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**bulletin**

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Vol. 67/No. 3

January/February 2024

**TAKE  
ACTION**



**CALL TO ACTION –  
Teachers Think Tank**

Make your voice heard  
Check your emails  
and participate in the  
**Questionnaire!** Now is  
your time to speak up.



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The new year begins with a Call to Action for the membership. There are several upcoming opportunities to voice your opinion and speak directly to decision makers in the province about the K-12 public education system. The first opportunity being the Teachers Think Tank event, which is coming up later this month. Every NLTA member has an opportunity to participate by completing a questionnaire that will directly inform the Think Tank event on February 23. Please check your emails and take some time to identify issues, challenges and possible solutions that can be actioned in the short-term to improve working conditions for teachers. Stay tuned to Association communications for other opportunities to act.



This issue of *The Bulletin* has some very important information for members. Thank you to everyone who contributed and once again, I encourage anyone who has something they want to share with their colleagues, to send us a submission!

Take care,  
Jennifer

# THE bulletin

**Editor**  
Jennifer Tulk  
jtulk@nlta.ca

**Editorial Assistant/Advertising**  
Melanie McDonald  
mcdonald@nlta.ca

**Design • Printing • Distribution**  
John Bishop, Elliott Green

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*March/April:* March 1



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# JANEWAY DAY IN SCHOOLS

## FEBRUARY 14 2024

JANEWAY  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

# UP FRONT WITH THE NLTA PRESIDENT



*“Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” ~ Malcom X*

Colleagues/Friends,

What if the headline read: “Schools to become Centres of Excellence in Newfoundland and Labrador” and this was government’s vision for public education?

Imagine this was the collective intention of our elected policymakers (across multiple agencies), making it their long-term goal. What would it take to initiate and implement such a plan?

Well, it appears that the concept of reaching the highest level of service for the public and effectively supporting public sector professionals in doing so has garnered the attention and focus of government. The difficulty lies in that it pertains to another sector:

**‘Creating ‘centres of excellence’ will help improve senior care in hospitals, says health minister’** – *CBC News NL, November 6, 2023*

Upon hearing this announcement back in November (though I greatly value any investment in seniors’ care), my mind immediately went to our public K-12 schools and how teachers are continually adjusting, triaging and surviving on the best of days, rather than being given the time, resources, and opportunities required to build paths to excellence for each and every student.

There is a shallow perspective on planning and resourcing for our schools. With education being one of the primary social determinants of health and well-being, the connection has never been practically made between quality school experiences/outcomes and healthy lifestyles/future health care costs within this province. Relatedly, standardized testing cannot become the only indicator of success and be the impetus for change and investment in our schools.

The lack of a long-term vision in this regard, on the part of successive governments, continues to be our ultimate obstacle. It will not be a “one budget” or “one government” fix. Nor

can another new program or initiative save the day. A direct consequence of our current system (which has seen a gradual deterioration over time) is a workforce that struggles to implement effective instructional strategies, access essential professional learning options, and focus on the advancement of personal and professional growth. These are the challenges engulfing our province around the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

So here is my plea to government (and its new iteration of management - NLSchools):

**The education system requires long-term, sustained attention** – Establish a framework (including short-term measures, mid-term benchmarks, and identifiable outcomes) that envisions a front-loading of support (and resourcing) at the preschool and school-age levels, with the intent of seeing quantifiable change in life experiences and health care statistics within Newfoundland and Labrador. This is not a new concept. Your Association has been asserting and underscoring the need for this approach for many years, based on social research and effective public policy practices.

**Listen and respond to the voices of your frontline workers** – In the coming weeks and months, you will have several chances to have your say and to express your thoughts on the successes, deficits, challenges and opportunities you observe within your daily practice on the frontlines of our schools.

- **Teachers Think Tank re: Recruitment & Retention** – Government has committed to this event to hear directly from the membership through survey responses, discussion groups and lived experience panels. We need your honest and detailed responses and accounts.
- **Budget 2024** – It would be highly valuable for you to make a submission to government emphasizing the need for meaningful investment and planning in education, on par with other sectors.

- **NLTA’s Hidden Reality Campaign** – Please continue to share our stories and social media posts pertaining to your realities, as submitted by you and your colleagues. Your outreach to us for individual support also serves to keep us informed and provides us with valuable examples to use moving forward.
- **Provincial Election** – When the election is eventually called, please make it a priority to bring education issues to the attention of those declared as candidates within your respective districts.
- **The Education Accord** – This was a last-minute addition to this “Up Front” piece, as we learned of its inception from government on January 25, just hours before the public announcement. Your Association will closely monitor this emerging item and strategize accordingly.

It is pivotal that you stay tuned for these Calls to Action. There will be more information to come on each as opportunities arise. We need you to step up and provide your input, creating a collective impact that will best position your leadership as we advocate for significant change and workplace improvements on your behalf.

Yours in Solidarity,

Knowing fully that you cannot always see or hear our media presence, a listing (with links) of our media coverage can be viewed on the NLTA website at the following link: [www.nlta.nl.ca/nltapresident-trentlangdon-2/](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/nltapresident-trentlangdon-2/)

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL  
**NEWS**

**NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR**

**2022-23 NLTA Scholarship  
Winners Announced**

Six Newfoundland and Labrador students who completed high school last June have been awarded NLTA scholarships for 2022-23. They are: Olivia Kinden (Gander Collegiate), child of Dean Kinden, Gander; Parker Lynch (Ascension Collegiate), child of Krista Mercer-Lynch, Bay Roberts; Emily Simms (Holy Spirit High School), child of Susan Simms, Paradise; Maria Spearns (Marystown Central High School), child of Robert Spearns, Burin Bay Arm; Jacob Sheppard (Mealy Mountain Collegiate), child of Valerie Sheppard, Goose Bay; and Grace White (J.M. Olds Collegiate), child of Julie White, Twillingate.

