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We're proud to share the first issue of *The Bulletin* for the 2025-26 school year. As always, we encourage you to stay connected with your Association through email updates, School Rep Updates, and with our newsletter.



This fall brings some important initiatives: the relaunch of our Invest in Our Kids campaign, and the next installment of Teachers Change Lives, featuring another member who is making a difference every day. Please help us promote these important campaigns by sharing them with your networks

In this issue, you'll meet our new NLTA Executive Director and hear from a member who recently took part in CTF's Teaching Together program.

THE bulletin

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ATTENTION! NEW TEACHERS

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

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



UP FRONT

WITH THE NLTA PRESIDENT



Renowned writer and civil rights activist Maya Angelou once stated that “I can be changed by what happens. But I refuse to be reduced by it.” On September 12, 2025, I was fortunate and strangely honoured as President of our Association to see great strength and resilience from our members as I visited the Conception Bay North region of our beautiful province.

Walking into Carbonear Academy teachers shared vivid descriptions of how areas of their school had been transformed into hospital rooms, living areas for residents and safe havens for animals. Just three weeks later the runnings of a school were quite apparent to me as several of these same teachers helped Kindergarten children tie laces, distributed breakfast to an entire school population, and had them settled into school routines that were unfamiliar to these children just nine days before my visit. In speaking to one teacher, she had lost her home in August and learned that her teaching assignment had changed in the first week of September. She smiled and told me she had the best class in the school. Clearly changed by circumstance, yet not reduced by it. As I departed, my school Principal logistical lens saw remnants of the relief efforts, like gym mats that had not yet been sanitized or needed to be replaced. However, it was my sense of humanity that was deeply moved and reflective of how resilient our province’s teachers need to be in the face of adversity.

The one-day journey continued with the witnessing of more strength and perspective as we visited Persalvic Elementary. First established as one of the initial evacuation sites during the onset of the fires and now the home school base for some of the displaced staff and students, we were welcomed with open arms and gratitude. Cabot Academy Principal, Jackie King, asked administrative questions aimed to protect her staff. I was amazed that her mind was as sharp and intuitive having learned her story through conversation and media coverage.

As a school Principal, Ms. King not only lost her school, but she also lost an important part of her personal story and her home community. Yet she articulated the needs of her teaching staff with compassion, common sense and conviction. The support she was receiving from her fellow Persalvic Administrators Garret McLean and Kelly Loch was obvious. Walking into the staff room that morning, I was left impressed by the strength of their attitude and in the pride that they possessed to be contributing to the loss of Cabot Academy. Each staff member showed appropriate humour and candour as they talked about working together for these children and their teachers. The camaraderie and commitment to support will certainly serve all of them quite well as they unpack their grief and establish new normalcy over the next several months. Further proof of a refusal to allow circumstance to reduce, by our members.

“Fire restoration efforts were apparent as workers were assessing homes.”

Driving through the Kingston to Northern Bay region was extremely moving as we realized the gravity of what had happened. The Red Cross stations were still quite active. Fire restoration efforts were apparent as workers were assessing homes. Communications construction was prevalent as poles were being reinstalled. The path of the fire and the strength of nature was marked by burnt trees and the foundations of houses that served as homes to several of these people. While I always had recognition and respect for what these Newfoundlanders and Labradorians faced, it was this experience that entrenched the long-term commitment that our citizens must offer to their community.

As we arrived in Old Perlican, we were informed by the lady at the local gas station that Tricon Elementary was closing due to a malfunction of their fire alarm. This

was supposed to be the last stop on our trip as it now houses three Cabot Academy teachers and 33 students. My empathy was triggered as I could only imagine the work of their teachers on this day as they supported a group of young students who had been traumatized by the incredible force of fire over the last few weeks. Sadly, we did not have the opportunity to visit the actual school while it was in session. We made the most of our experience and chose to go to Baccalieu Collegiate who had also become the new school community for several impacted students. Once again, the positivity of staff and willingness to support was what made me most proud to be a teacher in this province.

