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NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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bulletin

TEACHERSCHANGELIVES.CA

September/October 2021

WELCOME BACK



TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERYDAY

INSIDE

Up Front With the **NEW** NLTA President. 3

Class Size and Composition Count –
Now More Than Ever 6

The Gender and Sexual Diversity Special Interest
Council: Priorities for Change 14

Features

- 6 Executive Director's Message**
Class Size and Composition Count
 – Now More Than Ever
 by Stefanie Tuff
- 8 Programs & Services**
Overview of an Arbitration Ruling
 by Miriam Sheppard
- 10 Going on Leave?**
Things You Should Know
- 12 Living Well**
The Healthy Benefits of Play
 by Kenda Riggs
- 14 Of Special Interest...**
The Gender and Sexual Diversity Special Interest Council: Priorities for Change
 by Em Sopkowe & Trevor Taylor

Departments

- Note from the Editor* 2
Up Front with the new NLTA President 3
On Location News 4
News and Events back cover



Welcome back! By now you are all well into the swing of things in your classrooms and schools, and hopefully it is feeling a little closer to normal this year. This issue of *The Bulletin* will introduce you to our new President, Trent Langdon, and give you a little insight into his priorities for the Association and membership moving forward.

As we embark on another year of bringing you *The Bulletin* and providing you with important Association information, we want to highlight the good work happening in your classrooms, schools and communities. Throughout the year, if something is happening in your school community that you think the entire membership would like to hear about, send it to us! We will also be making the Q&A article a regular feature of *The Bulletin* so let us know who in your school the membership should get to know.

Take care and stay safe.

Jennifer



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THE bulletin

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UP FRONT

WITH THE NEW NLTA PRESIDENT



On August 1, 2021, Trent Langdon became the new President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

Born and raised in Norris Arm, Notre Dame Bay, Trent was a Guidance Counsellor at St. Peter's Junior High in Mount Pearl (for the past 13 years) before taking on his new role.

Trent has been involved with the NLTA at various levels since the start of his career including two terms as Vice-President, Chair of the Provincial Negotiating Team for two rounds of bargaining, and President of the NL Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association Special Interest Council (NLCPA) for two terms. He was also the recipient of the 2012 NLTA Barnes Award (for his contribution to the professional development of teachers in NL) and the 2019 NLCPA Lifetime Achievement Award.

Trent and his partner Tammy are raising twin teenage boys (Riley and Noah) in Mount Pearl.

As an introduction to the membership in his role, Trent answers a series of questions. The traditional *Up Front with the President* will return in the next edition of *The Bulletin*.

Q. What is your main priority as President of the NLTA?

Hands-down it's the health and well-being of members and the quality of professional life. The impact of the ongoing pandemic on the K-12 system, and our province in general, has accentuated their importance.

Q. What do you see as the biggest challenge/opportunity for the NLTA and its members going forward?

The biggest challenge by far is addressing the workload experiences of our members. This is impacted by the size and wide variety of needs that exist in our classrooms as well as the increasing

paperwork and responsibilities related to program implementation and school operations. The upcoming review of the Teacher Allocation Model is an opportunity to paint a clear picture of the modern classroom and the needs within. We will be fighting for a definitive response and recommendations for a truly "needs-based" model, as opposed to a "budget-based" approach to resourcing our schools.

Q. How do you see the NLTA, under your leadership, supporting members?

Action Words: Nurturing morale, building identity, individual support, collective advocacy, listening, maintenance of strong member services, an active 'Vision for Change.'

Q. What do you consider your greatest achievement?

That's an easy answer – election as NLTA President. I am deeply honored to have been entrusted with this responsibility and afforded this opportunity by our members.

Q. What motivates you to work hard?

Both my mother and father were (and continue to be) very hard workers; my father as an employee of Newfoundland Power and community leader/volunteer and my mother as a homemaker, former Kindergarten teacher, and community volunteer. Their influence has been key to intrinsically building values of hard work, striving for excellence, and seeking social justice.

Q. Which historical figure do you most identify with?

John F. Kennedy (former US President) – He was a respected leader who had a clear

vision for a society that was progressive while emphasizing the importance of equity and democracy.

Carl Rogers (Humanistic Psychologist) – He was known for his humanistic, person-centered approach and student-centered approach to learning. I have attempted to espouse these same traits in all of my personal and professional connections.

Q. What do you like to do in your free time?

In addition to spending time with my family, I very much enjoy a game of rec hockey, having frequent coffees (and muffins) with friends, reading historical/leadership works, hacking my guitar, backyard campfires, and spinning vinyl on a Friday night.

We plan to make a questionnaire a regular feature of *The Bulletin*. If you would like to suggest someone in your school community that you think the entire membership should get to know a little more, send your suggestion to jtulka@nlta.nl.ca.



PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

MOBILE

NLTA Medal winner announced

Madison Curtis

Madison Curtis is the 2020-21 recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association medal. Madison grew up in Mobile on the Southern Shore, starting her musical journey with piano and voice lessons. During her Music Education degree, she worked as Student Assistant for the MUN Lab Band and Orchestra under the direction of Korona Brophy. When she's back up the shore, she can usually be found working at Fun Learning Afterschool Program with kids in grades K-4. She is currently serving as Student Representative for the Newfoundland and Labrador Music Educators Association. Madison has also started her own music studio in Mobile, teaching voice, guitar, piano, and ukulele to students ages 4-74.