The scholarships are awarded annually to dependents of active, retired, disabled or deceased members of the NLTA and are valued at \$1,000 each. Awards are based on the criteria used by the Department of Education for the selection of provincial scholarship recipients.



Olivia Kinden



Parker Lynch



Emily Simms



Maria Spearns



Jacob Sheppard



Grace White

**ST. JOHN'S**

**Bell Let's Talk Day**

The NLTA recognized Bell Let's Talk Day on January 24, 2024. The Association encouraged all members to join the conversation and help end the stigma associated with mental health. For more mental health and wellness resources or more information on EAP for Teachers, please visit [www.nlta.ca/employee-assistance-program/](http://www.nlta.ca/employee-assistance-program/).



Staff at NLTA recognized Bell Let's Talk Day and shared encouraging messages to help support mental health and well-being.

**CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH**

**Wellness Wednesday at Villa Nova**

Students at Villa Nova Junior High celebrated Wellness Wednesday on January 24, 2024. President Trent Langdon visited the school and discussed the importance of speaking about mental health and encouraging students and their families to focus on health and well-being.



President Trent joins Grade Eight Mentors at Villa Nova who serve as student leaders.

ON LOCATION

## NEWFOUNDLAND &amp; LABRADOR

**Literacy Week 2024**

Schools throughout the province celebrated Literacy Week from January 22-26, 2024. President Trent Langdon joined Ms. Mary Hynes Nolan's Grade 6 class at St. Edward's School in CBS to read and celebrate literacy.



Ms. Nolan's Grade 6 ICF class at St. Edward's School.

## HUMBER BRANCH

**2022-23 Humber Branch Scholarship Winners**

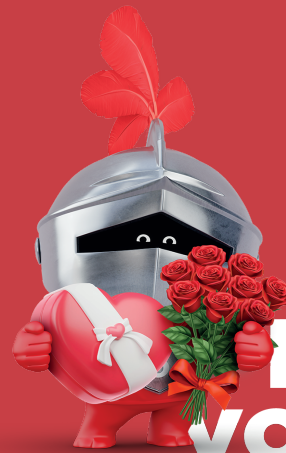
Congratulations to Amber Hann and Colin Spencer on receiving the NLTA Humber Branch scholarships for 2022-23. Thank you to our Provincial Executive Member, Tracey Payne for presenting these scholarships and a big thank you to all applicants who applied.



Amber Hann (left) accepts NLTA Humber Branch Scholarship from Provincial Executive Member Tracey Payne.



Colin Spencer (left) accepts NLTA Humber Branch Scholarship from Provincial Executive Member Tracey Payne.



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car and home insurance

Certain conditions, eligibility requirements, limitations and exclusions apply to all offers. Visit [belairdirect.com](http://belairdirect.com) for more details. Offers may change without notice. We offer car insurance and home insurance in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island and home insurance only in British Columbia. © 2023, Belair Insurance Company Inc. All rights reserved.



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

by Miriam Sheppard

**A**ncedotal reports of violence in schools are becoming more frequent. Section 4 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* requires employers in Newfoundland and Labrador to, within reasonably practical limits, provide a work environment that ensures the health and safety of employees. In the school setting, this means that, with respect to students, parents/guardians or other individuals who are physically aggressive/violent, employers have a legal responsibility to ensure that proper procedures, policies and work environment arrangements are in place to enable teachers to work without unreasonable threat to their safety.

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

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

includes workplace violence. Reporting obligations are also found in Employer violence prevention policies, which require workers, including teachers, to report all violence related incidents.

Reporting must trigger timely responsive action. Where there is a risk to employees from violence, the employer must first attempt to eliminate the risk; if elimination of the risk is impossible, the risk to workers must be minimized to the extent possible. The age and cognitive ability of the student(s) in question will have an impact on the type of options that are appropriate in any situation. As well, it may be necessary to consider different approaches when the risk of violence comes from the behaviour of a parent/guardian as opposed to a student.

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

Reporting violence is not a “when I have time” task. Risks of violence can only be effectively addressed when they are reported and documented quickly and appropriately. Additional information can be found at [www.nlta.nl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Sept-Oct-Bulletin-2023.pdf](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Sept-Oct-Bulletin-2023.pdf) (page 8: *Violence in the Workplace: Basic Advice and Guidelines for Teachers*).

*Miriam Sheppard is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA, [mshppard@nlta.ca](mailto:mshppard@nlta.ca).*

# Financing a Year of Deferred Salary Leave

The Deferred Salary Leave Plan (DSLSP) is available to any tenured teacher in a permanent position covered by the NLTA Collective Agreement. The terms of reference and other details of the DSLSP are set out in Article 51 of the Provincial Collective Agreement. Members must note that federal taxation legislation requires employees to return to work after the period of leave for a time equal to the leave duration. Therefore, members are prohibited from taking the year of leave immediately prior to retirement. Many members find the DSLSP an excellent means of financing a year of leave to pursue travel, enjoy family time, secure other employment, complete further studies or explore other interest(s) one might have.

Leave under the DSLSP is fully credited for purposes of pension, seniority, salary increments and sick leave. **The deadline to apply for enrolment in the DSLSP is April 30 of the previous school year.** So, a member wanting to start paying in to a DSLSP in September 2024 would have to submit their application to the school district by the end of April 2024. The Deferred Salary Leave application and other information can be accessed on the provincial government website at [www.gov.nl.ca/exec/tbs/working-with-us/deferred-salary/](http://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/tbs/working-with-us/deferred-salary/).

