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# THE bulletin

TEACHERSCHANGELIVES.CA

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## EDUCATION WEEK 2025



Adventure in Learning/  
Apprendre: une aventure!



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This month we had an opportunity to celebrate the positivity in our system with Education Week 2025. This year's theme, *Adventure in Learning/Apprendre: une aventure!*, highlights the ever-changing nature of education and the dedication of teachers who create fun and enriching experiences for students across the province.



We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of Education Week, particularly the Communications/Political Action/Membership Engagement Committee, whose leadership helped shape this year's theme and structure, and the Public Libraries of Newfoundland and Labrador, for providing valuable educational resources, as well as the generous support of a number of local personalities who took time to read stories on video for all students in the province. Most importantly, we recognize our members, whose commitment to student learning and engagement brings this initiative to life. We will keep the Education Week resources available for the rest of the school year for anyone that hasn't had an opportunity to celebrate Education Week quite yet.

Please keep sharing the positive and impactful work happening in your schools.

All the best,  
Jennifer

## THE bulletin

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# UP FRONT WITH THE NLTA PRESIDENT



*Morale does not come easily, nor naturally. Respect is felt when the employer and policymakers identify public education as an essential service that requires financial investment, is rooted in long-term objectives, and addresses the needs of the people on the ground. This, combined with our own steadfastness and self-advocacy, will lead to improved morale within our ranks.*

Colleagues / Friends,

Right now, there are several of our members in school communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador that are hurting and feeling immense pressure due to circumstances beyond their control.

Some are dealing with the tragic loss of a valued school member. When tragic events involving our students do occur, it strikes us to our core. Equally, we are heavily impacted when we lose a teaching colleague, a piece of our school family. To those impacted this year, we offer our condolences and wish you strength as you work your way through these difficult circumstances in support of your communities; your efforts are a valuable component of recovery and moving forward collectively.

Other schools and educators have become situational targets of sustained harassment and vitriolic actions both in person and on social media. Political and financial instability combined with narrow and hate-filled ideologies that repeat on the daily on our television screens and online channels are having a detrimental impact on local perspectives and group thinking. It leads to actions that invade personal and public

**"I cannot do all the good the world needs, but the world needs all the good that I can do."**

~(Jana Stanfield)

spaces through the intentional sharing of misinformation and attempts at intimidation. Schools cannot become battlegrounds for the public airing of personal concerns or the invasion of politically motivated events or demonstrations. There will always be a time and a place for the professional and respectful discussion of issues, ensuring the safety and protection of all those involved. This message has been shared with officials

of the Department of Education and they are in full agreement. Your Association is availing of resources and utilizing strategies wherever possible to press for responses from the employer and determine best courses of action. Your Provincial Executive has been in full support of individual and collective strategies to address the abuse of our teachers and the safety of our schools.

I realize that the discussion items to this point have been heavy (yet real), however, it is vital that we reinforce expectations and fortify protections on the frontlines where possible. Moving forward, public messaging will continue along with internal approaches to deal with individual cases/incidents that emerge. Given societal realities, I feel this will need to be a significant portion of our organization's communications efforts into the future.

## **So where do we go from here...**

Entering the spring months, Easter break and the conclusion of another school year, we must hang on to the personal and professional wins that we have experienced and created. There are countless examples of how our efforts uplift and strengthen our students and school communities daily. I encourage you to take five minutes to jot down a short list of those items which stand out as positive and rewarding; these items may not make the social media debate or the evening news, but I am positive they have influence. Taking it a step further, doing an inventory of daily wins may assist you in your emotional and cognitive processing of world and local affairs right now.

## **CALL TO ACTION**

The majority of our parents, guardians and community members are decent and civil human beings and need to step forward in support of our schools.

- Keep these discussions as standing items on your staff meeting agendas such that complacency does not emerge, and all is done to prevent incidents within your own buildings and communities.

- Encourage your School Councils to discuss the public behaviors being seen in other regions. Request that they take action to ensure protocols and expectations are clear for the parents and guardians of your school.
- Reach out to your MHAs to voice your concerns around violent and aggressive tactics by the public to intimidate teachers on school grounds and social media.
- Ask your MHAs that they support the solid creation of the Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE). This is the entity that will eventually replace the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils. There has been minimal information shared by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador or the Department of Education as to what degree it will be funded, the associated timelines for implementation, or the overall capabilities of this group. Your Association sees PACE as potentially a key player in advocacy related to the issues referenced above, as well as ensuring quality parental input.

I realize that we have much to balance when managing complex school environments.

Thank you for your efforts as we continue to protect the learning spaces of our students and the workspaces of our educators.

Yours in Solidarity,

Trent

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/~nlta/nltapresident-trentlangdon-2/](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/~nlta/nltapresident-trentlangdon-2/)