Madison would like to thank her colleagues and professors in the Music Education and Education Faculty for their guidance and support over the past two years. A special thank you to her previous music educators, Wanda-lee Carew, Lisa Sells, Julia Halfyard, Susan Quinn, Shelley Neville, and co-operating teacher, Cheryl Thorne. Thank you for the Music!

The NLTA Medal is awarded annually to an Education student who, during their academic career, have made an outstanding contribution to the Faculty of Education and to the University. The recipient must be a graduating student and have a consistently good academic record in the professional courses required for the degree. The award is made by Memorial University on the recommendation of the Dean of Education.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

DEL F B2 Certification

DEL F (diplôme d'études en langue française) certification is an award provided by the French Ministry of Education. It certifies the proficiency of French language speakers at four different levels that correspond to the speaker's abilities with the language.

In the 2020-2021 school year, the Second Language Council received funding from Official Languages to support 20 teachers in the preparation and writing of the DEL F B2 exam.

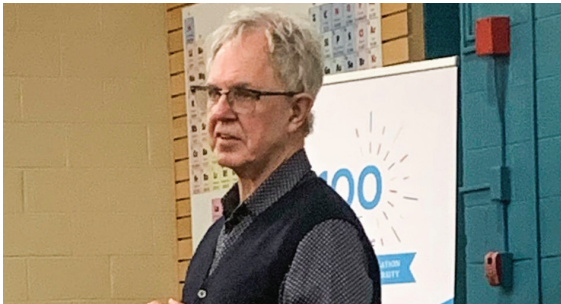
Participants were selected from across the province and included tenured and contract teachers with an appropriate language base. The group worked with Memorial University's DEL F Centre and, with guidance from the centre's Susan Forward, prepared for the exam. Susan held regular online meetings which provided tips and expectations for success with the B2 exam. Participants used online tools to sharpen reading and listening skills and wrote mock exams in listening, reading and writing. The DEL F Centre team evaluated and gave personalized feedback on each effort. Susan also arranged oral interviews with every candidate, and some candidates worked together online to practice for this component of the exam.

The DEL F Centre offered several dates for the exam. This accommodated teachers with extra preparation time. By the end of June, twenty participants had succeeded in obtaining their DEL F B2 designation. Your Second Language Council thanks Official Languages, Memorial University and the NLESD for supporting these participants throughout the year.

The Second Language Council was unsuccessful in obtaining funding to repeat this project. Teachers interested in knowing more about B2 certification should contact Memorial's DEL F Centre at sforward@mun.ca.

Let's Discuss – A New Series on Educational Matters

On September 9, the NLTA partnered with MUN's Faculty of Education to present the third installment of Let's Discuss – A New Dialogue Series on Educational Matters. The series was started in 2020 and explores a variety of topics as they relate to all things education. The event featured an empowering talk from well-known speaker, author, adviser, and researcher, Dr. Andy Hargreaves, who discussed his latest book, *Five Paths of Student Engagement*. The event also included a panel discussion featuring researchers and educators, including NLTA Member and SAC President Dale Lambe. The Dialogue Series can be viewed on the Faculty of Education's Facebook page (<https://fb.watch/89yLMAMHbB/>).



Dr. Andy Hargreaves



SAC President Dale Lambe



NLTA President Trent Langdon

Summer has ended and the new school year is here, and our school-age children and youth have returned to class with a renewed sense of optimism.



The beginning of the school year brings the excitement of seeing old friends, meeting new ones, and learning the names of new teachers. Most children happily go off to school carrying their new book bags and lunch boxes filled to start the school year.

But did you know that in Canada, 1 in 3 children are at risk of going to school hungry? We are no different here in Newfoundland and Labrador, with an estimated 1 in 6 St. John's families having no guarantee where their next meal is coming from. A staggering reality.

We know there are many reasons why children come to school hungry. Some have long bus rides or come from busy households, while others can't or won't eat in the morning, and sadly, through no fault of their own, some children do not have food at home.

We have all heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Research shows there is a direct correlation between good eating and a child's ability to concentrate and learn. Principals tell us they observe many benefits from their Kids Eat Smart Clubs including increased attendance rates, improved behavior, and overall positive impacts on their school environments.

At Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador our vision is that every child in Newfoundland and Labrador attends school well-nourished and ready to learn. Currently we are in over 94 percent of our province's schools. From Labrador to Twillingate, Port aux Basques and St. John's and everywhere in between, children all have one thing in common, and that is they start their school day with access to nutritious food, at no cost to families.

On behalf of Kids Eat Smart Foundation Board of Directors and Staff, we thank you for continuing to work together to ensure our children start their days well-nourished and ready to learn. We wish you a wonderful school year.

If you would like more information, visit our website at www.kidseatsmart.ca or contact Celina Stoyles, Executive Director, directly at (877) 722-1996 or email cstoyles@kidseatsmart.ca.