While the DSLSP provides an excellent opportunity for personal and professional rejuvenation, it is important to understand the economic realities of taking a deferred leave. NLTA Administrative Officers in Programs and Services are often asked what the “difference” is in take-home pay while participating in the DSLSP. We cannot provide specific financial details or advice to members because each individual’s situation is different and all financial matters, such as salary levels, income tax rates, CPP and EI contribution rates, etc. are subject to change. Accordingly, the information provided herein contains rough estimates only.

The following comparisons of net salary for a member on full salary versus the various DSLSP options are **rough calculations for illustrative purposes only**. Each individual member’s situation will be different. The estimates are based on the salaries presented in Schedule C: Annual Salary Scale (September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025) of the new Collective Agreement. Taxes deducted vary for each member, and these are approximations only. EI and CPP deductions are based on 2024 formulae. All estimated figures are rounded to the nearest dollar. **Members participating in the DSLSP continue to pay pension premiums based on the full, un-reduced salary. EI premiums are paid on the full salary, but are not paid during the year of leave.** Therefore, members may not be eligible for EI benefits in the year following the year of deferred salary leave which may have implications for those wishing to take maternity leave right after a deferred salary leave.

Infosheet #9 provides further information on the DSLSP; this can be found in the Member Services section of the NLTA website. Any further questions on the Deferred Salary Leave Plan should be directed to an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599. Emailed inquiries sent to [mail@nlta.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.ca) will be directed to appropriate Programs and Services staff for a response.

Full Salary			
	Top of V Scale	Top of VI Scale	Top of VII Scale
Salary	79,668	92,276	104,390
Estimated Tax	14,003	17,815	21,528
Estimated EI	1,049	1,049	1,049
Estimated CPP	4,056	4,056	4,056
NLTA Fees	996	1,153	1,305
Pension Deduction	9,042	10,473	11,848
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>50,522</b>	<b>57,730</b>	<b>64,604</b>

2/3 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Scale	Top of VI Scale	Top of VII Scale
Salary	53,112	61,517	69,593
Estimated Tax	5,867	7,720	9,574
Estimated EI	882	1,021	1,049
Estimated CPP	2,952	3,452	3,911
NLTA Fees	664	769	870
Pension Deduction	9,042	10,473	11,848
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>33,705</b>	<b>38,082</b>	<b>42,341</b>

3/4 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Scale	Top of VI Scale	Top of VII Scale
Salary	59,751	69,207	78,293
Estimated Tax	7,661	9,923	12,551
Estimated EI	992	1,049	1,049
Estimated CPP	3,347	3,896	4,056
NLTA Fees	747	865	979
Pension Deduction	9,042	10,473	11,848
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>37,962</b>	<b>43,001</b>	<b>47,810</b>

4/5 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Scale	Top of VI Scale	Top of VII Scale
Salary	63,734	73,821	83,512
Estimated Tax	8,749	11,502	14,336
Estimated EI	1,049	1,049	1,049
Estimated CPP	3,584	4,056	4,056
NLTA Fees	797	923	1,044
Pension Deduction	9,042	10,473	11,848
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>40,513</b>	<b>45,818</b>	<b>51,179</b>

5/6 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Scale	Top of VI Scale	Top of VII Scale
Salary	66,390	76,897	86,992
Estimated Tax	9,486	12,554	15,526
Estimated EI	1,049	1,049	1,049
Estimated CPP	3,742	4,056	4,056
NLTA Fees	830	961	1,087
Pension Deduction	9,042	10,473	11,848
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>42,241</b>	<b>47,804</b>	<b>53,426</b>

# Accommodation: The Basics

by Miriam Sheppard

**D**o you have a disability or family requirements that interfere with your ability to work? The *Human Rights Act* and the Collective Agreement require employers to accommodate human rights related needs of employees to the point of undue hardship. But what does this mean? What is involved in seeking accommodation?

The duty to accommodate requires employers to make modifications or provide the accommodation (supports, equipment, etc.) necessary (short of undue hardship) in order to allow an employee to fully and equally participate in the workplace. Accommodation requires “an individualized investigation of accommodation measures and an assessment of an employee’s needs.” [*Central Okanagan School District No. 23 v. Renaud, 1992 CanLII 81 (SCC)*] Every accommodation may look a little different, as accommodations should be tailored to the specific needs of the person seeking the accommodation. Some examples of accommodations in the teaching context might include:

- Jane has a knee injury and needs an adjustment to her supervision schedule so that she does not have to do outdoor supervision until she has recovered;
- Due to a medical condition, Marissa can no longer project her voice, and requires an amplification system to teach;
- Joe’s child has a serious illness requiring medical care in a different area of the province, and he needs to take a period of unpaid leave, or be transferred to a school closer to medical services, in order to access the necessary care for his child;
- Michael’s wife works offshore for weeks at a time and adequate child care services are not available in the area of the province where he lives and works; he therefore needs to reduce his hours to part time for a year, until his child is a bit older, in order to meet his legal parental duties; or
- Chris has a chronic medical condition and can no longer live or work in an isolated area because necessary medical care is not accessible in that area; they need a transfer to a different position in a location within a certain commuting distance of the medical services they need.

However, employers do not have to grant every request for accommodation. Sometimes employees cannot be accommodated, as to do so would cause the employer “undue hardship.” Undue hardship is a very high threshold as it requires the employer to prove excessive disruption of or interference with its business or operations, or undue expense. What circumstances would amount to undue hardship will vary depending on the details of each situation. Each case must be assessed and decided on its own facts, but meeting the “undue hardship” test may include a consideration of several factors, including:

- Financial cost;
- Safety;
- Size of the organization;
- Collective Agreement provisions;
- Interchangeability of work force and facilities;
- Morale of other employees.

The onus is on the employer to demonstrate that it has made reasonable attempts to accommodate an employee to the point of undue hardship. Employees also have a duty to cooperate in the accommodation process, which includes considering and implementing reasonable proposals advanced by the employer.