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

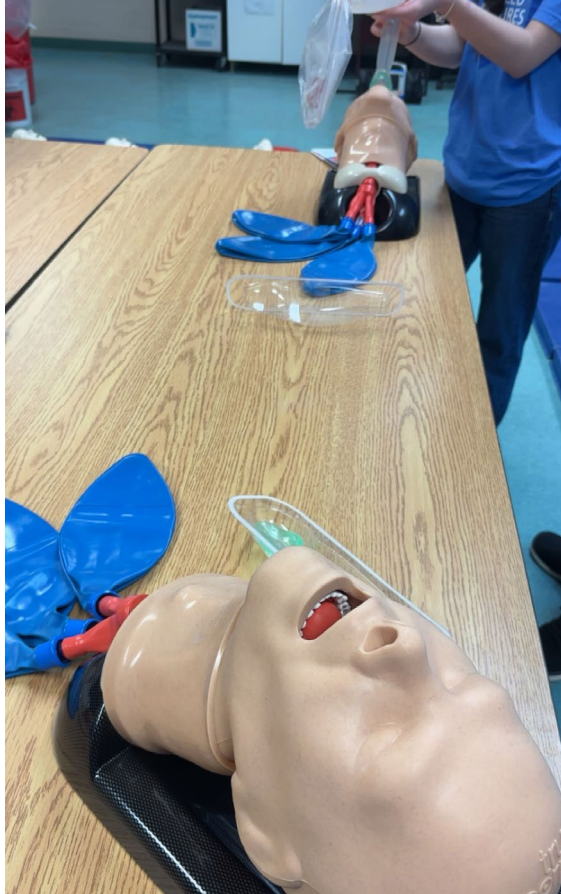
# NEWS



## ST. JOHN'S

### Holy Trinity Attends "Skilled Futures" at CNA

On March 5, 2025, Holy Trinity High school attended the Skilled Futures in Health Services at CNA, Prince Phillip Drive campus. The students at HTH got to participate in five "try-a-trade" in Health Services. These included Veterinary Tech, Paramedicine, respiratory therapy, practical nursing and pharmacy technician. Students had the opportunity to bandage a stuffed animal, listen to lungs and heart beats using a stethoscope, use a pulse monitor, ultrasound, blood pressure cup, practice their compressions on Avatars, learned how drugs were dispensed and how quality control plays a big part in pharmacy.



## WESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND

### 2023-24 Humber Branch Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to Liam MacArthur of Corner Brook Regional High and Brenna Connolly of Templeton Academy on receiving the NLTA Humber Branch scholarships for 2023-24. Thank you to Provincial Executive Member Tracey Payne and Humber Branch President Shelley Loder for presenting these scholarships.



Liam MacArthur (right) accepts NLTA Humber Branch Scholarship from Provincial Executive Member Tracey Payne.



Brenna Connolly (right) accepts NLTA Humber Branch Scholarship from Branch President Shelley Loder.



## ST. JOHN'S

## Joint Council Meeting

The Joint Council, which is comprised of Branch Presidents and Provincial Executive, met in St. John's in March. This group of dedicated Association leaders assists in directing the work of the Association. Their commitment and contributions are vital to Association discussions. The next meeting of the Joint Council will be Fall 2025.



Branch Presidents and alternates from across the province gathered in St. John's March 7, 2025, for Joint Council.

## VANCOUVER

## Holy Heart of Mary Teacher Nominated for Juno Award

Congratulations to Mr. Robert Colbourne of Holy Heart of Mary High School for being nominated for the Musiccounts Teacher of the Year JUNO Awards. Robert has been a music educator and choral director for more than 20 years. His dedication to music education has inspired generations of students.

While he did not take home the award, Mr. Colbourne did accomplish his personal quest of meeting host Michael Bublé after a campaign by the HHM choir caught the attention of the pop star.

Over the course of the weekend, Mr. Colbourne attended multiple concerts and gala events, and spent timesharing best practices with the other nominees from across the country.

Congratulations Robert on your nomination and thank you for your dedication!



## NEWFOUNDLAND &amp; LABRADOR

## 2024-25 NLTA Scholarship Winner



Amy Julien-Fowler of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's has been awarded the 2024-25 Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Scholarship. Amy is currently attending Memorial University and will graduate in the spring. The NLTA Scholarship is awarded annually on the basis of academic excellence and character to a senior student enrolled in the Faculty of Education. The scholarship, valued at \$1,500, is awarded by the MUN Senate Committee on Scholarships, acting on the recommendation of the Dean of Education.

Amy submitted the following information about her journey to becoming a teacher.

"I have a previous B.A. with a French major and psychology minor. I'm currently completing the primary/elementary B.Ed. program as a second degree with French as a second language at Memorial University. This term, I am doing my last and long internship at Brookside Intermediate in Grade 5 FI. This school is in my hometown of Portugal Cove-St. Philips and close to my heart, so I am beyond thrilled to learn from the insanely talented educators and administrators that fill the building! The students are absolutely fantastic and enhance my experience at Brookside. In May, I will graduate from the program and I intend to substitute until the school year closes out. My interests and passions are dance, art, music and animals (especially my two dogs who are my babies).

Ultimately, I just can't wait to dive into this profession and be the leader, educator and friend I know I am."

## 2015 PENSION REFORM – 10 YEARS LATER

# How Have We Done?

Written by Don Ash, former NLTA Executive Director  
and chief negotiator for the Pension Reform Agreement in 2015.

The short answer is that we have been incredibly successful! A pension corporation governed and run by expert pension professionals has been established; funding targets have been exceeded; investments have been diversified; and service has been improved.

The Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) Reform Agreement reached with Government in April 2015 and the subsequent 2016 Joint Sponsorship Agreement (JSA) changed the TPP from a pension plan sponsored solely by Government to a pension plan jointly sponsored by the NLTA and Government. These agreements created the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation (TPPC), which is responsible for administration and pension fund investment, independent of both the Government and the NLTA, and is governed by an expert, eight-person Board of Directors.

These agreements and the accompanying legislation were part of a joint effort of Government and the NLTA designed to help the TPP achieve stability, sustainability, and 100% funding over the next 30 years. These financial goals have been achieved in under 10 years, a significant milestone.

### IMPROVED FUNDING

	August 31, 2015	August 31, 2024
Value of Assets	\$3,001,390,000	\$6,678,140,000
Pension Liabilities	\$4,616,940,000	\$5,465,330,000
Funded Ratio	65%	122%

The funded ratio of the TPP has increased from 65% prior to reform, to 122% in 2024. This places the TPP on a solid financial foundation, well positioned to withstand any potential future catastrophic financial events. Actuarial analysis using stochastic modelling of 1000 real world economic scenarios concludes that the TPP is expected to remain fully funded over the next 25 years and beyond.

Since 2015, significant effort has been made by the TPPC Board of Directors, management and the

professional investment staff of the TPPC to diversify the TPP's invested assets in order to mitigate risk and maximise the likelihood of continued success. In 2015, the plans assets were highly concentrated in public equities (75%). Over the past 10 years, the Board and professional investment staff have significantly diversified TPP assets, resulting in decreased risk and reduced volatility, while maintaining required investment returns to help pay pensions and reach full funding of the plan.