Every **Breakfast**. Every **Child**. Every **School Day**.

Together, we will make it happen.



Class Size and Composition Count — Now More Than Ever

by STEFANIE TUFF

Over the past ten years, class sizes in the Newfoundland and Labrador public K-12 education system have gradually increased while administrative allocations have decreased. Given that provincial teacher allocations are a budget based, as opposed to needs based, determination, these decisions have been about cost cutting. Over the same period of time, we saw the forced integration of students with special needs into regular classroom settings without adequate supports. The result is that we have many schools with overcrowded classrooms encompassing diverse and complex compositions of student needs. The NLTA has seen an increase in member reported incidents of violence against teachers, and growing recognition of the concerns for mental health issues among children and youth. The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing Public Health state of emergency have served to highlight and exacerbate the impact of decisions that have been made around the resourcing of our public schools, for example, the inability to provide for any sort of reasonable physical distancing in most classrooms, school common areas and busses, as well as poor ventilation and air quality.

Class size is not a new issue for the Association, or the province. In 2017, the report of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes concluded: *...too many students in NL are under achieving, struggling with reading and basic mathematical functions, and are not taking the more academically demanding high school courses they need for success at the post-secondary level; too many students are graduating from high school without sufficient knowledge of career opportunities, post-secondary study options, and fundamental life skills; too many students are dropping out of school and have no realistic way back in; too many students with mental health needs and academic challenges are not receiving the supports and the education they deserve.* (p. 3)

The 2019 report of the Child and Youth Advocate on chronic school absenteeism reported, "Large class size that prevents getting individual help," "Lack of access to guidance services," and "Inadequate accommodation for individual learning styles,"

as factors identified by students as impediments to school attendance. Recent (June-August 2021) independent research undertaken by the NLTA has confirmed what we have seen in the past, which is that members of the public feel class size remains the top challenge facing the education system. In 2014, *The Globe and Mail* (September 25) reported that one of the major factors parents consider when deciding whether to enrol their children in private school is class size: "For parents considering enrolling their children in private school, class size has become synonymous with education quality." Parents continue to report their frustration to the Association, for example, an email received by President Trent Langdon in September 2021 read:

*... Considering we are still in a global pandemic, the class sizes should be kept to a minimum so maximum physical distancing can be utilized for the students, teachers and teacher aids. **The provincial cap for grade _ students is 28 and today there were 33 in the classroom, ...***

*I am emailing to request that the provincial caps be adhered to. The grade _ students need another teacher and another classroom. **The space is too small for the number of students. ... air quality and circulation has always been an issue – even with proper class sizes.** In addition to the need to physically distance at this time, students are also going to have a harder time at school this year with the new measures in place – **more teacher attention is what is needed for each student's mental health and academic wellness, not less, which can only be realized by smaller classes.** (edits/redactions made to eliminate potentially identifying information, emphasis added)*

In, *Does Class Size Matter?* (2014), Dr. Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach of the National Education Policy Center of the University of Colorado, states that "common-sense" is validated by research demonstrating that class size is "an important determinant of student outcomes." The study found that teachers are able to be more effective with small class sizes and that the resulting benefit to students is not limited to their performance in school, but will con-

tinue to be an advantage over their entire lifetime. Likewise Dr. William J. Mathis in, *The Effectiveness of Class Size Reduction* (2016) concurred that:

While lowering class size has a demonstrable cost, it may prove the more cost-effective policy overall particularly for disadvantaged students. Money saved today by increasing class sizes will likely result in additional substantial social and educational costs in the future.

If we are talking about cost, it is worthy of note that the June 2019 report of the Conference Board of Canada, *The Economic Case for Investing in Education*, concluded that investments in public education realize economic and social benefits for society in general. Key findings from this report included:

Each dollar of public education spending generates \$1.30 in total economic impacts to Ontario. At the same time, the inverse holds true for each dollar taken from education.

Public education can generate social benefits, such as a healthier population, a higher standard of living, and a reduction in crime. That lessens demand for Ontario's social assistance, public health care, and criminal justice services.

One of the most important responsibilities of our society is to look after our children. Accordingly, it is imperative that all people, including teachers, administrators, parents, extended families and all community members who care about the future of our children and our province engage in the public policy discussion on class size and class composition. The provincial government has recently committed to conduct the long overdue independent review of its policy governing teacher allocations, and class size, the Teacher Allocation Model. Members of the committee to lead this review and make recommendations will be appointed through the Independent Appointments Commission (IAC) process, and the advertisement for the three-person panel was posted on the IAC website in early September. The Association is monitoring this closely and will take full advantage of all opportunities to make submissions to the committee and participate in public and stakeholder consultations. I encourage all members to keep an eye on this, including updates from the NLTA, and to consider participating in options to provide feedback "from the field" regarding the impact of allocations, class size and composition on the reality in your classrooms and schools.