In a very serendipitous moment, I was pleasantly surprised to be greeted on my way out of Baccalieu Collegiate by retired Principal Gerard Murphy. Mr. Murphy had been Principal of Jackson Walsh Memorial High School, which later became the Cabot Academy that was recently lost. He was substituting for the afternoon and talked to me about his feeling that he is serving our profession by making himself available for our supply force during our teacher shortage. But in reference to the loss of Cabot Academy his statement resonated with me, “Sometimes as teachers we just know when to step up.” A fitting conclusion to a moving experience on September 12, 2025, that I will never forget. Meeting a group of educators who are refusing to be reduced by what has happened.

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

CORNER BROOK

Corner Brook Intermediate Bake Sale & Pride Month



Three Grade 8 French Immersion classes who were studying the unit “As-tu faim?” learned about world hunger and famine, learning that these issues are not just in third world countries, but also in their own communities. The resource to this unit encourages students to think about how to take action (Passe à l'action), and that's exactly what they did. Students held a bake sale fundraiser, and donated over \$500 to the school breakfast program. This was not only a fundraiser, but the fact that they were using their French in an authentic project, is exactly what the French Immersion program strives for.

Corner Brook Intermediate also celebrated Pride Month by holding a rainbow day, as well as a flag signing. The hope is that the school will continue to promote a safe and caring environment where everyone is accepted and comfortable!

HUMBER BRANCH

Humber Branch Retirement Dinner

A big congratulations to all our 2024-2025 retirees at Humber Branch. Pictured here at our retirement dinner is Norma Wells-Park and Janice Spencer. Best of luck and warm wishes as you embark on your next chapter.



ST. JOHN'S

Prince of Wales Collegiate Students Participate in Run for Women

A group of Prince of Wales Collegiate students proved hard work pays off this spring by completing the Shoppers Drug Mart Run for Women event. The initiative, led by Physical Education teacher Rebecca Fewer, PASS teacher Amy Fong, Guidance Counsellor Julia Ings, and NL Youth Outreach Worker Martha Bennett, was designed to support youth experiencing challenges. Over several weeks, 15 students trained to take part in the run, with registration sponsored by NL Health Services. On race day, the students showed up at 8 a.m. ready to walk or run the full 5 km. Their participation marked a major achievement. “The sheer joy of watching them succeed in something they’ve worked so hard toward has been inspiring,” said Fewer.



ON LOCATION

ST. JOHN'S

Sharing our Cultures Hosts Open House

President Dale Lambe was pleased to attend a Sharing our Cultures (SOC) Open House event on September 19, 2025, with other supporters of the program. SOC promotes the values of multiculturalism and inter-cultural relations and fosters belonging and acceptance among all school children.



President Lambe joined CEO Lloydetta Quaicoe, along with SOC staff members Fatima Mansaray and Gail Zwicker at the Open House.

ST. JOHN'S

Provincial Executive Summer Planning Session

In August, your Provincial Executive met to set the direction and priorities for the Association for the next two years. During those sessions, Education Minister Bernard Davis provided greetings to Provincial Executive members. Executive members had a brief roundtable discussion with the Minister and highlighted the successes and challenges currently in the education system.



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An Interview with... NLTA's New Executive Director

Ian Crewe was appointed Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association on August 1, 2025. He has been part of the Association's staff since 2016, first as an Administrative Officer with Programs and Services, and later as Assistant Executive Director. Before joining the NLTA, Ian spent more than two decades working in education. He taught Mathematics for 10 years, served as a vice-principal, and worked as a Program Specialist for Mathematics and Technology. He also held the role of Senior Education Officer in Human Resources with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. Ian holds a Bachelor of Science (Mathematics), a Bachelor of Education (Secondary), and a Master of Education in Leadership.

As an introduction to the membership in his new position, Ian answers a series of questions. The traditional Executive Director's Message will return in the next edition of *The Bulletin*.