### DIVERSIFIED ASSET ALLOCATION

Asset Mix	August 31, 2015	August 31, 2024
Canadian Equity	35%	12.1%
Global Equity	40%	33.0%
Private Equity	0%	6.0%
Real Estate	5%	7.9%
Infrastructure	0%	15.1%
Bonds (Universe)	20%	8.1%
Corporate Bonds	0%	6.0%
Mortgages	0%	0.1%
Private Debt	0%	8.1%
Cash	0%	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### IMPROVED PENSION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

The services available to both active and retired TPP members have increased and improved dramatically through the creation and efforts of the TPPC to be the first point of contact on pension related matters. The professional pension staff at the TPPC is exclusively committed to the administration and investment performance of the TPP, and to the provision of services to plan members. Pension staff are available by telephone, e-mail, or in person visit. A website ([www.tppcnl.ca](http://www.tppcnl.ca)) and a self service myPension Portal have been developed to allow online access to: annual benefit statements; videos and tools that promote financial literacy, pension knowledge, and retirement planning;

relevant pension related forms; pension pay stubs; change of address and banking information; requests for additional tax deductions; and much more.

#### CHALLENGES

Approximately 62% of TPP members are pensioners receiving pension with only 38% active members making contributions. The result is that each year, more is paid out in pension than is received in contributions, leading to a reliance on investment income to help pay pensions. Financial market uncertainty will always be a challenge for the TPP. Again, diversification, prudent planning and risk management strategies employed by the management and Board of the TPPC to address these challenges have mitigated the risks, and the actuaries are confident that full funding will be maintained for the foreseeable future.

#### SUMMARY

The 2015 reform and Joint Sponsorship of the TPP by Government and the NLTA has been an incredible success largely due to the agreement of the Government and NLTA, as plan sponsors, to rely on pension experts and the creation of an independent Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation that is governed by an expert Board of Directors and administered by a professional and dedicated staff.

The future of the Teachers' Pension Plan is secure and in good hands.

For more information, see the Annual Reports for the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation [www.tppcnl.ca/AboutUs/AnnualReport](http://www.tppcnl.ca/AboutUs/AnnualReport).

#### The Newfoundland & Labrador Social Studies Special Interest Council (NL SS SIC) is

committed to supporting social studies educators across the province. We invite educators who are interested in staying informed about our initiatives or becoming involved by serving on the Executive or Full Board to email [genevievegauci@nlschools.ca](mailto:genevievegauci@nlschools.ca). Your participation will help strengthen our professional community and enhance social studies education in Newfoundland & Labrador. If you are interested in more information about us, please visit our website: <https://sites.google.com/nlesd.ca/nltasssic/about-nl-sssic>

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# What Teacher Leadership Means to Me

by Chad Horne

Teaching Principal Point Leamington Academy, Point Leamington, NL (Canada)

*The below article previously appeared in the Association for Teacher Leadership and Scholarship February 2025 Newsletter and the MUN Faculty of Education's Morning Watch Journal*

In my roles as a father, husband, pet servant, at home, last night I dealt with our family poodle, Rusty, who hurt himself. As a result, our family had a restless night of worry and problem-solving. In my professional role, as a rural school principal was impacted, as I navigated through the next day somewhat distracted and a little tired. I was reminded of how important relationships are to leadership.

Leadership, after all, is about creating a culture where everyone feels valued and supported—even when things are not going perfectly. In my family others show leadership, not just me. In my school, teachers also show leadership. My family and my school are better when I understand this distinction as a family and leader.

More specifically, what about teachers as leaders? Teacher leadership to me is rooted in relationships. And we know relationships are the foundation of great leadership (Johnston, 2023). Something I wholeheartedly agree with, as strong leadership in schools is not confined to a title or position. It is found in how we connect with and empower others. Leadership happens when every member of the school feels valued, trusted, and encouraged to grow. When relationships are strong, so is the leadership that naturally emerges.

I believe that at Point Leamington Academy, leadership is evident throughout our building. It is found in others, or as Anderson (2004) refers to it, there is a mutual reciprocity between principals and teachers as leadership that enriches schools, regardless of their position on our team, everyone contributes to our school's success. Leadership isn't about being in charge; it's about supporting each other and working together toward common goals. When we foster autonomy and provide opportunities for staff to lead in their areas of strength, we see growth and innovation. It also encourages others to step into leadership roles. When staff members feel supported, valued, and trusted, they are more likely to take risks and embrace their full potential.

But this doesn't just stop with teachers. Students benefit when educators feel empowered and confident in their role. By modeling trust, collaboration, and resilience, teachers set an example for students to follow. Students learn that leadership is not about being perfect or always having the answers. It's about showing up for others, contributing to the greater good, and demonstrating integrity. When students witness these qualities, they begin to develop them as well.

A foundation for a successful administrator is to promote teacher leadership, to support teachers as leaders. If teachers and staff are not feeling encouraged, respected, valued, how can they foster those same feelings in their students? Leadership is about creating a ripple effect that begins with adults in the building. When relationships among staff are strong, they spill over into classrooms and impact how students learn and interact. Leadership is about more than solving big problems or achieving milestones. It is also found in the small, everyday moments; in the way a staff member feels heard in a staff meeting, in the way someone is encouraged to try something new, or in how we lift each other up when the day feels heavy. These moments of connections are what sustain us and make leadership meaningful.

Rusty's injury reminded me that relationships matter, roles are mutually engaged and matter, not just in our homes, but in our schools. Just as our family rallied around Rusty through his injury, our school community rallies to support each other. Leadership, in essence, is about building a culture of trust, respect, and encouragement—a culture where everyone feels empowered to lead and to succeed. Teacher leadership is about shared responsibility and collaboration. It's a journey we undertake together. Through strong relationships, we create schools that are not only successful but are places where everyone—teachers, students, and yes, even a tired principal—can thrive.

*Chad is a principal of a rural school in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Canada). He is also the President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Small Schools Council.*



**Rusty is, not just a dog, but the family friend and a key relationship in this story.**



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Anderson, K. (2004). The mutual influence between of teacher leaders and principals as leadership reciprocity. *International Journal of School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 15(1), 97–133.