The NLTA continues to advocate and promote the need for a properly funded public education system. COVID-19 has, understandably, consumed a lot of time and focus over the past eighteen months, but please stay tuned for more information, coming soon, on a new and re-branded campaign, "Class Size Counts – Now More Than Ever", a vehicle to increase the pub-

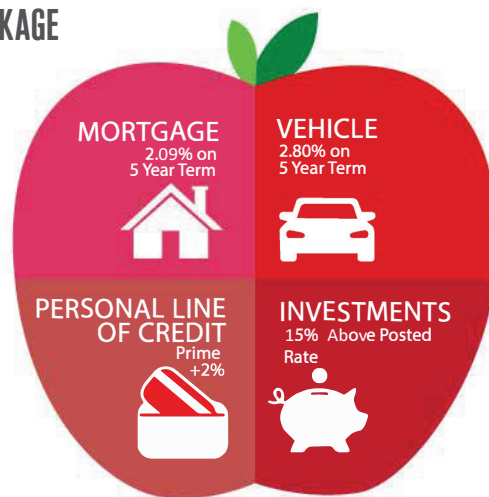
lic conversation on class size. More information on this will be provided to Association members and launched publicly over the coming weeks and months. The NLTA understands that class size and class composition issues are a major concern for teachers, administrators, students, parents and families. We will need members to add their individual voices to demonstrate that concern to our elected and government officials.

I would also encourage teachers, when they meet with their parents, to explain the impact of large class sizes and wide ranges of complex needs, and how this affects the level of individual support that is possible. These conversations could begin with, "I wish I had more time to work with your child individually, but unfortunately the size of and level of needs in the class prevent this." This is not a comment on any particular teacher's abilities, but rather it is a statement on the learning conditions for students. Advising a parent about their child's learning environment is an important professional responsibility. Parents expect their children's teachers will keep them informed.

Stefanie Tuff is Executive Director of the NLTA.

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Overview of a Recent Arbitration Ruling

by MIRIAM SHEPPARD

On August 17, 2021, your Association received the most recent ruling regarding a grievance that the Association referred to Arbitration. This grievance dealt with the issue of consultation in the context of contemplated changes in Government regulations or policy, specifically Government's 2020 -21 Education Re-entry Plan (the Plan), released to the public on July 6, 2020. The Plan concerned a return to schools following school closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Citing significant concerns, particularly around teacher occupational health and safety, your Association filed a grievance. The arbitration panel found unanimously in favour of the Association and allowed the grievance.

Clause 3.04 of the Provincial Collective Agreement states: *Government agrees to consult with representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association about contemplated changes in Government Regulations or Ministerial Policy which would affect teachers' terms and conditions of employment not governed by this Agreement.*

A similar provision exists in Clause 14.04 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement.

The issues for resolution in this case, i.e., in the context of the Plan and Clause 3.04 were:

- Whether Government failed to meet its duty to consult with the Association prior to the release of the Re-entry Plan.
- Whether the duty to consult continued after the release of the Re-entry Plan on July 6, 2020.

The arbitration panel found, in the context of the duty to consult with the Association on Ministerial Policy:

- 1) the consultation must be meaningful;
- 2) consultation includes a bilateral process where the NLTA and the Government are informed of each other's position on the Ministerial Policy and have an opportunity to give and receive information;
- 3) there is a duty on the Government as decision maker to inform the NLTA of its position, which

- includes providing a copy of the proposed policy or draft policy, with a reasonable opportunity for the NLTA to state its position on the policy; and
- 4) the Government is required to inform itself of the NLTA position, to take the position into account and to provide a rationale with respect to the decision.

The panel further determined that duty to consult with respect to the Re-entry Plan continued in effect following the release of the Plan in July 2020.

“Government's failure to send the draft Re-entry Plan to the NLTA, and to provide an opportunity for input...was a breach of the duty to consult in Article 3.04.”

The Arbitrators ruled that while representatives from the NLTA, Department of Education and the NLESD met regularly on an informal basis and exchanged information, and that Government did act in partial compliance with its duty to consult, the collective agreement consultation requirements were not met. The parties were actively engaged in the first stages of the consultation process prior to the Plan's release. However, Government did not complete the process. Significantly, when Government eventually prepared a Re-entry Plan that was a Newfoundland and Labrador version of the Alberta plan, there was no communication from Government to the Association stating that Government intended to follow the Alberta plan. Government sent the draft Plan to the NLESD on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, with a direction that the Plan be kept confidential and without inviting any input. Government sent the Plan to the Association on Saturday, July 4, 2020, but did not invite any input, and requested that the Plan be kept confidential. Government did not provide the

Re-entry Plan, or a draft of the Re-entry Plan, to the Association with an opportunity to comment before its approval and release to the public on July 6, 2020. Government's failure to send the draft Re-entry Plan to the NLTA, and to provide an opportunity for input on the Re-entry Plan, was a breach of the duty to consult in Article 3.04.

As remedy, the Arbitration Panel ordered:

- 1) a declaration that Government failed to meet its obligation of consultation under Article 3.04 of the Collective Agreement, with respect to the release of the Re-entry Plan on July 6, 2020, by failing to provide a copy of the Plan to the Association prior to its acceptance by Government and Public Health, failing to provide an opportunity for the Association to provide input on the Plan, and failing to give due consideration to the Association's input; and
- 2) a compliance order requiring Government comply with the duty to consult in Article 3.04 by meeting the requirements set out in the Arbitration Board's declaration.