Teachers seeking accommodation **MUST** provide appropriate documentation to support the request. With respect to medical accommodation, for example, teachers would need to provide medical documentation to establish:

- that they have a medical condition that impacts on their ability to do their job (details of the diagnosis are not required);
- what functional limitations or restrictions on their abilities they have because of their medical condition and the likely duration of same (i.e. are the condition and/or limitations temporary or are they likely to be permanent); and
- that, in their physician’s opinion, working without the recommended accommodations would most likely lead to a worsening of their condition and a probable need to access sick leave.

Sometimes physicians may also comment on what adjustments/accommodations are medically required to enable the teacher to meet the demands of their job



without exacerbating their condition or causing their symptoms to worsen. Depending on the case, other types of medical documentation may be required.

Documentation will also be required to establish necessity of accommodation in other types of cases. For example, a teacher seeking family status accommodation based on a family member's medical conditions must provide documentation relating to that individual's condition to support the claim for accommodation. Other reasonable documentation may be required in requests for family status accommodation in other types of situations. In general, the question to consider in a request for accommodation based on family status is: will the employee be unable to meet their legal obligations to care for a family member if an accommodation is not made?

The employer is only obligated to accommodate properly documented employee needs, not preferences or conveniences. Supporting documentation must establish what is necessary or required, not what is preferable or most convenient.

Requests for accommodation can be complex and are very fact specific to individual cases. Teachers are also reminded that, while requests for accommodation can be made at any time, requests for accommodation that involve transfer for the 2024-25 school year should be made to the Employer as soon as possible, and well in advance of the redundancy/reassignment season, if possible. Teachers who are considering making any request for accommodation are encouraged to contact an Administrative Officer in the Association's Programs and Services Division for advice and assistance.

Further information on human rights and the accommodation process can be found at the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission website at [www.thinkhumanrights.ca/know-your-rights/duty-to-accommodate/](http://www.thinkhumanrights.ca/know-your-rights/duty-to-accommodate/).

*Miriam Sheppard is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA, [msheppard@nlta.ca](mailto:msheppard@nlta.ca).*



## Learning Pathways

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let's talk  science



# An Overview of the NLTA Group Insurance Plan

by John Veitch

**B**elonging to a group insurance plan is a significant benefit for NLTA members and their families. Premiums and coverages are generally favourable compared to individual plans because risk is distributed across a large group of policyholders. Significantly, new members are entitled to enrol without proof of medical insurability. The NLTA plan allows for individual and family coverage and includes both active and retired members.

The purpose of this article is to provide a brief overview of the basic structure of the NLTA Group Insurance Plan.

## Who owns the NLTA Group Insurance Plan?

The NLTA Group Insurance Plan is owned by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. Members, both active and retired, are the policyholders of the program. Neither government nor Johnson own any part of the NLTA Group Insurance Plan. As a consequence, neither of these parties can alter benefits or coverage in the NLTA plan.

## What is the role of Group Insurance Managers?

The NLTA Group Insurance Plan is operated by a Board of Teacher Managers, appointed by and answerable to the Provincial Executive of the Association. The Board consists of seven members of the Association, appointed on an annual basis for a maximum seven-year term. Two managers are Provincial Executive

members, one is an RTANL member, and the remaining members are selected by regional representation. Provincial Executive appoints the managers and designates the Chair.

The Managers are essentially a Board of Directors who manage the Group Insurance Plan. Managers have the mandate and responsibility for overseeing the operation of all aspects of the Group Insurance Plan, including changes to premiums and/or benefits. They have an important role with significant fiduciary responsibilities and receive specialized training to ensure they can fulfill their role appropriately on behalf of plan members.

When the Group Insurance Committee needs a new manager, the Association solicits applications from plan members.

## What is the role of Johnson?

Johnson is not our underwriter. Rather, Johnson is hired under contract by the Group Insurance Managers to conduct the business transactions of the NLTA plan, including payment of claims and collection of premiums.

Johnson serves as both the consultant and the administrator of the NLTA plan. The Managers make all final decisions on Plan benefits and premiums but rely on Johnson staff to provide expertise on the various insurance policies.

## Who Insures our Members?

Various underwriters provide coverage to NLTA members.

Currently, Manulife Financial is the underwriter for Life, Long Term Disability, and Health and Dental policies. Beneva (formerly SSQ) is the provider of Critical Illness and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Policies. Our Travel policy, known as MEDOC, is underwritten by Royal Sun Alliance.

The performance of the underwriters is under regular evaluation, with a comprehensive market study completed every five years. This involves an in-depth review of all coverages and NLTA solicits bids for business from various companies. The underwriters are chosen based on the coverage, cost and service levels they can provide for members.

## STRUCTURE OF GROUP INSURANCE PLAN

**NLTA**  
(POLICY HOLDER)

**MANAGERS**  
(TEACHERS)

**JOHNSON INC.**  
(CONSULTANT AND ADMINISTRATOR)

**UNDERWRITERS**  
(VARIOUS INSURANCE COMPANIES)



**What is changing with Johnson joining belairdirect?**

Johnson home and auto insurance has rebranded to belairdirect, a large Canadian insurance provider. Members who have home or auto insurance through Johnson have been notified of this change and will be contacted directly to provide payment options at renewal time. Payroll deductions will no longer be available for home and auto policies at members' renewal.

There is no change to any of the NLTA Group Insurance Plan policies. The rebranding of the Group Benefits and Travel divisions will happen in the future and members will be advised when such branding is to be implemented. Members will continue to have payroll deductions for all of the policies managed under the NLTA Group Insurance Plan, including after rebranding to belairdirect occurs.