Horne, C. (2024). What teacher leadership means to me. *The Morning Watch Journal of Education and Social Policy*, Spring 2024 (copied with permission).

Johnston, B. (2023). Building strong relations: Why prioritizing relationship in education matters, Astra Word Press.

## MUN FACULTY OF EDUCATION

### "Legacy of Leadership" Award nominations are now open!

Do you know an educator who has led significant and sustained initiatives to improve the educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador? Awards are for two streams, K-12, and post-secondary school systems.

**Nominate a deserving individual by April 11, 2025.**

Learn more:

<https://www.mun.ca/educ/about/legacy-of-leadership-awards/>



Faculty of Education

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# FOOD & FUEL LOAN PROGRAM



Working in a remote area? Need to buy essentials in bulk? With this program you may be eligible to borrow up to **\$6,500** for food and fuel purchases.

Contact NLCU at **(709) 754-2312** for details. Applications due **September 30, 2025.**



\*This program is offered in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, which guarantees a portion of these loans.



# Financial Wellness Impacts Mental Health

by Kathy Taylor-Rogers

Over the past few years there have been a significant number of challenges that have impacted us and our financial well-being. Financial challenges such as: rising interest rates, the rising cost of groceries, the higher price of gas, the higher cost of post-secondary courses, higher cost of vehicles, and the lack of affordable housing. These are just some of the challenges that have changed the demand on our money and potentially negatively impacted our financial wellness.

Increasing financial pressures have created more stress for many of us and this stress is further increased by the looming threat of tariffs and uncertainty regarding how these tariffs will impact us. Another factor that has played a role in some people's decreased financial wellness is that the pandemic thrust us into online shopping, which has had a negative impact on those that are impulse buyers. Even if you were aware of your weakness regarding overspending online, you were left with little choice, particularly if you were afraid to venture into stores. The pandemic also encouraged us to use our credit cards more than we ever did, as many stores did not want customers to buy with cash. This again was hardest for those that were unable to keep up with the credit card debt or did not budget. The result has been a perfect storm of variables that led many into a worse financial situation than normal.

Another factor that can make it harder for people to be realistic about their financial issues is that it is a "taboo" subject. Many of us do not feel comfortable discussing our financial issues and feel ashamed about our debt. This can cause us to ignore it and just hope it will go away. The potential symptoms of depression that can develop from financial strain can also make it harder to deal with the issue. Some may even resort to gambling, in hope of the big win that will solve all their problems. Unfortunately, gambling typically makes our problems worse.

It is very important for us to be aware that financial strain and worry can negatively impact our mental and physical health. Anyone who has experienced significant financial insecurity can confirm the toll that the worry and anxiety can take on us. Some of the potential negative impacts to physical and mental health are:

- Increased heart rate
- Sweating
- Panic attacks
- Lack of sleep
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Gastrointestinal problems with significant weight loss or gain
- Feelings of despair
- Overuse of alcohol or drugs to cope
- Symptoms of depression
- Significant anxiety
- Relationship issues

This list just names some of the common problems and highlights why it is so important to take control of your finances. Ignoring them will not help your situation.

Some of the pitfalls that lead to financial issues according to Emily Norris in a Personal Finance article are:

- Unnecessary spending
- Never-ending payments
- Living large on credit cards
- Buying new vehicles when the one you have is reliable
- Overspending on your home
- Misusing Home Equity
- Not saving
- Paying off debt with retirement savings
- Not having a financial plan

The good news is that deciding to regain control of your finances can help get you on the road to



improving all the negative impacts that financial stress can create.

What to do:

- Be honest with yourself and talk to someone about the problem. This can help you to put things in perspective and gain the courage to take control.
- Be honest with your significant other and figure out how to take control of the situation together.
- Take inventory of your finances and stop ignoring the problem – do up a detailed inventory of all sources of income and all monthly expenses including all sources of debt.
- Try to identify all spending habits, particularly those that are adding to the financial burden. Sometimes something as simple as not bringing a lunch to work and running out for fast food can really add up over time. We can't change problem habits until we recognize them.
- Once you have made an inventory of your income and expenses, if the picture is too overwhelming to deal with on your own contact a credit counselling agency, such as Credit Counselling Services of Newfoundland and Labrador (CCSNL), and they will assist you in developing a plan to tackle the issues at no cost to you.

Spending money has become way too easy and access to credit has gotten easier right along with it. It is important to be aware of where your pitfalls are when it comes to money management. Once you see where you tend to go off track, you have a better chance of gaining control of your relationship with money and learning how to avoid falling into unhealthy habits. If you choose the option of contacting a credit counselling agency, they will be happy to help you figure out your financial situation. They can help you make decisions regarding how you can gain control of your financial situation and get past the financial stress. They will map out the possible solutions and then you will decide which route is best for you and your situation. Financial education helps to limit stressors that impact both mental and physical health. The more that we can learn money management, which is the process of budgeting, saving, investing, and spending in a way that meets our financial goals, the less finances will negatively impact our mental and physical health.

When facing financial stress, it is important to recognize the negative impact that it is having on your life and your relationships. Being in tune to this will hopefully be the motivator you need to make changes. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of good self care in the face of financial stressors. Some self care strategies could be: staying active, not

using alcohol or drugs to self medicate, remaining connected to your support network, focusing on the things that you can change, trying to be mindful and in the present, doing online yoga, taking a hot bath, doing things that you enjoy like listening to music, reading books, playing board games and spending quality time with loved ones. Self care is very individual, the key is to spend some time each day doing activities that make you feel good or bring you joy.

For confidential assistance contact Lori Hewitt (ext. 242) at [lhewitt@eapnlteachers.ca](mailto:lhewitt@eapnlteachers.ca), or Nancy Ivany (ext. 269) at [nivany@eapnlteachers.ca](mailto:nivany@eapnlteachers.ca). More information on the Employee Assistance Program can be found at [nlta.nl.ca/employee-assistance-program/](http://nlta.nl.ca/employee-assistance-program/).