This is an important arbitration as it establishes that the duty to consult in Article 3.04 applies to Government, which includes, but is not limited to, the Department of Education. The panel's findings regarding Government's duty to consult with your Association when there are contemplated changes in Government Regulations or Ministerial Policy which would affect teachers' terms and conditions of employment that are not governed by this Agreement should be instructive to the parties well into the future.

Miriam Sheppard is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA, msheppard@nlta.nl.ca..



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Attachment Oct 19
Strategies for Fostering Connections

Restorative Justice Oct 26-28
Facilitating Dialogue

Anxiety in Children and Youth Nov 6
Practical Intervention Strategies

Trauma-Informed Care Nov 10
Building a Culture of Strength

Play Therapy Nov 16-17
Tools for Helping Children and Youth

Violence Threat Assessment Nov 19
Planning and Response

Crisis Response Planning Nov 23

Gender and Sexual Diversity in Youth Nov 23-24

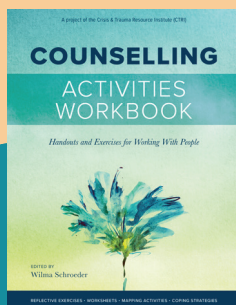
Self-Injury Behaviour in Youth Nov 30-Dec 1
Issues and Strategies

Addictions and Youth Dec 14
Substances, Technology, Porn



MUN Faculty of Education Launches New Storytelling Series

As part of the Faculty of Education's 100 year anniversary celebrations, they will be launching a new storytelling series called Teacher Tales on Tuesday. The series will kick-off on Tuesday, September 28th at 8 p.m. via Facebook LIVE on the faculty's Facebook page. This event will be hosted by Dr. Jan Buley and will feature invited guests – educators of the past, present, and future, who will recount memories and share stories of education and learning in Newfoundland and Labrador.



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GOING ON LEAVE? THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Whether going on maternity leave, approved leave without pay, unpaid sick leave, educational leave, or deferred salary leave, it is your responsibility to ensure your desired benefits are maintained while on leave. NLTA members should be aware of the steps which must be taken to maintain these benefits which include NLTA Membership, Group Insurance and Pension service. As well, we are often asked about the impact of such leaves with respect to seniority, pension and salary increments. The table below will assist members in addressing these questions.

NLTA Membership

N1: Payment of \$5.00 per month must be made to the NLTA to maintain membership rights and benefits as per NLTA policy. To discuss payment options, please contact Rita Tee, NLTA Corporate Services, rtee@nlta.nl.ca; 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 236.

N2: Membership dues continue to be paid as normal via deduction from paid salary.

N3: Dues not required in order to maintain membership.

Group Insurance

G1: NLTA members must arrange with Johnson Inc. to pay their share of the group insurance premiums. Failure to do so will result in termination of insurance. If insurance is terminated, the member will be required to apply for coverage, and provide proof of medical insurability subject to policy limitations, should the member wish to resume coverage. **Should a member take more than 39 weeks of maternity/adoption/parental leave, they must arrange with Johnson Inc. to pay by bank deduction both their share and government's share of the group insurance premiums for the additional leave period.** Otherwise, if insurance is allowed to lapse during a period of parenthood leave, medical proof of insurability may be required in order to be reinstated in the plan. As well, members must contact Johnson Inc. within 31 days of the child's birth/adoption in order to add a dependent for group insurance coverage. Beyond 31 days, an application providing satisfactory medical evidence of insurability will be necessary and approval must be granted by the underwriters.

G2: NLTA members must arrange with Johnson Inc. to pay by bank deduction both their share and the government's share (Life, Accidental Death and Dismemberment, and Health plans only) of the group insurance premiums. Failure to do so will result in termination of insurance. If insurance is terminated, the member will be required to apply for coverage, and provide proof of medical insurability subject to policy limitations, should the member wish to resume coverage.

G3: Payment of group insurance premiums continue to be paid via normal payroll deduction and government's contribution of their share continues.

Pension

P1: Pension premium is unpaid and no pension service accrues while on leave. Members may arrange with the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation (TPPC) to purchase lost pension service. Members must make their election (accept a contract to purchase service) within 180 days from their return to work. If the service time is purchased within this window, the cost is at current contribution rates matched by government. After 180 days, the cost is at full actuarial value, which is a significant cost increase.

P2: Pension premium continues to be paid on the full salary, not the reduced salary, and full pension service accrues.

Salary Increments

Members' placement on the salary grid is reviewed and changes are made once per year at the beginning of the school year or at the date of initial employment of a member. To determine the number of teaching years for salary increments, all teaching days to the date of calculation are added together and this total is divided by 195, which is the number of days in a school year. A fraction of half a year or more is required to move to the next step on the salary grid.

S1: Credited fully as time taught for the period of leave (maximum 58.5 continuous weeks for maternity/adoption/parental purposes) for the purpose of salary increments.

S2: Most unpaid leave is not credited for salary incremental purposes; however, it is credited fully as time taught when leave is related to upgrading experience and/or qualifications (approved unpaid educational leave).

S3: Not credited for the purpose of salary increments.