Q. *Now that you've stepped into the role of Executive Director, what are your priorities moving forward?*

A. I believe that the NLTA has had a rich history of supporting its members and making substantial gains for teachers (and by extension, students) in this province through both collective bargaining and advocacy. As I speak with colleagues across the country, I can honestly say that the NLTA punches above its weight. My main priority is to continue the work that has been done and to make as many gains as possible while providing quality services and protections to the membership with the team here at 3 Kenmount Road and working with our Provincial Executive.

Q. *What is the most important way the NLTA can continue to support educators right now?*

A. Historically, schools and classrooms have always been in a constant state of "change", however, it seems

that the rate of change today is greater than ever before. To support our teachers, I believe that we, working as both a professional association AND union of/for teachers, also must be adaptable and be proactive in our support for teachers. This will require thoughtful and strategic leadership from our Provincial Executive, our branch leaders and from NLTA staff. I hope to provide quality leadership to help all of those folks achieve that goal.

Q. *What do you see as the biggest challenge facing teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador, and what do you see as the biggest opportunity?*

A. I think many of our challenges are reflected in our public awareness campaigns...the increased amount of violence and abuse of teachers, especially the sorts of vitriol we see online, but also the physical violence being experienced in our schools. That mistreatment of our teaching staff and the whole retention/recruitment of people into the education profession are, I believe, issues that Government and all other stakeholders will need to carefully consider in the months/years ahead if we are to have a quality education system for our youth. On the "opportunity side", I do believe that there are ways that the collective "we" can make Newfoundland and Labrador a desirable place to stay/come and work as a teacher. Our diversity in both rural and urban areas are true gems that we need to tap into if we want to make our education system the envy of the rest of the country

Q. *How can the NLTA work with members to make sure teachers' voices are not just heard, but help shape government decisions?*

A. I do believe that the majority of our citizens inherently understand, and believe in, the importance of a high quality education. What I think we "lack" sometimes is a communication (by the public) of that belief to our elected officials. That is challenging

with all of the other competing “priorities” like health, transportation, and others, however, I do think we need to “up our game” on the education side of things, especially when you consider the research that clearly shows the positive impact a quality education can have on other aspects of our society.

Q. *How would you describe your leadership style?*

A. I have had many leaders in my career that have influenced my approach to leadership, but I think the most important thing I have learned is the importance of truly “listening to understand.” The importance of creating and maintaining good relationships with people from all different “sides” cannot be overstated. I always try to approach things/challenges in a calm and thoughtful manner and to predict (as best as one can) the consequences, both intended and unintended, of any/all decisions that I make as an individual and we make as a team.

Q. *What is something about you outside of work that might surprise members, for example an interest, a hobby, or a passion?*

A. While most of my friends and colleagues would know this about me, the thing that most folks would not know about me is my passion for music. Coming from a musical family, I don’t remember a time in my life when music didn’t play a significant role in my life. I love to play/perform, but I also enjoy writing and recording my own music and have gone so far as to have my own (very amateur) recording studio in my rec room.

Q. *If you could invite any three people, living or from history, to join you for dinner, who would you choose and why?*

A. I think the first person I would have there would be my Dad’s brother, Harold Crewe. As long as I can remember, Harold was a “musical genius” to me in that he could make a guitar do whatever he wanted it to do. Beyond that, he was one of the most endearing human beings you could ever hope to meet. His sense of humour, caring and compassion, and his outlook on life in general were a model that I aim to reach every day. My second invitee would be Robin Williams. I am, and have always been, a HUGE Robin Williams fan. From his days as an actor in movies like *Dead Poet’s Society* to *Good Will Hunting* (anyone remember Mork and Mindy?) to his stand-up comedy, I think he would be incredibly entertaining to have at any dinner table, not to mention the fact that I would love to speak with him on an individual level. His life was cut short way too soon. The final person I would have would be my kindergarten teacher, Maud Mauger. Ms. Mauger was the same height as most of her kindergarten students, but her level of care/compassion for her students was at a height of its own. She had a way of making her students feel special – a way that lives with me to this day (50+ years later)!