## Join the Small Schools Special Interest Council!

Are you working in a small school with 100 students or fewer? The Small Schools Special Interest Council is here to support and collaborate with educators like you! We understand the unique challenges and opportunities that come with teaching in small school settings. By joining, you'll connect with colleagues across the province, share resources, and advocate for the needs of small schools.

Let's work together to strengthen our schools and support each other. Join today!

**Join The Small Schools SIC**

## Education Week 2025

### Adventure in Learning/Apprendre: une aventure!

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association celebrated Education Week 2025 from March 24-28 with the theme Adventure in Learning/Apprendre: une aventure! This year's theme helped us recognize the changing nature of education and the dedication of teachers who create fun and enriching experiences for students across the province.

This year, to launch the week, President Trent Langdon visited Persalvic School in Victoria and signed a proclamation with the Grade 3s and student leaders and participated in several activities related to this year's theme. A special thank you to Principal Garrett McLean, VP Kelly Loch and all the staff and students at Persalvic School for the visit! We'd also like to thank the Public Libraries of Newfoundland and Labrador for partnering with the NLTA on Education Week and providing many useful resources.

Education Week has always been about celebrating education and the importance of learning and for over 85 years the NLTA has been proud to sponsor the week in Newfoundland and Labrador.







# 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 2025 would have to submit their application to the school district by the end of April 2025. The Deferred Salary Leave application and other information can be accessed on the provincial government website at [www.gov.nl.ca/exec/tbs/teacherspayroll/#teachers](http://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/tbs/teacherspayroll/#teachers).

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, 2025 – August 31, 2026) of the new Collective Agreement. Taxes deducted vary for each member, and these are approximations only. EI and CPP deductions are based on 2025 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,

**Schedule C: Annual Salary Scale**  
**September 1, 2025– August 31, 2026**

Full Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	81261	94122	106478
Estimated Tax	14446	18337	22134
Estimated EI	1,077	1,077	1,077
Estimated CPP	4,430	4,430	4,430
NLTA Fees	1016	1177	1331
Pension Deductions	9223	10683	12085
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>51,069</b>	<b>58,418</b>	<b>65,420</b>



## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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 DSLP; this can be found in the Member Services sec-

tion 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 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599. Emailed inquiries sent to mail@nlta.ca will be directed to appropriate Programs and Services staff for a response.

2/3 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	54,174	62,748	70,985
Estimated Tax	5,952	7,893	9,923
Estimated EI	899	1,042	1,091
Estimated CPP	3,015	3,525	4,022
NLTA Fees	677	784	887
Pension Deductions	9,223	10,683	12,085
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>34,407</b>	<b>38,821</b>	<b>42,978</b>

3/4 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	60,946	70,592	79,859
Estimated Tax	7,817	10,284	12,958
Estimated EI	1,012	1,077	1,077
Estimated CPP	3,418	4,006	4,376
NLTA Fees	762	882	998
Pension Deductions	9,223	10,683	12,085
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>38,714</b>	<b>43,659</b>	<b>48,364</b>

4/5 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	65,009	75,298	85,182
Estimated Tax	8,978	11,896	14,778
Estimated EI	1,077	1,077	1,077
Estimated CPP	3,660	4,270	4,430
NLTA Fees	813	941	1,065
Pension Deductions	9,223	10,683	12,085
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>41,258</b>	<b>46,430</b>	<b>51,747</b>

5/6 Deferred Salary			
	Top of V Salary Scale	Top of VI Salary Scale	Top of VII Salary Scale
Salary	67,718	78,435	88,732
Estimated Tax	9,817	12,968	15,994
Estimated EI	1,077	1,077	1,077
Estimated CPP	3,821	4,319	4,430
NLTA Fees	846	980	1,109
Pension Deductions	9,223	10,683	12,085
<b>Estimated Net</b>	<b>42,933</b>	<b>48,408</b>	<b>54,036</b>



# Ensuring the Future of NLTA Group Insurance Plan: Decisions and Insights from Recent Discussions

The NLTA Group Insurance Managers have been reviewing feedback and exploring options to ensure the long-term stability of the NLTA Group Insurance Health Plan, in keeping with their fiduciary role and responsibilities. After extensive research and consultations, a survey, and expert industry, actuarial and legal analysis, Managers decided to implement a 15% co-pay for prescription medications, effective July 1, 2025. This decision was not made lightly, but it was deemed necessary to maintain the financial health of the plan while continuing to provide comprehensive prescription drug coverage for members.

## Gathering Input: Survey and Member Feedback

Understanding the impact of potential changes was a top priority for Managers. While they have regular and ongoing access to claims experience, Managers also decided to carry out a survey, which was conducted in October 2024 by Thinkwell Research + Strategy, an independent research firm. The survey gathered responses from over 4,000 members, including 2,726 active teachers and 1,292 retirees. The survey was intended to both inform and get input from members, and the results showed a preference among active members for maintaining the current model, where members pay only pharmacist charges for prescription medications, even if it meant increased premiums. Key findings included:

- 62% of all respondents preferred the current model with necessary premium increases.
- 70% of active members favored the current model, while 23% supported a co-pay and 7% remained undecided.
- 46% of retirees preferred the current model, while 41% supported a co-pay and 13% were undecided.
- Among those who supported a co-pay, the 20% option was the most preferred.

If these responses were extrapolated to the full Group Insurance membership, an estimated 55.5% of members would favor keeping the current model, while 34.5% would support a co-pay structure.

Beyond survey responses, virtual information sessions in January 2025 provided additional opportunities for discussion. Over 540 members, active and retired, attended these sessions, where NLTA staff presented information, answered questions, and addressed concerns. Hundreds of emails and phone calls from members further contributed to the decision-making process.