*To obtain information about all the coverages available to you or to make any changes to your current coverage, you should contact Johnson Inc. at 1-833-772-6528.*

*John Veitch is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA, jveitch@nlta.ca.*

**SAVE ENERGY TO WIN UP TO \$2,500 In Chapters Gift Cards**

**Get your students into energy efficiency with the takeCHARGE School Contest!**

**Contest Details**  
**Two Contests:** Grades K-6 and 7-12  
**To enter:** Create a short video, book, song, poster, artwork or whatever you like about saving energy. Get Creative!  
**Prize:** Chapters Gift Cards  
 K-6 | Valued \$2,500 for your class.  
 7-12 | Valued \$100/student\*

**Deadline to Enter**  
 K-6 | Friday, February 2, 2024 by 4 PM  
 7-12 | Friday, March 1, 2024 by 4 PM

**Visit [TakeChargeNL.ca](https://TakeChargeNL.ca) for contest details.**

\*up to 4 students/entry

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**ASNLAUTISM SOCIETY**  
 Newfoundland & Labrador

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2024**  
**Embracing Neurodiversity Conference**

**LOCATION:**  
**Emera Innovation Exchange, MUN Signal Hill Campus**

**REGISTRATION OPENING IN MID-FEBRUARY**

**THE CANADIAN HOME AND SCHOOL FEDERATION**

**Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week**  
**FEBRUARY 11-17**  
**IT TAKES A VILLAGE, THANK YOU FOR BEING MINE**

**FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES ASSOCIATIONS FOYER-ÉCOLE**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS  
WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING RETIRING AT  
THE END OF THE 2023-24 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 2024-25 school year should submit their resignation to the school district and their pension application to the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation by **March 31, 2024**. As administrator of the pension plan, the TPPC has 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, 2024 will be eligible for a pension benefit in July 2024. However, a teacher who retires in June 2024 and submits their pension application in July 2024 will not be eligible to begin receiving a pension until August 2024. A teacher who submits their documentation in August 2024 will not receive a pension until September 2024 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. 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 709-793-8772, toll free 1-833-345-8772 or [memberservices@tppc.nl.ca](mailto:memberservices@tppc.nl.ca). As always, for further assistance, you may contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 or [mail@nlta.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.ca).

**FOR ANYONE  
CONSIDERING RETIREMENT**

**IN MEMORIAM**



**AMBROSE PATTERSON**  
**JULY 20, 1965 – DECEMBER 19, 2023**

Ambrose was born in Botwood, NL on July 20, 1965, and passed away at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre on December 19, 2023, after a lengthy battle with Multiple Myeloma.

Ambrose was predeceased by his loving parents, Catherine (O'Reilly) and James Patterson, along with his siblings Ronald Patterson, Alice Butler and Ethel Noftall.

Ambrose leaves behind the love of his life, Phronie, after 30+ years of marriage; his pride and joy, daughter, Holly Mitchell (Nathan), and his two grandchildren Grayson and Harper, and of course his fur baby, Reilly.

Ambrose leaves to mourn, with fond memories, his siblings: William Patterson (Sandra), Thomas Patterson (Nigel), Christine Glavine (Luke), Margaret Patterson, Mary Dalley, and Kathleen King (Chris). Ambrose also leaves to mourn his aunt Ruth O'Reilly, uncle Joe O'Reilly, uncle Des O'Reilly and his sisters-in-law, Olga Norman (Doug Wilson), Elaine Patterson, and brother-in-law Willis Butler. He also had a large number of nieces, nephews and cousins, whom he loved dearly, along with a large circle of friends.

**Ambrose's Education & Career**

- Received a Bachelor of Arts from Memorial University in 1988
- Received a Bachelor of Education from Memorial University in 1996
- Received a Masters in Education from Mount Saint Vincent University in 2006
- Instructor at College of the North Atlantic from 1989 to 1996
- Teacher at NLESD from 1998 until February of 2023

*(Submitted by the Patterson Family)*



## Vaping: The EX-Files Educator's Resource

In recent years vaping has become a significant public health concern among Newfoundland and Labrador's youth, as data is indicating increasing rates of experimentation and regular use of vaping products. The 2021-22 CSTADS indicates that NL has the highest prevalence of past 30-day use of e-cigarettes among grade 7- 12 students among Canadian provinces.

To address this growing crisis, The Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco (ACT) and its provincial partners, including NLHS, developed **Vaping: The EX-Files**, a new set of vaping education resources for grades 4, 5 and 6. The project was designed to provide a standardized set of resources that align with grade-specific outcomes. Much effort has been dedicated to making the resources easy to use for teachers and other potential educators.

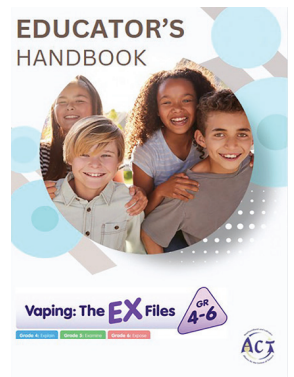
The EX-Files resource provides educators with a scoped and sequenced array of materials for students in English and French. There is a "File" or component for each elementary grade:

- Grade 4: Vaping - The EX-Files: Let's EXPLAIN Vaping
- Grade 5: Vaping - The EX-Files: Let 's EXAMINE Vaping
- Grade 6: Vaping - The EX-Files: Let's EXPOSE Vaping

Contents include a PowerPoint game for each grade, a reading comprehension activity, worksheets to reinforce key messages and vocabulary, and a fact-based game to review all concepts. A comprehensive Educator's Handbook is also included that outlines details on how to use Vaping: the EX-Files in each grade, a lesson plan per grade, instructions for the various activities and links to all the resources. These resources have been approved by the Department of Education and will be a suggested resource in the new health curriculum – due in 2025.

All resources will be housed on ACT's website <http://www.truthaboutvaping.ca> and free for all educators to use. To create a comprehensive set of vaping prevention and education materials, additional resources for Grades 7-10 will be added later in 2024.

