinators have training and experience in conflict resolution. Advice and assistance is provided at no cost to members and is completely confidential between the parties to the dispute and the NLTA staff person working with them. This assistance can take many forms, from providing general advice on possible approaches or resolutions, to facilitating meetings between members to help them find an acceptable resolution to their concerns.

Unfortunately, member-to-member conflict sometimes relates to a breach of the NLTA Code of Ethics, in particular, Teacher-Colleagues section (ii), which states: “A teacher does not criticize the professional competence or professional reputation of a colleague, except to proper officials and then only in confidence and after the colleague has been informed of the criticism.” (emphasis added)

When teachers have a complaint or concern about another NLTA member, the Code requires that they inform their colleague of the issue before taking the matter to higher authority through any of the options described below. (Note: Contacting NLTA to discuss an issue in confidence or seek support/advice on how to deal with a conflict does not constitute a complaint to proper officials or report to “higher authority.”) This ensures the other member is aware of and has an opportunity to respond to the issue before further action is taken.

Everyone deals with conflict in their professional and personal lives from time to time. Something else to keep in mind is that conflict is not always a negative thing – when effectively managed and resolved, disagreements can often lead to positive developments and outcomes, such as gaining a new perspective on an issue or initiating important changes to policies or procedures that might not have been considered had the conflict not arisen. As NLTA members, teachers have access to information, advice, and support when dealing with the challenges of conflict between colleagues.

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Where There's Hope: Moving Forward

by KENDA RIGGS

"Yesterday ended last night. Today is a brand-new day." ~ Zig Ziglar

We are living through a worldwide pandemic, and this past year has been particularly challenging for many teachers. The 2020 CTF/FCE survey gave much insight into how teachers are doing across Canada, and the results were not surprising, bearing a common theme of teachers feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted. Given the current circumstances, experiencing these emotions is very understandable and a normal response to have during this global pandemic, which can also often lead to increased feelings of anxiety. However, efforts must be focused on ensuring that anxiety is prevented from taking over, as anxiety too, can spread like a virus. Therefore, we must take good care of ourselves and each other to remain strong and united. We must have hope.

Optimism versus Hope

Optimism and hope are often interchanged, but both are different concepts. Psychologist Charles Carver's research defined optimism as believing that your future will have good, positive experiences rather than negative ones. His research found that higher levels of optimism are related to better subjective well-being in times of difficulty, reporting that optimism is ultimately a state of mind. Optimism, however, differs from hope. According to psychologist Charles Synder, who specialized in positive psychology, hope is a positive motivational state, whereby individuals 'perceive' that they can walk certain paths leading to a desired destination. Synder identifies three components for hope:

- you need to have focused thoughts;
- you must develop strategies in advance to achieve clear and attainable goals;
- you must be motivated to make the effort required to reach these goals, even when it becomes difficult.

The more you believe in your own ability to achieve the components listed above, the greater the chance that you will embrace hope.

Focused Thoughts

Many people talk about hope in general terms, such as 'I hope

to get out to pick up my groceries tomorrow', or 'I hope that the weather isn't too messy tomorrow'. However, hope is much deeper than this. Hope is about focusing your thoughts to envision a more positive future, even when circumstances are happening around you that make it seem like there is not much to hope for.

It is important to acknowledge that sometimes, in periods of difficulty, there can be feelings of hopelessness. When feeling hopelessness, it is often due to *external* experiences that have occurred or are taking place in our lives, such as death of a close loved one, diagnosis of an illness, job difficulty, ending of a relationship, parenting difficulties, worries about the sickness of a loved one, financial difficulties, caring for an aging parent, living through a pandemic – the list can go on. It is important to realize that although the situation is external to you, the feelings

of hopelessness that you may be experiencing come from inside you. The ironic thing is the *solution* to hopelessness must also come from inside of you.

The January/February Bulletin article was about resilience and you. Hope helps bring about resilience,

as having hope means having the belief that things will be different in the future. Hope is about self-preservation, with a goal on thriving rather than just surviving. When you believe in yourself, and the fact that you can accomplish goals that you focus your thoughts on, this helps motivate hope to grow. Research has shown that the human capacity for hope is so strong that even when you may feel there is no hope, you can still find it.