## Common Themes and Concerns

Members raised several important points during these discussions, including:

- Concerns about retiree coverage: Some feared that retirees might be considered a financial burden and removed from coverage. NLTA assured members that retiree benefits will remain unchanged and that the plan will continue to provide the same coverage at the same cost for active and retired members.
- Transparency in decision-making: Some questioned whether decisions had already been made before gathering feedback. Managers emphasized that no final decisions were made prior to February 2025 and that extensive consideration of all input was central to the process.
- Balancing cost containment with coverage: Some members suggested alternative cost-saving measures, such as restrictions on certain medications or adjustments to paramedical benefits. However, industry experts and financial analysis indicated that reducing benefits in non-drug areas would not be sufficient to address the financial risk posed by rising prescription medication costs.



### Why a Co-Pay Was Chosen

The financial strain on the Health Plan has been growing, with prescription drug claims increasing by over 28% just from 2022 to 2024. Over the past 10 years (including the 2024-25 group insurance fiscal year), the real cost of required premiums to pay for claims in the Health Plan has increased by approximately 138% for family coverage and 116% for single coverage. Industry and actuarial experts advise that this trend will continue, will be driven primarily (75%) by prescription drug claims, and is expected to grow due to an aging population and the rising costs of specialty medications. This is a serious reality that Managers have been grappling with for several years.

As permitted, Managers have, over this period of time, approved various measures for the purpose of rate stabilization and mitigation, but these are not sustainable over the long term and, for many members, nor are the ongoing and anticipated future premium increases if nothing changes.

After thorough review, Managers concluded that a co-pay is necessary to ensure the plan's long-term stability. While both 15% and 20% co-pay options were considered, Managers opted for the 15% co-pay, believing it to be the best balance between necessary cost containment and affordability.

#### Next Steps and Implementation Timeline

While most annual insurance rate changes take effect on May 1, Managers have delayed the implementation of the co-pay until July 1, 2025, to give members more time to prepare.

Members are encouraged to:

- Discuss potential cost implications with their doctor/healthcare provider.
- Explore patient assistance programs or government support for high-cost medications.
- Stay informed as the finalized premium rates for 2025-26 are announced.

*Change is always challenging. Managers remain committed to providing high-quality health coverage and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the NLTA Group Insurance Program for years to come.*

### Understanding the 15% Co-Pay

The 15% co-pay will apply to the total cost of prescription medications, including both the medication cost and pharmacy charges.

Below are examples based on an average pharmacy charge of \$10 (actual fees may vary\*).

#### Example 1

- Pharmacist charge: \$10
- Medication cost: \$40
- Total cost: \$50
- Current model: Member pays \$10
- New model: Member pays \$7.50 (15% of \$50)

#### Example 2

- Pharmacist charge: \$10
- Medication cost: \$90
- Total cost: \$100
- Current model: Member pays \$10
- New model: Member pays \$15.00 (15% of \$100)

#### Example 3

- Pharmacist charge: \$10
- Medication cost: \$190
- Total cost: \$200
- Current model: Member pays \$10
- New model: Member pays \$30.00 (15% of \$200)

*\*These examples illustrate how costs will shift under the new structure. Members are encouraged to review their prescriptions and consult with healthcare providers as needed.*



## COMMITTEE MEMBER SOUGHT FOR NLTA GROUP INSURANCE COMMITTEE

The **NLTA Group Insurance Committee** is seeking expressions of interest from teachers in **Labrador** who would be interested in serving as a Manager. If you are interested, please contact Melanie Jaster, Senior Administrative Assistant, Programs and Services at 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 233 or [mjaster@nlta.ca](mailto:mjaster@nlta.ca) by **May 16, 2025**. Please include your name, email and telephone number in your message.

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

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

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

Article 9 outlines the process that the employer is required to follow as they prepare and finalize staffing plans for the 2025-26 school year. The Collective Agreements can be accessed under “Publications” on the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca).

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

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

Any teacher or TLA who has been notified (on or before May 7 or May 28, respectively) by their school administrator or employer personnel that their position is redundant and that they will be reassigned or laid off for the following school year should consult with the designated Administrative Officer in Programs and Services responsible for their school/region. (The NLTA number is 709-726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599.) The regional assignments for each Administrative Officer are listed below:

<b>NLSchools:</b>	<b>Avalon Region</b>	<b>Avalon East</b>	Jody Saunders	ext. 226	<a href="mailto:jisaunders@nlta.ca">jisaunders@nlta.ca</a>
			Darlene Johnson	ext. 241	<a href="mailto:djohnson@nlta.ca">djohnson@nlta.ca</a>
		<b>Avalon West</b>	John Veitch	ext. 244	<a href="mailto:jveitch@nlta.ca">jveitch@nlta.ca</a>
	<b>Central Region</b>	<b>Central</b>	Jamie Kieley	ext. 245	<a href="mailto:jkieley@nlta.ca">jkieley@nlta.ca</a>
		<b>Burin</b>	Bob Johnston	ext. 239	<a href="mailto:bjohnston@nlta.ca">bjohnston@nlta.ca</a>
		<b>Vista</b>	Bob Johnston	ext. 239	<a href="mailto:bjohnston@nlta.ca">bjohnston@nlta.ca</a>
	<b>Western Region</b>	<b>Miriam Sheppard</b>	ext. 230	<a href="mailto:msheppard@nlta.ca">msheppard@nlta.ca</a>	
	<b>Labrador Region</b>	<b>Gabe Ryan</b>	ext. 232	<a href="mailto:gryan@nlta.ca">gryan@nlta.ca</a>	
<b>Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador</b>		<b>Gabe Ryan</b>	ext. 232	<a href="mailto:gryan@nlta.ca">gryan@nlta.ca</a>	

## Steps in the Redundancy Process

The following are the steps in the redundancy process which teachers and TLAs should ensure are applied to their circumstances (clause numbers noted are from the Provincial Collective Agreement):

### Step I:

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

Each teacher and TLA should ensure that their placement on the employer’s seniority list accurately reflects their entire teaching service in the Kindergarten to Level III public school system in the province. Time taught outside the province or outside of the Kindergarten to Level III public school system cannot be credited as seniority.

There have been changes to the seniority list provisions resulting from the new Collective Agreement. The seniority lists were posted by NLSchools and the Conseil Scolaire Francophone, respectively, on January 31, 2025.