If you would like to suggest someone in your school community that you think the entire membership should get to know a little more, send your suggestion to jtluk@nlta.ca.

In Memoriam Submission Guidelines

Submissions to In Memoriam should be a **maximum of 250 to 300 words** and may contain a photo of the deceased. In Memoriams should be submitted within a timely manner – normally within the same school year (if possible) of the death of the teacher.

Please submit to: Melanie McDonald, Editorial Assistant/Advertising, *The Bulletin*, mmcdonald@nlta.ca, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John’s, NL, A1B 1W1; Fax: 709-726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582 (toll-free in province).



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Violence in the Workplace

Basic Advice and Guidelines for Teachers

by Miriam Sheppard

Incidents of work-related violence are a significant source of concern for NLTA members. Aggressive and sometimes violent student behaviour is an unfortunate reality that teachers sometimes face in their professional lives.

The Provincial Government (NLSchools) and the Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial have employer policies relating to violence in the workplace. Further, pursuant to section 4 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), all employers in Newfoundland and Labrador must, within reasonably practical limits, provide a work environment that ensures the health and safety of its 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 the proper preventative measures, supports and training are in place to enable teachers to work without unreasonable threat to their own safety. What is necessary to ensure employee safety is case specific and depends on the nature of the situation.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012 (Regulations) specifically address the issue of violence in the workplace as a health and safety concern. Section 22 of the Regulations defines violence as “the attempted or actual exercise 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. Situations like this should be assessed

and addressed on a “case by case” basis, and NLTA Programs and Services staff are available to assist teachers experiencing violence in the workplace. However, the following guidelines can assist in ensuring that cases of violence are appropriately addressed:

- **Get the information you need:** Has the employer or school administration provided you with information about the possibility of encountering someone with a history of violent behaviour from whom you may experience injury? If you may be exposed to risk of violence at work, you are entitled to know the nature of the risk, the precautions that may be taken, and information related to the risk from persons who have a history of violent behaviour and whom you are likely to encounter in the course of your work.
- **Document, Document, Document:** Do you know how to report violent incidents? Promptly report and document all violence related incidents and accidents, regardless of the severity, to the school principal, manager or supervisor. Ensure that there are written records of the event in accordance with Board and school reporting protocols. Communicate to your administration, in writing, your concern for your safety, the safety of other employees, and others (such as students). The NLTA can assist you in drafting appropriate correspondence.
- **Request the risk assessment(s):** Ask your administrator whether a risk assessment pertaining to the risk of violence in the workplace has been completed. If so, ask to see a copy. If not, ask when one will be done. Sometimes an already completed risk assessment needs to be updated, especially where there have been changes or a significant event.
- **Examine the assistance provided:** If a risk assessment concludes that there is a risk of vio-

lence, the employer must implement procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risk to workers from violence, or to minimize the risk in cases where elimination is impossible. This may require assessment of facilities, equipment, human resources, and student programming. 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. Consider: Have safety plans been developed for students whose behaviour poses a risk to your safety? Does following the existing safety plan protect you? Are the proposed measures reasonable and complete, and have they been implemented in a timely fashion? Seek employer support for matters that cannot be resolved at the school level despite administrator involvement; sometimes employer involvement is necessary to obtain required training, supports, resources or programming changes. 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.