Visualizing Attainable Goals

Hope involves visualizing attainable goals and setting strategies to achieve your goals. At this time, I invite you to reflect upon what your goals are. Not having a goal is like sailing in a river of water without a destination. Visualization can often help with goal setting and is a wonderful way to 'see' yourself a particular way. If you close your eyes for a moment, how do you visualize yourself:

- How much stress do you see around you?
- What does it look like?
- How do you look with less stress around you?

"Everything that is done in the world is done by HOPE."

~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- What thoughts are going through your mind right now?
- How do you feel?
- What would YOU like things to look like?

Reflect upon what may be getting in the way of you achieving these goals. Start thinking about some strategies that could help you head towards that destination. The purpose of visualization is to help you start the process of developing goals for yourself and developing a stronger version of you.

Motivation

Motivation has been considered one of the most important reasons to move forward towards a goal, whereby our thoughts influence an action. This seems to be a simple concept to embrace, however it may not be easy. If it was, as human beings, reaching our goals would occur at a much quicker pace than it ever does! Mel Robbins, motivational speaker and author of “The Five Second Rule” describes one of the reasons why. She reveals that if you have an instinct or gut feeling to act on a goal, you should physically move towards that act within five seconds or your brain will try to stop you from doing it. Robbins explains that there is a five-second window between the moment you have an instinct to act and your thoughts stopping you. She says that when you feel yourself hesitate before doing something, count 5-4-3-2-1-Go and then move towards action. The counting will focus you on the goal or commitment and distract you from the worries, thoughts, and excuses in your mind that try to stop you. If you do not act on this instinct within five seconds, she indicates that you run the risk of remaining stagnant. This theory helps to understand the neuroscience in the brain of motivation, to help to bring awareness as you move forward towards action to achieve your goal towards hope for the future.

How Does Your River Flow?

Every day, people are searching for more peace and balance in their busy lives to have an easier flow in life. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, another prominent researcher who studied positive psychology, identified the concept of ‘flow’ to be a highly focused mental state conducive to productivity. He explains that people are happiest when they are in a state of flow—a state of concentration with a particular activity—and nothing else seems

to matter. This is often described as being in ‘the zone’. This flow state is an optimal state of intrinsic motivation, which is a satisfying activity to do.

So, let’s explore this flow state in relation to a river. Water flows down a river, and as it flows towards its destination, it picks up and drops sediment along the way. Rivers sometimes flow very calmly and peacefully in a relaxing manner, moving forward with ease as water gently flows over the rocks. Other times, after heavy rain, wind, or stormy weather, rivers can run very forcefully and turbulently, as the water crashes into the rocks. Just like our lives, when our river is calm and peaceful, we can control and express our emotions, choices, and behaviors with composure and thought. However, when the river is overflowing, there are moments whereby everything can be chaotic. We can become more reactive to situations, reacting emotionally rather than rationally, without properly thinking our behavior through. Take time to reflect upon:

- How does ‘your’ river flow?
- Are you able to enter the flow, whereby you are in the zone of intrinsic motivation?
- Are you reaching goals and having hope?
- What storms are in the way of preventing you from reaching your true happiness or pursuing your goals?
- What do you need to do to get into your ‘zone’?
- What gives you hope?

We are living at a time when it is not business as usual. Many people talk openly about having COVID-19 fatigue while being worried and scared about how this virus has been impacting all of our lives. There is hope for the future, as vaccine production is occurring, and we live in a province and country where we will have access. While we wait, it will be imperative to keep your river flowing as calmly as you can. Continue to do things that you enjoy and focus your mind away from stress. Take good care of yourselves and each other. Continue to be kind. We are moving forward. There is hope for the future!

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Girls, Math and Career Choices

by ROXANNE ROBERTS

As a female educator, I feel that it is my responsibility to be an encouraging role model for the many young girls who pass through my classroom. I want to instill a love for math and all that it has to offer. I want girls to feel empowered and believe that they can determine their future careers. Yet there remains a serious underrepresentation of women in math-related fields (Ceci et al., 2009). Why do most girls choose careers that are unrelated to math or science? Neurologically, the brains of boys and girls are more similar than they are different (Kersey et al., 2019), and gender differences in math performance are minimal (Ganley, 2018). This article focuses on some of the internal and external factors that contribute to this disparity, and suggests how this gap in equality can be bridged.