Submitted by: Tanya Matthews, Regional Health Educator, NLHS Western Zone and Melissa Moore, ACT Program and Education Coordinator.





# What's the Deal on Deep Listening?

by Lori Hewitt

“Being truly heard and having our true selves accepted for who we really are is vital to our healthy emotional and psychological state.” ~ Michelle Fowler

**H**ave you ever spoken to someone who made you feel as if you were the only person in the room? That your opinions, feelings and thoughts matter? How did that impact you? Did you feel understood, validated and valued? Deep listening connects us to others quite like nothing else, and as social beings, we are wired for connection. The need to be heard is one of the most basic needs we have and truly listening to others is one of the most important gifts we can offer.

As educators, you already know the value and importance of communication and the impact on your students' healthy development and well-being. As Sam Osherson writes, research indicates that “skilled teachers who foster relationships with their students produce students who achieve more.. and the key to a strong relationship is deep listening.”

But did you know that deep listening also benefits you as the listener and has a positive impact on the relationship between the listener and the recipient (whether it be a student, partner, child, or friend)? From this perspective, deep listening is an investment not only in others but also in ourselves and our relationships.

Deep listening does not come easily or naturally to many of us. In fact, most of us must work at it—a lot! Stern and Samson surmise that it may even seem counterintuitive in our world of quick clicks, quick fixes and quick solutions, but the benefits are plentiful. Switching gears from multi-tasking to being mindful and truly present with another person offers inner stillness, compassion and connectivity. Thankfully, it is a skill that does not require perfection, but rather awareness and practice.

According to Roger K. Allen, deep listening can be defined as “suspending judgement and being fully present with another person to understand his or her experience or point of view.” Deep listening involves more than hearing and acknowledging the words

of the speaker, it taps into the deeper meaning, the unspoken needs, as well as the feelings conveyed. “It is something that is done with the **heart** as well as the mind.”

When we choose to be present with the other person, we learn, grow, and connect. Deep listening is an interchange between two people where we do more than respond to the content and the words we've heard. There is a difference between “listening to respond” and “listening to understand.” We don't interrupt, correct, lecture or offer advice. We must find a way to avoid the temptation to formulate a response while the other person is speaking. This practice can be energy-draining for us and dismissive for the other person. When this happens (and it inevitably will), we can internally acknowledge without judgement what is occurring and bring ourselves back to listening.

When we do respond, we should respond mindfully. This can mean asking follow-up questions that demonstrate understanding or summarizing what the other person has said to confirm accuracy, not only of content but also of underlying need and meaning. Responding mindfully shows that our intent and interest is with the other person, as opposed to imposing our own agenda.

A few weeks ago, I met a friend for coffee. I had considered rescheduling as I had a demanding day and was feeling run down. She also had a rough day, and while I knew she just needed a listening ear and a supportive shoulder, I found myself formulating what I would say and how I would “problem solve.” I noticed I was getting anxious and inevitably cut her off mid-sentence to offer “wisdom and advice.” It was at that moment I realized I was not really listening. I hadn't paid attention to her body posture, eye gaze or gestures. Similarly, I hadn't paid attention to my own feelings of tiredness and agitation. Once I realized and acknowledged this, I took a deep breath, refocused and noticed a shift.

### Self-Awareness

We are unlikely to listen deeply if we are not in tune with our own thoughts and feelings. In addition to having an interest in what others have to say, deep listening requires self-regulation, mental stamina and energy. In the example above, I was able to engage with my friend more genuinely once I took stock of my own emotions, thoughts and actions. As a result, a greater conversation and connection occurred. Self-awareness involves listening to ourselves. Couple this with mindful and deep listening, and collaboration and greater connectivity can occur.

### Learning to Listen Deeply

As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. Practicing deep listening builds and strengthens our capacity to listen. Every day we are presented with opportunities to practice being present with others. Here are some tips to help further develop this skill:

- 1. Connect with yourself first.** Connecting with ourselves and our own experiences is important. When we have self-awareness, it becomes easier to connect deeply with others. Recognizing and naming our feelings enables us to respond to our own needs, which is crucial for inner connection. Begin each day with a self check in, paying attention to your feelings and thoughts. Are they positive or negative? What's triggering them? Are you impacted by external, internal or hidden stressors? Working on self-awareness and learning to talk to your inner self with compassion and kindness is time well spent.
- 2. Make time.** We are all busy, and getting busier it seems! But deep listening requires our time. It might help to be intentional with your time and build regular scheduled check ins with those close to you. For some, this may mean family dinners or dedicated and regular weeknight moments to touch base. It may also mean being aware of the day-to-day moments that arise, where we can shut off the internal and external noise and just be present. Regardless of what it might look like for you, the important thing is to create the space and opportunity and make the time for deep listening.
- 3. Minimize distractions.** Do you consider yourself a multi-tasker? Many of us have become experts at splitting our attention between multiple tasks and demands. And while there are some occasions where this might be necessary, deep listening requires our full mind, attention and heart. I'm sure we can all recall a time when we were engaged in a conversation with someone who was distracted. Do you remember how this made you feel? Annoyed? Not heard? Not validated?

Even very young children can tell when the adults in their lives are distracted. "Research shows that parent's increased distraction can negatively impact a child's development." Alternately, "evidence shows us that attuned, sensitive, and emotionally available caregiving promotes healthy development, secure attachment, and positive mental health." A good place to start is by putting down your phone and focusing on being present.

When I look back on the relationships that I value the most, they are the ones in which I have felt truly listened to. These relationships have helped me feel valued, confident and heard. They offered transformation and growth. Perhaps it is through our presence and willingness to listen deeply that we offer those around us the greatest gift of all.