Seniority

Seniority is determined on the basis of the total length of time employed as a member with any school board in the province, schools operated by the Department of Education, schools in Churchill Falls, and schools in Conne River.

SE1: Credited fully as time taught for the period of leave (maximum 58.5 continuous weeks for maternity/adoption/parental purposes) for the purpose of seniority.

SE2: Not credited for the purpose of seniority.

Type of Leave	NLTA Membership	Group Insurance	Pension	Salary Increments	Seniority
Maternity/Adoption/Parental Leave	N1	G1	P1	S1	SE1
Approved Unpaid Leave	N1	G2	P1	S3	SE2
Approved Unpaid Sick Leave	N3	G2	P1	S3	SE1
Paid Educational Leave	N2	G3	P2	S1	SE1
Approved Unpaid Educational Leave	N1	G2	P1	S2	SE1
Deferred Salary Leave	N2	G3	P2	S1	SE1
Injury on Duty (Temporary Earnings Loss)	N3	G3	P2	S2	SE1
Leave to Care for Critically Ill Child/ Family Member or Injured Child	N1	G2	P1	S3	SE1

Inquiries regarding specific circumstances should be directed to an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA at 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 or via email at mail@nlta.nl.ca.

Update Your Info and Win!



All members will be receiving a **personalized** email from the NLTA with an invitation to **update your contact information**. Each week, starting October 4, those who update their information will be entered for a chance to win a **\$100 cash prize**.

Be on the lookout for your personalized invitation over the next few weeks.

At the end of October we will enter all names of those who updated their information in a draw for an additional **prize package** of various NLTA promotional items as well as a **\$200 cash prize**.

Winners will be announced each Friday until the end of October.



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[GET ACTIVE](#) ▾



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When students don't have adequate supports, it not only hurts them – it hurts us as well. To ensure a brighter future, we must give our students the best tools to succeed.



The Healthy Benefits of Play

by KENDA RIGGS

“We are designed to be lifelong players, built to benefit from play at any age.”
~ Dr. Stuart Brown

Summer break is over, and you are back to work for another year of teaching. What did you do over the summer to rejuvenate your mind, body, and soul? As you reflect on your summer, I invite you to think about some of the things you did that you enjoyed. If it feels like summer slipped by, what may have gotten in the way of you taking time to pause to incorporate some time for play, that important time for you?

Research tells us that adults often forget to play. With adulthood, there is a natural expectation that life becomes more serious with a focus on education and career goals, while moving forward in life with other responsibilities of home and family. The transition into a professional adult identity is not always a balanced one. Particularly for teachers, many often stay in work mode not only during the day, but during evenings and weekends too, and lose their sense of identity outside of their working self. Even though there is emphasis on work-life balance, many teachers have gotten so caught up in the cycle of work-life that many have forgotten to play.

Teachers go to work and then come home to work, whether that is checking and responding to emails and phone calls, organizing lesson plans, attending meetings, online workshops, research, or completing evaluations. Teachers will often say that they just don't have time to play. Play is often viewed to be a guilty pleasure that distracts from the serious tasks. However, the impacts of work overload on the physical and mental health of teachers takes a toll on the well-being of teachers. One of the solutions to feel better is to incorporate more play time into your day, even when you don't feel that you have the time. The overall health benefits will be profound.

What Is Play and Why Is It Important?

Dr. Stuart Brown, Founder of the National Institute for Play, defines play as being “a process you feel”; a state of being that is purposeless, fun, and pleasurable. He describes play as being essential to human growth and development, learning, and cultivating relationships *throughout the lifespan*, which is essentially the gateway to feeling vitality. Play can be structured activities whereby games or events are planned with other people with similar interests, or play can be unstructured

spending time with others or time by yourself.

Play is important for many reasons. Play is fun time, and helps to regulate emotions, promotes creative thinking, and develops problem-solving capability which protects the adult brain by improving cognitive flexibility and memory. Play helps to build relationships by encouraging open communication. It can bring healthy energy and elevate your spirit while helping you to relax. Play can foster positivity, discharge stress, and even boosts your immune system. Play can improve your overall productivity and quality of sleep.

Play is essential for good health, just like food, water, and sleep are critical for your well-being. There is significant research regarding the neuroscience behind brain development indicating that when the brain is deprived of play during childhood or adulthood, it impacts the brain's growth and development. Play often brings laughter which helps to relieve stress and inflammation with the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that has a role in experiencing pleasure. Dopamine is known as the ‘feel-good’ hormone that helps you to experience happiness. With feelings of positivity and happiness, play boosts productivity at work and quality of work increases. Without play, or with prolonged play deprivation, burnout and compassion fatigue become more probable for teachers.

Play and Mindfulness

When thinking of play, many envision physical activity. But play can also be relaxing, mindful activities as well. Mindfulness means your mind is paying full attention to what is going on in the present moment. It is the ability to be fully aware of where you are and what you are doing, and not being overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around you. The research on mindfulness shows that benefits include improvements to self-awareness, mental concentration, and emotion regulation. There are many mindful play activities which include: painting; photography; berry picking; fishing; exploring a new trail; puzzles; knitting; coloring mandalas; reading a good book or magazine; walking your pet; enjoying an evening campfire.