Internal Factors

Belief in one's ability to do a job well, a willingness to work hard to reach goals, and having the courage to step outside of the gender bubble are all necessary when considering a math-related career. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation (Cherry, 2020), and girls' lower math self-efficacy is evident even in middle school years (Seegers & Boekaerts, 1996). By understanding the nature of self-efficacy, low math self-efficacy in girls can be addressed with the goal of increasing the number of women in math-related fields.

Growth mindset refers to the belief that intelligence increases with hard work, whereas in a fixed mindset learning is possible but one's basic level of intelligence is immutable (Boaler, 2016a). Having a growth mindset has shown to be beneficial to both boys' and girls' academic performance, but is especially so for adolescent females (Degol et al., 2018). Degol et al. (2018) found that females with a growth mindset had higher math grades than males with a growth mindset, and concluded that "efforts to increase diversity may be more successful if we target the mindset and motivational processes that impact women's achievement and career decisions" (p. 987).

In considering any particular academic field, individuals produce in their mind a prototype, a set of traits and attributes a person in that field should have. Research suggests that this can explain why enrollment in math and science is low for girls: "prototypes about math and science [are] highly dissimilar from self-prototypes students have or want to have of themselves" (Hannover & Kessels, 2004, p. 51). A lack of female role models can be a contributing

factor to girls' prototype. Role models are extremely important to students; girls want to see themselves reflected in those fields.

Stereotype Threat is a "situational threat—a threat in the air—that, in general form, can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists. Unfortunately, members of that group can fear being reduced to that stereotype" (Steele, 1997, p. 614). The stereotype that "girls can't do math" persists (Makarova et al., 2019), despite evidence to the contrary (Ganley, 2018).

External Factors

Many outside forces may influence a person's decision to enter a certain field of study. While some forces intentionally try to influence (e.g., media), other forces unintentionally influence due to implicit biases and partialities (e.g., teachers).

From an early age, children see pervasive gender stereotypes around what boys should do versus what girls should do. Toy and clothing sections are segregated by gender in stores. Advertisements for household kitchen items are usually geared towards women, and advertisements for automotive items are geared towards men. Girls are pushed into the princess or dancer role, while boys are directed to the sciences (Aptimal, 2017). Phrases such as "you throw like a girl" or "you run like a girl" are used with negative connotations (Hively & El-Alayli, 2014).

The single most important factor in a child's educational success is not the child's school, socioeconomic status, or measured ability, but the child's teacher (Davis et al., 2015). Therefore, what teachers say and do (or don't say or don't do) can have a lasting impact on students. Unfortunately, gender bias does occur in the classroom. In a survey of more than 8,600 young people and adults, some 57% of teachers admitted to having made subconscious stereotypes about girls and boys in relation to sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects (Pells, 2017). As a result, teachers send biased messages: "When girls are given that message, they are given a downward trajectory with math" (Boaler, 2016b).

Teacher anxiety towards math can also have a negative impact on the girls they teach but not the boys (Beilock et al., 2009). One possible reason for this finding is that "female teachers' math anxiety helps to confirm stereotypes about which gender is good at math and this, in turn, has an impact on girls' math achievement" (p. 1861). A teacher's mindset can also play a pivotal role in maintaining gender stereotypes about math ability. As Boaler (2016a)

notes, “Mindset beliefs held by teachers, open or close pathways for students, and that fixed mindset thinking and teaching is a large part of the reason inequities continue in mathematics and science, for women” (p. 102).

Bridging the Gap

If girls believe that they can do math (growth mindset), then careers in math may seem more obtainable. Therefore teachers need to use their unique position to foster that belief through “the ways they present mathematics, and the opportunities they take to encourage vulnerable students” (Boaler, 2016a, p. 102). This growth mindset is imperative not only for the student, but also the teacher, in order to ensure they are sending growth mindset messages to their students rather than unintentional partialities.