- **Reflect on staffing:** Are there enough trained staff to support students to prevent escalations and follow safety plans? Are contingency plans in place in the event of an absence so that roles in safety plans and emergency plans are filled by other trained staff?
- **Consider incident response times:** Have you been provided with the tools and specific plans to summon assistance in various circumstances? Does assistance arrive quickly?
- **Use the Occupational Health and Safety Committee:** If a teacher believes that their workplace is unsafe, and school administration has been advised of these concerns, then a report can be made to the school Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The employer must respond in writing within 30 days following receipt of a recommendation from an OHS Committee.
- **Know your rights:** Ultimately, if you have reasonable grounds to believe that specific work circumstances pose an imminent danger to your health and safety and have brought this to the attention of your principal, you have the right, pursuant to the OHSA and the Regulations, to refuse unsafe work until remedial action has been taken. Advice and assistance from NLTA staff are available whenever an NLTA member has exercised or is considering exercising the right to refuse unsafe work.
- **Consider whether you need police assistance:** Some violence or aggression, including threats, may be considered criminal acts – if there is a question as to whether this is the case, or if you feel your personal safety is at risk, you should contact the police.
- **Would personal protective equipment (PPE) help?:** While not a complete answer to violence, PPE can be part of a solution. Have you been provided with appropriate and adequate PPE to protect you from injury from violence? Is it checked and cleaned regularly? Have you been instructed on its care, use and limitations?

- **Access the appropriate benefits:** In cases of workplace injury, WorkplaceNL benefits (including medical aid) may be appropriate – not sick leave. On application, a top up of WorkplaceNL benefits may be available to teachers who have long term disability coverage through the NLTA Group Insurance Plan, and who are injured at work.
- **Help us, help teachers:** The Association has developed a Violent Incident Tracking Form, which can be accessed under the forms listed on the NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca/forms/). We are asking teachers to use this form to document violent behavior and/or conduct in the workplace. Information provided through the Violent Incident Tracking Form is being used ONLY for internal collective bargaining research and ongoing advocacy, and the identities of teachers who use the form will not be disclosed. A contact to Programs and Services is still required for specific advice and assistance.
- **Call your Association:** Dealing with workplace violence can be complicated and stressful. Teachers and administrators who have questions or require assistance with concerns regarding workplace health and safety, including issues related to violence in the workplace, should contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA. Support is also available through the Employee Assistance Program for many stressful situations, including dealing with workplace violence.

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

Teaching and Learning Assistant Professionals

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

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

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

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NLTA Programs and Services

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Teaching Together in Ghana

by Laun Shoemaker

A CCRA, GHANA – You know, sometimes life hands you an invitation that just feels right, even if it pushes you way outside your comfort zone. For me, that invitation came in the form of a professional learning initiative in Ghana, a journey that proved to be far more than just teaching abroad. It was a deep dive into global partnership, a chance to really teach together, and a surprisingly personal path to professional growth.

The whole adventure kicked off in Ottawa, a familiar stop for many of us, but this time, it was buzzing with a different kind of energy. The Canadian team, and me among them, gathered for an orientation that felt less like a lecture and more like a warm-up for a big game. They tossed around questions about past team hiccups, the kind of stuff that usually gets swept under the rug, but here, it was all out in the open, helping everyone prepare. "The orientation was pretty cool," I noted in my journal. We had questions to discuss that apparently emerged from situations that the organization had already experienced...difficulties that teams encountered. That was cool to consider, and it set the stage for an honest, collaborative vibe.

The Ottawa orientation included boat tours on the Rideau and great Indian food, the kind of easy social stuff that helps strangers become teammates. It also got me thinking about the personal side of things – family back home, projects lining up for school – a reminder of the solid foundation I was leaving, even as I embarked on something so new. I even brought my dad's well-worn carry-on, a quiet nod to a personal connection making the trip with me.

Crucially, the Ottawa prep wasn't just about Ghana; it was about the culture shock that hits you not just when you're away, but also when you come back home. That bit of foresight really hit home, highlighting how these experiences ripple through your whole life, not just the time you're "on duty."

Bridging Classrooms, Building Connections

Landing in Ghana was, as you can imagine, a whole

different ballgame. Meetings with the Director of GNAT (Ghana National Association of Teachers) and folks from the Ministry of Education quickly showed me a world where formality and respect are the unspoken rules. It was a sharp contrast to a more plain-speaking manner that I was used to, but fascinating to observe.