Teachers with NLSchools and the Conseil had until February 28, 2025, to challenge their seniority and be assured that any resulting correction(s) would be effective for all decisions made during the 2025 redundancy, reassignment and recall process and the 2025 staffing season.

Failure to have made a challenge within this 30-day period means that any changes as a result of a challenge after March 1st will only apply to future matters, five working days from the date of challenge. **Employer decisions made in reliance on incorrect seniority that was not challenged will not be changed.**

### Step II:

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

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

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

### Step III:

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

- (i) within the community;
- (ii) within the nearest community, within the school district (\*NLSchools representing the district formerly known as NLESD), where such a position exists.

A teacher who is reassigned and notified in writing in accordance with Clause 9.12(b) (Clause 9.13(b) for TLAs), has five (5) working days following their notification to notify the school district

(employer) of their acceptance or rejection of the reassignment. **It is VERY important to note again that reassignment is distinct within the separate job classifications of teachers and TLAs respectively – whether within or outside of their own school, teachers CANNOT be reassigned to TLA positions, and TLAs CANNOT be reassigned to teaching positions through the redundancy/reassignment process.**

### Step IV:

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

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

### Step V:

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

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

**If you have any questions or need further information, please contact [mail@nlta.ca](mailto:mail@nlta.ca) or 709-726-3223 or toll-free 1-800-563-3599.**

### School District/Employer Teacher Online Profiles:

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

## IN MEMORIAM



**CARMEN OLDFORD**  
**JANUARY 7, 1946 – JANUARY 26, 2025**

It is with broken hearts that we announce the passing of our loved one, surrounded by family on Sunday, January 26, 2025 at the Health Science Centre, St. John's, NL. Carmen Oldford, age 79 years of Burnside/

Centreville/Paradise, NL.

Predeceased by his parents, George and Alma Oldford; father and mother-in-law Clyde and Pearl Samson; son-in-law Chris King; brothers Clyde; Melvin and Harvey.

He leaves to mourn with fond and loving memories, his wife Shirley of 57 years; son Dwayne (Tonia); daughter Deanne and grandchildren Liam, Madison and Braydon. Brothers: Mac (Verna) Oldford, Howard (Mavis) Oldford, Ira (Brenda) Oldford. Sisters: Evelyn (Austin) Benson and Jeanette (David) Adams; as well as many nieces, nephews, friends and colleagues.

Carmen was a well-respected educator. His teaching career spanned the communities of Hare Bay, Burnside, Salvage and Trinity, Bonavista Bay. He was also well versed in teaching after school as a driving instructor. He was well known for his compassion and dedication to many students.

Beyond the classroom, he was a committed community member. He served in many capacities as a Lions Club member, on hospital committees and community development associations.

In his spare time, he took an interest in fly fishing, cod jigging and singing harmony with the Men's church choir. That always came second to the well-being of his family. He was quiet but cared deeply.

Upon retirement, Carmen moved to Paradise and began what his family called a "second career". He spent 14 years serving the public as a member of Kent Building Supplies.

He loved the social aspect, friends, customers and camaraderie.

He will be dearly missed by his family, friends, colleagues and students.

# CONTACT 2025

**AUGUST 5 – AUGUST 8**

**UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW BRUNSWICK,  
SAINT JOHN, NB**



**"NAVIGATING  
DIVERSE  
CLASSROOMS  
TOGETHER"**



# DSS

**Developing Successful Schools**

**JULY 8–10, 2025**

**MOUNT ALLISON  
UNIVERSITY,  
SACKVILLE NB**

**FOR INFORMATION  
AND REGISTRATION:**

**[WWW.NLTA.NL.CA/DSS2025/](http://WWW.NLTA.NL.CA/DSS2025/)**

**2025 THEME:  
COLLECTIVE EFFICACY**



# 2024 NLTA Province-wide Vote Expenses

As per the financial guidelines established in Association policy on the Election of President and Vice-President by Province Wide Vote, candidates must disclose the sources and amounts of campaign financial contributions (monetary and “in kind”) and expenses for verification within 60 days of the election.

Subject to the audit of this disclosure, candidates are eligible for reimbursement from NLTA of the lesser of \$2,000 or forty percent of eligible campaign expenditures, or a prorated share of a maximum of \$10,000 if

the eligible reimbursement for all candidates exceeds this amount. Following verification, candidates campaign contributions and expenses are to be published to the membership.

The NLTA Electoral Committee is therefore providing this information by way of publication to the membership, in compliance with Association policy. All candidates in the 2024 province wide election for President and Vice-President submitted their campaign financial disclosure within required timelines and these have been verified as follows:

2025-2027 Summary Statement of Income and Expenses							
	Colleen Galgay	Dale Lambe	Steve Penney	Dustin Rideout	Sherri Rose	Sheldon Slaney	Sean Weir
Income:							
Financial Contributions	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-
Fundraising Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In-kind Contributions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Income:	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Expense:							
Advertising	100.00	125.00	-	-	324.24	100.00	-
Fundraising Exp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meetings/Socials		-					
Office Supplies		79.84		-	86.57		
Postage	-	-	-	-	660.96		
Travel	-	1,773.87	-	-	-		
Unpaid Leave		693.79					
Total Expenses:	100.00	2,672.50	-	-	1,071.77	100.00	-
Campaign Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 100.00	\$2,672.50	\$-	\$-	\$1,071.77	\$ 100.00	\$-
40% - Reimbursable	\$ 40.00	\$1,069.00	\$-	\$-	\$ 428.71	\$ 40.00	\$-

# School-based Reading Specialists: Literacy Leaders

by Tracy Critch and Jeanne Sinclair

In 2018, the Education Action Plan introduced School-based Reading Specialists (SbRS) to K-6 schools in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Though the role has existed for some time in Canada and longer internationally, there continues to be wide variation in application and responsibilities. Research on reading specialists is scant, particularly in Canada (Liu et al., 2021), but studies agree that the role is not clearly defined, and more research is needed.