Girls, more than boys, will “strive towards depth of understanding” (Boaler, 2002, p. 103). They want to “know why methods work, where they come from, and how they connect to broader conceptual domains” (Boaler, 2016a, p. 103). This helps explain why girls prefer open-ended assessments as opposed to multiple choice questions (Reardon et al., 2018). Hands-on experiences, project based curriculum, curriculum with real-life applications, and opportunities to work together also help create engagement in math for girls (Boaler, 2016a). Teachers need to offer these types of experiences in the classroom.

Teachers should also assume that girls are interested in STEM and encourage leadership roles to make the classroom inclusive (Ayers, 2017). Girls need positive messages about their “valued place in mathematics” (Boaler, 2016a, p. 105). Further, teachers are encouraged to provide opportunities for girls to see other females in STEM positions and, if possible, invite these role models as guest speakers (Ayers, 2017).

Society has a role to play in helping bridge the STEM gender gap. As Purcell (2015) notes, “If we want to attract the best and brightest minds into the fields that will move us forward, we must look to all of the population” (para. 2). First, girls should be exposed to STEM fields: “Correcting the negative perceptions that girls develop at a

young age can lead them to embrace math and science when they reach high school, rather than avoid the subjects” (Purcell, 2015, para. 3). Secondly, they should be encouraged to participate in special programs (e.g. Bricks-4-Kids, or one of Memorial University’s summer camps) and avail themselves of the many online sites geared towards young girls (e.g. Stem Like a Girl, or Girls Who Stem). Next, women in the field should be mentors in our communities: “Time and time again, the majority of successful women credit their participation in some sort of mentorship for dramatically helping them reach their career goals” (Purcell, 2015, para. 7). Finally, society in general and educators in particular should take action to bridge this gender gap and learn about opportunities in STEM fields by accessing the wealth of online resources.

Conclusion

Although increasing numbers of women are having STEM-related careers, there is still unequal representation of women in these fields. Internal and external factors such as self-efficacy, mindset, stereotypes, and implicit biases can influence a girl’s choice of career. Girls need role models to show career opportunities open to them. Newfoundland’s own scientist astronaut, Bethany Downer, with her strong presence on social media, is now a household name. In a CBC interview Downer said, “Ever since I’ve expressed that I was interested in space, I’ve had some people tell me it may not work out A) because I’m a woman, B) because I’m too young, C) for where I come from” (Breen, 2018). However, she rejected those criticisms, noting, “I very much want to emphasize that the things that are taking place in the space industry are very important for humanity, for mankind ... so I really want people to get motivated and involved, but more so to realize that we need people from all backgrounds to do this.” With more women in the field, it will become more evident to young girls what they can truly offer the world.

Roxanne Roberts currently teaches at Brookside Intermediate in Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING RETIRING AT THE END OF THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

Please be advised of the following notice based on information from the Teachers’ Pension Plan Corporation (TPPC):

This is a reminder that teachers planning to retire prior to the beginning of the 2021-22 school year should submit their resignation to the school district and submit their pension application to the Teachers’ Pension Plan Corporation by **March 31, 2021**. As administrator of the pension plan, the TPPC has also advised that federal government pension regulations may prevent retroactive payment to July 1 for any pension applications received between July 1 and August 31.

Therefore, it is important that you submit all documents on time.

Under the Teachers’ Pension Plan, eligible teachers who have submitted their application for a pension, can begin receiving

their pension in the month following their resignation. Therefore, a teacher who requests to retire at the end of June and submits their resignation notice and pension application by March 31, 2021 will be eligible for a pension benefit in July 2021. However, a teacher who submits their pension application in July 2021 will not be eligible to begin receiving a pension until August 2021. A teacher who submits their documentation in August 2021 will not receive a pension until September 2021 and so on, depending on the month in which a teacher chooses to retire.

To be clear, March 31 is the resignation deadline for teachers planning to retire effective the end of the school year, as per Clause 12.02(c) of the Provincial Collective Agreement and Clause 48.02(c) of the

Labrador West Collective Agreement. Teachers who have submitted their resignation to their school district and have submitted their pension application to the TPPC on or before March 31 will receive their entire summer holdback pay as a lump-sum payment during the first pay period following the end of the school year and will begin receiving pension benefits by July 31, retroactive to July 1.