*Lori Hewitt is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Lori Hewitt (ext. 242), lhewitt@nlta.ca or Kenda Riggs (ext. 265), kriggs@nlta.ca.*

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**Employee Assistance Program**  
for teachers

**For more information:**  
Contact one of our EAP Coordinators:

<b>Kenda Riggs</b> 709-733-3265 ext.265 kriggs@nlta.ca	<b>Lori Hewitt</b> 709-733-3242 ext.242 lhewitt@nlta.ca
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1-800-563-3599 (in-province)  
eap@nlta.ca



# How do Educators Approach Classroom Assessment and Restorative Justice?

by Nevra Ozoren Sener

Is there a connection between classroom assessment and restorative justice practices in the classrooms? Does this really exist? Does teaching experience impact an understanding and practice of this? To answer these difficult questions, I designed a research project to examine the relationship between future and current teachers' approaches to classroom assessment and their restorative justice practices in Newfoundland and Labrador. The results of this research identified a meaningful and reciprocal connection between classroom assessment and restorative justice in education and identified how this relationship plays a crucial role in advancing comprehensive education within classrooms.

## Classroom Assessment

Over the past few decades, how teachers assess students' progress in the classroom has changed significantly. Recently, assessments have focused more specifically on problem-solving, metacognitive skills and reasoning skills. The goal is to improve *how* students learn, in addition to *what* they have learned. To do this, provincial policies have pushed to make assessments a part of everyday teaching through various forms of assessment including formative and summative. Another change includes assessment practices that focus not only on the learning outcomes but also on students' needs, backgrounds and values. This socio-cultural context of assessment helps teachers to build meaningful relationships between teachers and students in the classroom.

## Restorative Justice

In the late 1970s, restorative justice became part of the Western criminal justice system. Later, in the late 1990s, it expanded to education. Restorative justice in education focuses on the connections and relationships in classrooms, treating everyone with respect and creating inclusive environments. Its Indigenous and spiritual roots help to emphasize the importance of nurturing healthy relationships, and creating just and equitable learning environments. This translates into recognizing the impact of beliefs

and values on teaching and assessment, like the socio-cultural context of classroom assessment. Even though classroom assessment and restorative justice are often seen as separate areas in education, our study aimed to explore if and how teachers might identify their connections. Our study had two phases. In the first phase, teachers shared their perspectives by responding to an online, anonymous survey. In the second phase, teachers were asked to share their perspectives with more detail in an interview.

## The Educational Context in the Province

Limited research and publications exist on classroom assessment and restorative justice in Newfoundland and Labrador, but recent changes in assessment policies and restorative justice initiatives by the Provincial Government have highlighted their importance. The Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting policy aims to enhance student academic achievement through formative assessment, summative assessment, and self-assessment. At the same time, the Government emphasizes assessment *as* learning, assessment *of* learning, and assessment *for* learning. Restorative justice practices have been gradually introduced to schools over the past 13 years in the province with some schools or individual teachers engaging in its implementation. In collaboration with various organizations, including Memorial University, Relationship First NL and NLTA, there is a collective effort to integrate restorative justice into schools, through offering courses, workshops, and a variety of resources. A recent \$600,000 investment by the Provincial Government to Relationships First NL, along with specific endorsement of it in the Education Minister's mandate letter, illustrates significant support for restorative justice in education. In this way, the province remains a vital context for research due to its unique educational landscape and collaborative efforts in promoting restorative justice.

## Similar Approaches... but with Different Relationships

Both teacher candidates and classroom teachers seem to approach and understand classroom assessment



and restorative justice in remarkably similar ways. Although classroom teachers have more hands-on experience with assessment and restorative justice in education through classroom instruction, both groups have a similar understanding, which is a bit unexpected. However, teacher candidates are getting familiar with assessment and restorative justice starting from teacher education programs. Hence, the clear and well-established pathway for teachers from teacher education programs to school districts, as observed in our study, explains the comprehensibility of this similarity.

Although teacher candidates and classroom teachers have similar approaches to classroom assessment and restorative justice, they understand the connections between these domains differently. While classroom teachers appear to have a more unified and complex understanding of the relationship between classroom assessment and restorative justice, teacher candidates could not see these connections. In particular, classroom teachers appear to connect almost all dimensions of classroom assessment to each other and to restorative justice. However, teacher candidates had a disjointed understanding of the relationship among classroom assessment dimensions and between classroom assessment and restorative justice. A plausible reason for this is the previously mentioned impact of teaching experience. Teacher candidates mainly focus on the theoretical foundation of teaching and need more first-hand experience, unlike classroom teachers. In summary, it is possible to say that teaching experience helps teachers understand and make connections between classroom assessment and restorative justice practices.

#### **Encouraging More Learning: A Need to Discover**

Despite these differences in understanding how classroom assessment interacted with restorative justice in the classroom, both teacher candidates and classroom teachers expressed a lack of knowledge about restorative justice and how to integrate it appropriately into their assessment practice. Even as educators and researchers emphasize the need for ongoing professional development in classroom assessment and restorative justice, it's essential not to disregard the broader implications of both on teaching and learning, such as influencing classroom dynamics and relationships among educators and students. This research provides a valuable understanding of educators' attitudes toward classroom assessment and restorative justice, contributing to the expanding body of proof highlighting the significance of the relationship

between classroom assessment and restorative justice. In short, strengthening the relationship between these two domains is essential for creating inclusive classrooms and improving classroom assessment practices through a recognition of students' various socio-cultural contexts. If you want to know more about this study, please feel free to contact Nevra Ozoren Sener (nozorensener@mun.ca).

*Nevra Ozoren Sener holds a Bachelor's degree in Guidance and Psychological Counseling from Bogazici Univeristy. With nine years of experience in education in various positions, she earned a Master's in Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning Studies from Memorial University. Recognized as a "Fellow of the School of Graduate Studies," her research focuses on classroom assessment, restorative justice, and teacher education in Newfoundland and Labrador.*

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# Nunatsiavut Principal Wins Award for Inuit Excellence

Julie Dicker was awarded the 2023 ITK (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) Award for Inuit Excellence. As the first Inuk to hold the title of School Principal in Nain and an enthusiastic supporter of Inuktitut education and physical education, Julie exemplifies Inuit self-determination in education.