This qualitative study focused on how NL SbRS perceived their role to be defined and the successes and challenges they experienced as literacy leaders. Literacy leaders take the lead in their schools to improve literacy skills by working with teachers and students through direct and indirect support, providing material resources, guidance, collaboration, or instruction. They are committed to improving reading achievement for all.

Thirteen SbRS representing all provincial regions, rural and urban schools, and full-time (FT, n=6) and part-time (PT, n=7) positions with various role combinations agreed to participate. Data was collected through two virtual focus group sessions held in Fall 2023. Regarding limitations, thirteen participants represent a small portion of the SbRS population, and only SbRS in Phase One and Two schools were included, so experiences of later implementation phases were not reported in this study.

The findings in this study parallel research from other parts of Canada and the United States, with commonalities in ill-defined roles and similarly perceived supports and challenges. In NL, while the SbRS role is described as responsive to individual school needs, it lacks clear parameters, resulting in wide interpretation and varied approaches. This leaves SbRS to prioritize their work the best they can: some participants focused on working with teachers, others on intervention groups, and others on large-scale or whole-class literacy activities. These prioritization decisions were

not necessarily strategic but often based on immediate needs (i.e., “putting out fires”) and where SbRS believed they could have the most impact at that moment.

Context and day-to-day realities are important contributing factors (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Lowenhaupt et al., 2014). These focus groups took place at a challenging time for schools with day-to-day difficulties overwhelming teachers. The 2022 PISA data confirms that reading achievement has dropped significantly (Brochu et al., 2023). This issue is compounded by increasing mental health and behaviour concerns. The NLTA reported a 29% increase in reported violent incidents in schools within a one-year span (Kennedy, 2024). The reality of school is likely quite different and more arduous than the general public imagines.

While SbRS shared many common stories, each school had its own challenges and managed them differently. This resulted in different experiences that influenced their leadership development. As Poekert et al. (2016) note, feedback from the local context can support or challenge leadership growth, and SbRS revealed that both exist. Successful experiences along the way supported leadership, whereas other experiences challenged it.

SbRS report that allocation time and redeployment directly impacted their time spent doing core SbRS work. While both FT and PT SbRS report uncertainty in their role and feeling pulled in many directions, PT SbRS felt this impact more deeply. FT SbRS can focus on one role and hone their skills without distraction or interruption by other duties. In contrast, PT SbRS are pulled in many directions and have multiple responsibilities to balance. This reduced time impacts what they can accomplish and their leadership development. A 25% position does not translate into considerable time focused on core SbRS duties, and with other demands encroaching on that time, one stated that the role was likely receiving less than 25% of her time, and such a



role would not have much impact. Redeployment (i.e., being taken from a role to cover the duties of another role due to short staffing) also hindered the potential to have a positive impact. FT and PT experienced this and believed it impeded their ability to do their jobs effectively. FT SbRS felt they were especially an easy target for redeployment since they were not directly responsible for a class of students. So, while many factors shaped the leadership development of SbRS, allocation and redeployment directly impacted the time spent in the role.

Feeling like a leader and feeling as if you can act like a leader are two different conversations. PT participants with administrator roles identified as school leaders but did not necessarily identify as instructional leaders. For others, even those who felt like leaders expressed many challenges which they perceived restricted their leadership capacity in practice. Some pointed out that they aren't official school leaders like administrators. Reinforcing that belief for some participants is the feeling that their employer doesn't see them as leaders, noting the irony of having the word "specialist" in their title but not qualifying for specialist pay.

Addressing recruitment and retention is vital to the success of SbRS leadership development. The confidence to undertake this work does not happen overnight, and time spent in the role is essential. Retention is particularly problematic for PT positions, making it harder to develop leadership over time. More turnover was seen in the PT positions compared to the FT positions, with two-thirds of FT participants working in the same role since the outset, while this was true for less than one-third of PT participants. Those in the role longer have logically had more time to engage in an iterative process of leadership development, thereby refining their knowledge and practice, positively impacting their sense of leadership.

While this study focused on the SbRS, many issues discussed during the focus groups pertained to the education system at large. Through its Education Accord, the province is transforming the K-12 education system, and the identified challenges need to be tackled head-on. The bottom line is that it will require investment on many levels. First, there is a need to invest in human resources and recruitment to increase staff and remediate short-staffing, so the redeployment of specialists is no longer a concern. Second, there is a need to invest in professional learning and support of SbRS through mentorship. Finally, developing clear role descriptions can ensure consistent practices across the province. Without a clear definition of a reading specialist, it is left open to interpretation, which makes it hard to establish focus and evidence-based practices.

SbRS are optimally positioned to lead amid change.

They are on the ground, understand their schools and students, and can support teachers. Even though NL is working to catch up with the reading development and instruction research, schools led by innovative SbRS have already made changes. Some have already implemented research-supported programs and screening tools instead of waiting for top-down directives. Those innovative SbRS are leading a grassroots movement to help our schools effectively teach reading. They have taken charge and are trying to fix a "too-big" problem. Their work is not just important; it's transformative.

*Note: This is a 'readers digest' version of a larger article published in the Spring 2024 edition of the Morning Watch Journal of Educational and Social Policy Analysis also written by Tracy Critch and Jeanne Sinclair. Simply Google Morning Watch and MUN to find the site.*

*Enjoy,*

*Kirk Anderson, Senior Editor of the Morning Watch.*

## References

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## Dates to Remember

### April 2025

- April 15 **Deadline:** Notice of Postponement of DSL or Withdrawal from DSLP
- April 17 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
- April 22-25 Biennial General Meeting
- April 30 **Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
- April 30 **Deadline:** Year-End Resignation from Contract
- April 30 **Deadline:** CONTACT Applications
- April 30 **Deadline:** Developing Successful Schools Applications

### May 2025

- May 7 **Deadline:** Notice by Board of Teacher Layoffs
- May 15 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
- May 28 **Deadline:** Notice of Board of TLA Layoffs

### June 2025

- June 5 Table Officers Meeting
- June 6-7 Provincial Executive Meeting
- June 19 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications



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