If you have any questions regarding pension eligibility or pension administration, please contact the Teachers’ Pension Plan Corporation at 793-8772 or 1-833-345-8772 or memberservices@tppcnl.ca. As always, for further assistance you may contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 or mail@nlta.nl.ca.

K-6 Mathematics Bursary Program

by NICOLE BISHOP & ALLISON PINSENT

I learned a great deal about creating, setting up and delivering math blocks. I also learned effective strategies, as well as a variety of low-floor, high-ceiling activities that could be implemented...

(Emily Callahan, substitute teacher)

Emily Callahan is a recipient of the K-6 Mathematics Bursary. Since its inception in May 2018, over 83 educators in Newfoundland and Labrador have received a bursary through this program.

The intent of the Mathematics Bursary Program is to build capacity among K-6 teachers and to enhance mathematics pedagogy in Newfoundland and Labrador. The bursary provides funding for current K-6 teachers and administrators to participate in a mathematics pedagogy course or a mathematics content course.

To be eligible for a mathematics bursary, you must be a K-6 teacher or administrator (permanent, replacement or substitute) in the public school system; a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador, a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada; a graduate of a B. Ed. and/or M. Ed. program; and currently certified to teach in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Applying for a mathematics bursary is easy. First, visit www.k12pl.nl.ca/curr/k-6/math/burs-prgm.html to complete the Mathematics Bursary Application Form. To complete the form, you must select a course from the list of pre-approved courses. After you submit the application form, you will be notified via email if you have been pre-approved to receive a bursary once your studies are completed. A notice will be emailed to you with instructions on the steps to take to receive your bursary once you have successfully completed your course. You will be responsible for registering for the course specified in your application.

If you are interested in participating in a course not on the current list of choices, please email the Mathematics Bursary Program Coordinator at mathbursary@gov.nl.ca with the course name and number, and the institution at which the course is offered. EDU welcomes the opportunity to add eligible courses to the list of pre-approved courses. Once a decision is made, you will be notified by email.

Straightforward form and quick verification process. (Terina Legge, K-6 Mathematics Program Specialist, Avalon Region)

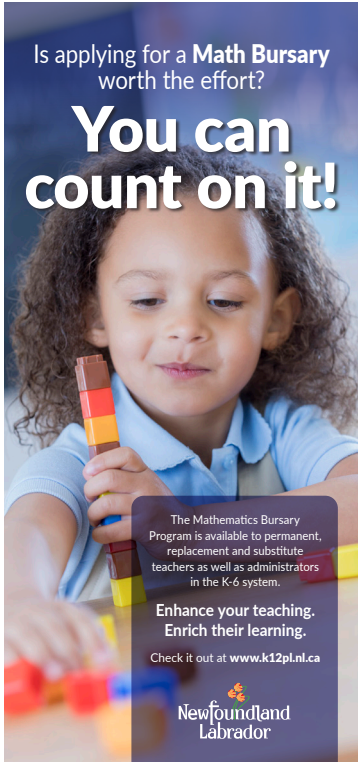
When asked about her experience with the bursary program application process, Angie Patey, of St. Andrew's Elementary, replied, "No issues whatsoever! Simple to apply and I received it in a timely manner."

There are many benefits to receiving a mathematics bursary. Having a bursary helps to relieve some of the financial strain sometimes experienced by educators in their pursuit of lifelong learning. "As a substitute teacher, the bursary helped ease financial worries while completing my Special Ed. Degree," reports Ms. Callahan.

Great opportunity to further your teaching skills without the monetary cost. (Angie Patey, St. Andrew's Elementary, St. John's)

The amount of the bursary is based on a variety of criteria including, but not limited to, the method of course delivery, required travel, etc. The bursary is awarded as follows: \$500 for an online course, \$750 for a course taken on campus with a required commute of less than 45 km in total, or \$1000 for a course taken on campus with a required commute of at least 45 km in total.

Recipients may use the funds received at their discretion to recover course costs and related expenses for successfully completing a pre-approved bursary-eligible course. Bursary recipients will not be asked to repay any unspent funding and additional



Is applying for a **Math Bursary** worth the effort?