Even the popular toy Lego has introduced mindfulness for adults with a focus on relaxation while

creatively building, and they recently launched a botanical garden and flower bouquet collections as part of their newest builds. Given the importance of play and mindfulness, the goal is to offer another play medium for adults, with a focus on relaxation, being in the present moment, and enjoying the mindful benefits of play!

Play and Nature

Richard Louv, Author and Co-founder of the Children and Nature Network, describes the concept Nature Deficit-Disorder (NDD), which is not a medical diagnosis, but "...the human cost of alienation from nature, diminished use of senses, attention difficulties, high rates of physical and emotional illnesses including Vitamin D deficiency". He explains that spending less time outdoors is taking its toll on the overall physical and mental health and well-being of adults and children. With the digital world in which we live, adults are spending increased amounts of energy blocking out many of the human senses to focus on electronic screens, which is ultimately leaving people feeling less alive. People do better overall physically and emotionally when experiencing the great outdoors, benefiting from the positive feelings, stress reduction, and energy restoration from being in nature.

Playing outside in nature is an important component to experience the best health benefits. Nature can also promote play and mindfulness, as this involves using all your senses to live in the moment and observe what is going on around you without passing any judgement. The next time you are outside, pause and notice the activation of your five senses. What do you truly see around you? It may be a leaf blowing on the tree, a ladybug crawling on your deck post, or a cloud floating in the sky. What do you hear? Try to really listen to the sounds around you. Do you hear the leaves rustling? Do you hear a brook flowing? Or a songbird chirping? What do you taste? Slowly sip a warm or cold drink outside and enjoy the warmth or coolness, the flavor, and the feelings of the liquid gently going through your body. What are you touching? Are you sitting on a chair or a swing, or the grass? Notice your surroundings. What do you smell? Breathe deeply to let the fresh air absorb into your lungs. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in the freshness of the air and the nature scents around you.

There are direct benefits of playing in the fresh air and sun, while using protective sunscreen. Sunshine gives our bodies Vitamin D, which strengthens our immune system and helps protect against illness. Research has shown that just one hour of natural light per day significantly improves the quality of

sleep. Just being outside in the sunshine helps to reduce stress levels. What did you do to get outside and enjoy the sun and fresh air this summer? How can you bring more play and nature into your life each day throughout this upcoming year?

When Was the Last Time That You Truly Played?

When was the last time you allowed yourself to be truly creative and have fun? Not only to laugh, but to laugh out loud from the soul, and to feel and experience the joy of happiness? Teachers may stop playing because they are distracted by always having something else to do such as work tasks, parenting responsibilities, house chores, and family duties. Sometimes teachers even plan to take a vacation or time off for fun, and end up checking emails or answering calls, and ultimately working on their 'time off'. It is truly hard to experience the full benefits of play if you continue to work during these times.

Think about some of your favorite ways to play. Do you have a hobby? Play sports? A favorite activity? Do you like to collect things? What do you do to have fun to rejuvenate yourself?

Here are some adult play ideas to consider, with many of the activities requiring just small amounts of your time such as: swimming; bowling; mini golf; charades; jumping rope; board or card games; dancing to music; baking a new recipe; crafts such as rug hooking or cross-stitch; sport activities like golfing, softball, basketball, or tennis; playing an instrument; riding a bike; gardening; flying a kite; blowing bubbles; playing horseshoes; frisbee; sliding or snowshoeing; home karaoke...or any other play activity that you enjoy doing.

Play Is for Everyone

As you begin the school year, I encourage you to explore integrating play into your days as you navigate your own work-life balance. Remember that play is not a waste of time or an activity for children. Play is for all ages, and the power of play is just as magical for adults as it is for children. Dr. Brown highlights that play "...energizes us and enlivens us, eases our burdens, renews our natural sense of optimism, and opens us up to new possibilities". It is ultimately an investment in you and your overall physical and mental well-being. A healthy balance of play leads to healthy teachers. As Albert Einstein stated, "Play is the highest form of research". So go ahead and play!

Kenda Riggs is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Kenda (ext. 265) or Gail Carroll (ext. 242)

"We don't stop playing because we grow old...we grow old because we stop playing."
~ George Bernard Shaw

OF SPECIAL INTEREST...

THE GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCIL

Priorities for Change

by Em Sopkowe & Trevor Taylor

Who are we?

The Gender and Sexual Diversity Special Interest Council (GSDSIC) is dedicated to advocating for and supporting members of our association, or stakeholders within our educational community, who may be systemically marginalized based on sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Recognizing that professionals, like our students, can face discriminatory or prejudicial treatment because of their identity, it is our intention to give voice to issues facing Queer educators in our province. By broadly providing professional learning to all NLTA members, it is our goal to create more inclusive, safe and equitable working environments for all. In addition, acting as a consultancy body, the GSDSIC collaborates with the NLTA on matters related to the 2SLGBTQ+ community – providing guidance, insights and meaningful perspectives on issues of significance to our membership.

Who can become a member?

As an NLTA member, *core* membership is open to any educator who self-identifies as (1) a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, (2) is an ally of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, or (3) is responsible for a school-based or regional Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA). To respect the dignity of all, disclosure of gender identity, gender expression, or sexuality is not required.