Julie is an educator and school principal at Jens Haven Memorial, a K-12 school in Nain, the northernmost community in Nunatsiavut. She completed a Bachelor of Education, and Bachelor and Master of Physical Education from Memorial University of Newfoundland and has now begun her PhD in Arctic and Subarctic Futures at MUN.

She has worked for the Labrador School Board for 14 years, becoming the first female Inuk to teach physical education, first at John Christian Erhardt Memorial in Makkovik, Nunatsiavut, and then in her home community of Nain. When Jens Haven Memorial faced a two-year gap without a permanent Inuktitut teacher, Julie took on the role of teaching Inuktitut as well.

Last year, Julie took time away from her regular teaching duties to become the Principal at Jens Haven Memorial. When time permits, she continues to fill in as teacher and volunteer for youth sports. This past summer, she spent two weeks in Halifax



as manager of the Newfoundland and Labrador boys volleyball team at the North American Indigenous Games. She is also helping to coordinate Nunatsiavut's 45th annual fall sportsmeet by hosting the event at her school in Nain.

"Julie's dedication and leadership serve to inspire people across Nunatsiavut and Inuit Nunangat. Her support of sports and language programs contribute to Inuit strength, wellness and pride," said Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. "We are pleased to honour her service to Inuit."

The ITK Awards have been presented annually for more than 20 years. With the 2023 Award, ITK is moving from a slate of many recipients, to a single individual who has demonstrated excellence in an area that contributes to Inuit self-determination. The 2023 winner was identified by an ITK selection committee from among 39 nominations. The next ITK Awards for Inuit Excellence will be presented in fall 2024. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national representational organization protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada. For more information, please contact [media@itk.ca](mailto:media@itk.ca).

*Information for this article was obtained from the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami website.*

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For a full list of professional development opportunities, visit the NLTA website at [www.nlta.ca/professional-development](http://www.nlta.ca/professional-development)



# NL Teacher Named Human Rights Champion

Émile Sopkowe was named a Human Rights Champion by the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission.

Émile Sopkowe (they/them/iel) is a trans and queer teacher who has made 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion a keystone of their pedagogical approach.



Driven by a desire to create equitable, inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ educators, students, and their families, their passion for advocacy and change led to the creation of the Gender and Sexual Diversity Special Interest Council (GSDSIC) of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) in 2020, of which they are now Vice-President.

Throughout Émile's career, they established Gender and Sexuality alliance groups in multiple schools in both the English and francophone school districts, provided countless 2SLGBTQ+ professional development sessions for their colleagues and for NLSchools and provincial educational leaders, and worked extensively in the area of restorative justice. In 2022, Émile was honoured with the Barnes Award, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association's highest award for professional development and curriculum work. In addition to their work within the education system, Émile is devoted to volunteering with diverse community organizations outside of education, and is also the Trans Youth Group facilitator with Parents of Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Kids NL.

*Information for this article was obtained from the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador website.*

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## Dates to Remember

### February 2024

- Feb 11-17 Teacher Appreciation Week
- Feb 14 Janeway Day in the Schools
- Feb 15 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
- Feb 29 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting

### March 2024

- Mar 1-2 NLTA Joint Council Meeting
- Mar 18-22 Education Week
- Mar 21 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
- Mar 31 **Deadline:** Centennial Study Award Applications
- Mar 31 **Board Deadline:** Notice for Retirement at end of School Year

### April 2024

- Apr 15 **Deadline:** Notice of Postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
- Apr 18 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
- Apr 26-27 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting
- Apr 30 **Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
- Apr 30 **Deadline:** Year-End Resignation From Contract

### May 2024

- May 7 **Deadline:** Notice by Board of Teacher Layoffs
- May 16 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
- May 28 Notice by Board of TLA Layoffs

### June 2024

- June 7-8 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting
- June 20 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications

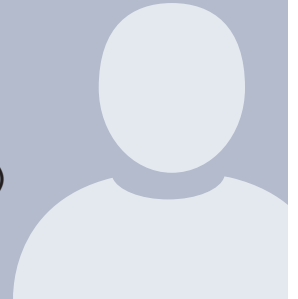
## MEMBERS

### Have a Question or Concern?

#### Contact the NLTA

Call 709-726-3223 or  
1-877-711-6582  
(toll-free in the province)

**EMAIL:** mail@nlta.ca

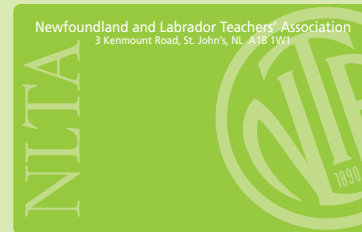


### NLTA Membership Cards

If you require an NLTA membership card, visit [www.nlta.ca](http://www.nlta.ca), click on "**Forms**" and then "**Membership Card.**"

Cards will be mailed to your home address.

If you have had a recent address change, please update your current address.



**Note:** You may need your NLTA membership card to access discounts from the **NLTA Teacher Discount List** which can be found at [www.nlta.ca](http://www.nlta.ca). Click on "**Member Services**" and then "**Discount Program for Teachers**".



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#### For more information:

Contact one of our EAP Coordinators:

**Kenda Riggs**  
709-733-3265  
ext. 265  
kriggs@nlta.ca

**Lori Hewitt**  
709-733-3242  
ext. 242  
lhewitt@nlta.ca



1 - 800 - 563 - 3599  
(IN-PROVINCE)  
eap@nlta.ca