You can count on it!

The Mathematics Bursary Program is available to permanent, replacement and substitute teachers as well as administrators in the K-6 system.

Enhance your teaching. Enrich their learning.

Check it out at www.k12pl.nl.ca

Newfoundland
Labrador

funds are not available if the bursary does not cover all course expenses incurred.

The major benefit experienced by bursary recipients is the opportunity for them to further their mathematical learning. Bursary recipient, Denise Broderick of St. Edward's School, reports that participating in her chosen course was a great way to explore math topics and incorporate various math concepts into the play-based learning environment. Ms. Legge said, "I think it is important to stay current with our math learning. It keeps me up to date with the current research, which benefits my students. The process was easy. The list of approved courses was helpful for me to begin my search." Ms. Patey added, "I very much enjoyed my course. I found it very practical and it provided me with resources I could use right away."

The K-6 Mathematics Bursary Program is managed by the Department of Education. An informative website is available in both English and French and includes a straightforward application form, a dynamic list of pre-approved courses, and a thorough Frequently Asked Questions section. Start your mathematics learning journey today and visit the K-12 Professional Learning site (www.k12pl.nl.ca). Apply today!

Nicole Bishop and Allison Pinsent are Mathematics Program Development Specialists with the Department of Education.

RESOURCE

Ecology of Being in the Schools

A couple years ago, *The Telegram* featured a school program: "If you want evidence of the success of violinist Nancy Dahn and pianist Timothy Steeves' newest Tuckamore Festival school outreach project, consider this: it had a gym full of grades four and five students literally cheering in excitement last Friday – over Beethoven."

Now Tim and Nancy (aka Duo Concertante) bring *Ecology of Being* to the schools, virtually, through five new musical works which focus on the climate emergency. Designed to engage students around our interconnections to this planet, *Ecology of Being* considers topics surrounding ecology, social responsibility and stewardship, eco-justice, role of "Artist-citizens", ways of knowing, and how artists can respond to world issues. It also addresses the power of nature and our dependence on it for survival, resilience, and healing.

In this online school program, accessible across many grade levels (4-12), Nancy and Tim share video performances of these works, contextual information and a follow up with synchronous discussion and short performances, designed with many curriculum outcomes in mind.

Each work examines environmental issues in a unique way:

- Dawn Ierihò:kwats Avery's *Onekha'shòn:a, Ya'kòn:kwe* (*The Waters, The Women*) speaks to the Native American understanding of the deep symbiotic and spiritual connection of water and women.
- Carmen Braden's *The Seed Knows*, depicts the promise, mystery and simplicity of a seed.
- Ian Cusson's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* draws inspiration from Hieronymus Bosch's famous painting in an evocative programmatic work.
- The Australian wild fires were raging when NL composer Bekah Simms wrote *shedding, as if sloughed* and it conjures sensations of burning as well as the cycle of fire and regrowth.



Violinist Nancy Dahn and pianist Tim Steeves (Duo Concertante)

- Finally, Melissa Hui's *Ecology of Being*, an award-winning short film, uses the eco poetry of Shannon Webb-Campbell to address our inter-generational responsibilities as custodians of the planet.

For more information, email: info@tuckamorefestival.ca and <http://duoconcertante.com/ecology-of-being/>



Learning to Approach Physical Education Differently

by KELLIE BAKER & CHRISTAN MURPHY

In a recent NLTA Bulletin article titled *Physical Education into the Future*, I (Kellie) urged PE teachers to explore innovative approaches to the teaching and learning of PE as one way to impact the future of PE. While some practical suggestions were provided, that article was based on research and theory. In this article, my teaching partner and I share our collaborative efforts to do things differently, namely our journey developing our implementation of Teaching Games for Understanding.

We share our story to provide a window into the possibility of sustaining long-term change in pedagogical practice through collegial collaboration. As such, this article focuses on our experiences working collaboratively to improve our pedagogical practices. We do this to support students in gaining physical skills, but also in learning how to be explicit about the *why* of sport and games which ultimately contributes to the development of overall greater confidence and competence, both physically and cognitively.