What matters right now?

While the Safe and Caring Schools Guidelines for LGBTQ Inclusive Practices (NLESD, 2016) lays out clear expectations concerning respect and support for persons of diverse gender expression, gender

identity or sexual orientation, in practice, 2SLGBTQ+ staff and students still face systemic marginalization.

Respect for Chosen Names and Pronouns

In a 2019 special report conducted by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, trans children in our province identified some of the biggest challenges holding them back in school. One of their most pressing concerns, the meaningful respect and consistent use for chosen names and pronouns, as well as the use of their name in school documents, is inconsistent at best. Not surprisingly, research shows that consistent use of their correct name improves mental health outcomes for trans children.

Diversity in Curriculum

The 'othering' of a marginalized group happens through the systematic, and often unconscious, exclusion of the lived experiences and perspectives of people who are not represented by the majority. While 2SLGBTQ+ themes commonly appear in Health and Family Study curriculum, we believe that opportunities exist across all subjects and grade levels to explore the contributions that Queer persons and organizations have made to our histories, cultures, and economies. Further, the purposeful and intentional integration of content which represents diverse gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations promotes a safe and inclusive school climate for all and must become a priority for the Department of Education.

Equitable Washroom Access

Access to a safe washroom is a basic human right. Among the concerns voiced by

the trans community, fear of gender-based harassment in the washrooms, a lack of gender neutral facilities, and gatekeeping of gender neutral washrooms are amongst the challenges for trans children and staff in our schools. While many schools in our province have followed our students' lead in implementing washrooms that are in line with human rights expectations and meet the needs of all students in our school community, there is much work left to do to ensure this practice becomes the norm.

Professional Learning

Young people say that, from their perspective, schools rarely seek training on gender diversity until a student transitions at school. Trans and queer youth are put in the position of having to educate their own teachers. We can do better. With increased awareness, professional learning, and a collective commitment from our members, we can forge truly inclusive, welcoming and safe spaces for all our educators and students.

Executive Members

Trevor Taylor, President
Em Sopkowe, Vice President
Megan Rose, Treasurer
Kenneth Noonan, Secretary
Michael Walsh, Communications Officer
Lisa Courtney, Member at Large
Michelle Chislett-Lahey, Member at Large
Jordan Stringer, Consultant & Advisor



Trevor Taylor



Em Sopkowe

SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCILS

A Great Way to Get Involved in Your Association

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 14 Special Interest Councils:

- Council of Special Services (COSS)
- English Language Arts (7-12)
- Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSDSIC)
- Health Education Council
- Math/Science Council (MSSIC)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Music Educators' Association (NLMEA)
- NL Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association (NLCPA)
- Physical Education Council (PESIC)
- School Administrators' Council (SAC)
- Second Language Council
- Small Schools Council
- Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)
- Teacher Librarians Newfoundland Labrador (TLNL)
- Technology Education Council (TESIC)

Please make every effort to be an active member of special interest councils that are of interest to you. If you wish to become a member of one of the existing councils, you have only to contact the president of that council (go to the NLTA website for this information), and you will be sent the necessary membership information.

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

Darlene Johnson, Administrative Officer,
Programs & Services, NLTA
djohnson@nlta.nl.ca;
726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 241

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NEWS & EVENTS

For a full list of conferences and professional development opportunities, visit the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca/pd_opportunities/

Notice for Substitute Teachers

Information for Substitute Teachers is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca.

 Click "**Member Services**" and then "**Substitute Teachers**".

For any questions re substitute teacher issues please contact: **Bob Johnston**

Administrative Officer, NLTA Programs and Services
726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 239; bjohnston@nlta.nl.ca

Teaching and Learning Assistant PROFESSIONALS

Information for Teaching and Learning Assistants is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca.

 Click "**Member Services**" and then "**Teaching and Learning Assistants**".

For any questions re teaching and learning assistant issues please contact: **Gabriel Ryan**

Administrative Officer, NLTA Programs and Services
726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 232; gryan@nlta.nl.ca

PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINARS 2021-22

Information on Pre-Retirement Seminars for 2021-22 is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca.



Dates to Remember

October 2021

Oct 7-8 Pre-Retirement Seminar (Grand Falls-Windsor)

Oct 21 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

Oct 21-22 Pre-Retirement Seminar (Corner Brook)

Oct 22-23 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting

November 2021

Nov 18 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

Nov 18-19 Pre-Retirement Seminar (St. John's)

Nov 25-26 Pre-Retirement Seminar (St. John's)

December 2021

Dec 2 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting

Dec. 3-4 NLTA Joint Council Meeting

Dec 16 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL LEAVE?

Applications for Educational Leave for the 2022-23 School Year will be available soon on the NLTA website. Please check back at www.nlta.nl.ca.

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

NLESD: January 14, 2022

CSFP: January 14, 2022

ATTENTION! NEW TEACHERS

Information for New Teachers is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca. Click "Member Services" and then "Beginning/Early Career Teachers"

If new teachers wish to receive any of the information on the website on a flash drive, please email: newteachers@nlta.nl.ca