Our Story

We (Christan and Kellie) began teaching together at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Christan is at Cowan Heights School every day until recess. We co-teach kindergarten classes (in separate spaces), but all other classes are taught on our own. However, there's a catch; sometimes, we teach the same class on different days. For example, we may teach class 2A twice a cycle each, or Christan may teach 5B once a cycle and Kellie may teach them three times. We quickly realized that such a schedule necessitated being highly collaborative. Early conversations made it clear that we were both student-centered educators. As such, we decided to implement a student-centered approach that brought focus to the cognitive side of physical activity and sport – Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU).

Supporting students in working towards “Sport Lead-Up” outcomes that would transfer across sports through a TGfU approach held challenges and opportunities for both of us, not to mention possibilities for student learning. However, our first attempt was filled with growing pains. Our focus was almost solely on developing TGfU questioning skills that supported students in using critical thinking skills to gain deeper understandings of the concepts, tactics, and strategies within and across multiple territorial sports and games rather than trying to implement the full-version of the model. As the unit progressed, so did our skills in focusing the

questioning on concepts that can be transferred across all territorial games, such as creating and reducing open spaces. Through email, we shared videos, games, activities, and other resources. However, we were still primarily “doing our own thing” when it came to which activities, games, and sports and with which classes.

Net/Wall games was another unit that we decided to approach through TGfU. To increase sequence, balance, and scope, we collaboratively developed shared documents. This collaboration supported us in developing our focused questioning skills and taking a step forward in our TGfU implementation. We began to integrate TGfU pedagogical principles such as:

- *Sampling* – for example, transferability of placement skills in volleyball, handball, and pickleball.
- *Game Representation* – developmentally appropriate game-like situation in small-sided games.
- *Exaggeration* – for example, in a sport such as basketball, changing the scoring to three points for shots closest to the net and one point for those furthest to support passing to the post and/or discussion about the concept of higher percentage shots
- *Tactical complexity* - developmental progression of concepts/strategies/tactics.

As we increased our confidence and competence with TGfU, we noted increased gains in student understanding and, therefore, success in game play across sports and physical activities. This success was motivating for both students and us as teachers. In fact, it provided us with the confidence to share the document with our colleagues across the province through the NLESD Google Group: teachers_physical_ed_health_athletics@nlesd.ca

As we write this article, we are collaborating on our third unit from a TGfU approach: Target Games. We have developed a template to help us with the planning process. Key concepts, progression, resources, curriculum outcomes, and daily plans in a table format help us share and develop our thinking (and of course, we are more than willing to share that template with others). We don't yet know all the ways in which our pedagogical practice will continue to develop through this unit, but we are well aware we are not yet implementing the full TGfU model. We also understand that changing pedagogical practices is a deliberate process that takes time, so we learn from our challenges and internalize the successes, however small.

Challenges and Successes

Working collaboratively to implement a student-centered approach to PE teaching and learning has been challenging. Some of the challenges we continue to work through are:

- lack of time to collaborate face-to-face
- differences with TGfU implementation experience
- student resistance to the unfamiliar
- high cost in terms of time, for example, with planning, meeting, and compiling resources
- keeping track of each other's progress between shared classes
- maintaining consistency in questioning and teaching cues
- significant amount of equipment that then needed to be thoroughly sanitized.

We meet these challenges through:

- collaboratively developing shared documents
- making the most of our short face-to-face time together with quick and focused chats
- watching videos
- sharing lead responsibilities from one unit to the next
- a “lesson zero” – that first class where you introduce a new unit/new approach in ways that make it more appealing to students and make it known that we will be doing things a little differently
- creating shared documents that will lessen the time commitment in years to come
- taking breaks between high-intensity unit planning through a TGfU approach with content areas and approaches more familiar to us
- being fluid with, and responsive to, our diverse and dynamic classes, rather than holding tight to rigid lesson plans (or as Kellie prefers “learning plans”).

Student comments such as “That was awesome Miss! They couldn't just score on us any time they wanted to like they could before” and “I never wanted to work this hard in gym before” were motivating. Further motivation came from positive parental feedback. For example, one parent commented that their grade seven child had never wanted to be involved in any form of school activity before. They are now engaged in intramurals and school sport – both of which were highly linked to the Net/Wall games TGfU unit we had just completed. As we progressed through TGfU categories, we began to see evidence of learning not only in how students physically applied transferable skills across different games and sports, but also in response to questioning. Their improved understanding was positively impacting their ability to participate more confidently.

While we did not formally research our implementation of TGfU, given that we have approached most of our teaching and

learning through a TGfU model, it is safe to say that these positive comments are linked, at least in part, to this approach. What we are sure of is that this year has been increasingly satisfying for both of us because: a) we are taking risks, supporting each other, and learning from each other; b) we have been challenged; c) we have had successes and met challenges; and most importantly, d) students have benefited both in PE and beyond the walls of the school (i.e., students and families reporting that because a physical activity was introduced in PE their family had engaged in it at home).

Your Story

While we recognize that most PE specialists in our province have no subject area teaching partners in their school, based on our experience and the change it has brought about in our job satisfaction (which is highly linked to student success), we strongly suggest taking the plunge. Find a virtual colleague and plan together – it's the advice we give people all the time in order to sustain physical activity (i.e., find a buddy). We are not advocating for models as the only approach to PE here, but rather thinking about doing things differently. If not models, perhaps a different approach.

Christan most aptly caught the possibilities of collegial collaboration in sustaining pedagogical change when he said, “It is so easy to keep doing what you've always been doing. This year's been great because we could count on each other so it was a lot easier to take risks”. When Kellie pressed Christan to explain, his face lit up as he talked about all the benefits for students, not least of which is the contribution to their physical literacy in terms of both confidence and competence – a PE teacher's dream!

Thank you to Ms. Elizabeth Murphy, Mount Pearl Senior High, for her feedback on earlier versions of this article.

Kellie Baker is a K-7 PE specialist at Cowan Heights School in St. John's and teacher educator at Memorial University. She teaches predominantly through a Models-Based Practice approach including pedagogical models such as Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility, Teaching Games for Understanding, Cooperative Learning, and Peer Teaching. Her doctoral dissertation was on developing principles of practice implementing MBP in PE.

Christan Murphy is a K-6 PE specialist at Cowan Heights and Bishop Abraham schools in St. John's. He has been teaching for 10 years and is new in the implementation of different models-based approaches to Physical Education.

2020 NLTA Province Wide Vote Election Expenses

As per the financial guidelines established in Association policy on the Election of President and Vice-President by Province Wide Vote, candidates must disclose the sources and amounts of campaign financial contributions (monetary and “in kind”) and expenses for verification within 60 days of the election. Subject to the audit of this disclosure, candidates are eligible for reimbursement from NLTA of the lesser of \$2,000 or forty percent of eligible campaign expenditures, or a prorated share of a maximum of \$10,000 if the eligible reimbursement for all can-

didates exceeds this amount. Following verification, candidates’ campaign contributions and expenses are to be published to the membership.

The NLTA Electoral Committee is therefore providing this information by way of publication to the membership, in compliance with Association policy. All candidates in the 2020 province wide election for President and Vice President submitted their campaign financial disclosure within required timelines and these have been verified as follows:

NLTA Province Wide Vote Financial Disclosure Form			
	CANDIDATE		
	T. Langdon	D. Drover	M. Doyle-Gillingham
Income			
Financial Contributions	\$	\$	\$
Fundraising	\$	\$	\$
In-kind Contributions	\$	\$	\$
Other	\$	\$	\$
Total Income	\$	\$	\$
Expenses			
Advertising	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$489.30
Fundraising Expense	\$	\$	\$
Meeting/Social Functions	\$	\$	\$
Office Supplies	\$ 31.60	\$	\$146.88
Postage	\$243.34	\$297.16	\$491.99
Telephone	\$	\$	
Travel	\$	\$	
Other:			
Printing	\$418.97	\$327.75	\$
Photocopies	\$ 37.40	\$	\$
Total Expenses	\$831.31	\$724.91	\$1,128.17
Campaign Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$831.31)	(\$724.91)	(\$1,128.17)
NLTA Contribution	\$332.52	\$289.96	\$451.27

(lesser of 40% of expense or \$2000)