The real heart of the trip, though, was the Teaching Together. Paired with my Ghanaian colleagues, Isa and Helena, I plunged into professional development sessions for over 600 teachers from 4 different regions. It wasn't about me "showing" them how it's done. This was about genuine collaboration, learning from each other's strengths. While our Canadian approach often leans into discovery and tech, the Ghanaian style, with its "Are you with me?" and "Yes? You're hearing me?" was about direct engagement, making sure every single person was right there with you.

"I was assisting yesterday and will be teaching today," I penned in my journal on July 15. The observation was good as there is a lot of unwritten material that Doc and Helena were teaching. They are masters of direct teaching... which kept students engaged and on the same page. This wasn't just an observation; it was a realization about different paths to the same goal: student success. I saw how technology, or the lack of it, shaped things. Many Ghanaian teachers were working on Excel-type spreadsheets with cell phones rather than laptops, pushing me to rethink how to make tech training truly applicable. My efforts to introduce using mobile phones for inclusion, for instance, were a small but meaningful step in adapting to the local reality.

Sure, there were moments of cultural awkwardness – like when I might have offered a bit too much feedback, learning that sometimes, in a different culture, silence is the wisest response. But these bumps were just part of the ride. The overriding feeling was one of mutual respect. Success wasn't about imposing a Western model but about finding shared ground and building solutions together.



The Unseen Curriculum: Personal Growth and Shattered Stereotypes

Beyond the classroom, this trip became a powerful course in personal professional learning. Being immersed in Ghana wasn't just about seeing new sights; it was about having my preconceptions challenged, gently but firmly. Early on, I reflected on listening to the book "Africa Is Not a Country" and how it has definitely shown me the impact of Western media's poverty images on my psyche...because those images have not been something I have seen. This honest admission is a great example of how travel can truly open your eyes, dispelling media-driven myths and revealing a vibrant, complex reality.

Visits to places like the National Museum and the Presidential Park, rich with history, provided a deeper understanding of Ghana's journey. And then there was Osu Castle, a former slave fort – a sobering, powerful experience that laid bare a painful past but also highlighted Ghana's incredible resilience and forward-looking spirit.

But it was often the everyday moments that truly resonated: the warm greetings, especially from the many that chorused "Shoemaker" when they saw me. In Ghana, Shoemakers are low status uneducated labourers, so the juxtaposition of a teacher named Shoemaker was something Ghanaians found unbelievable and hilarious. Seeing women effortlessly carry incredible loads was a quiet testament to their strength and grace. These simple interactions were constant reminders of privilege and the sheer gratitude I feel for my own life. Being reminded how great I have it – my wellness and my wife – was a common thread throughout my reflections.

Visiting local schools was another eye-opener. Large classes, limited resources, but an undeniable spirit of learning were contained within. I'm glad I met teacher groups first to do PL; they were bright, studious and enthusiastic, but their classrooms were just benches and walls. If I'd seen their classrooms first, I might have been less open. That reflection underscored a fundamental truth: human connection and a hunger for knowledge matter more than the latest tech.

The Lasting Echoes of a Global Experience

As the program wound down, the impact was clear. The professional learning sessions were a hit, especially the tech parts, and the bonds formed were strong. Casual chats, shared meals, and even attempts at line dancing "Cadillac Ranch" became a surprise hit at Canada Night. These all built a deep sense of camaraderie. This wasn't just work; it was about genuine human connection, the kind that makes partnerships truly last.

The journey to Ghana was more than a professional development trip; it was a deeply personal and transformative experience. It underscored the immense value of global partnerships in education, where teaching together becomes a catalyst for profound personal professional learning. By stepping into another's shoes, by listening and adapting, and by simply showing up with an open heart, I not only shared knowledge but also built bridges of understanding that will undoubtedly shape my teaching, and my life, for years to come.

Laun Shoemaker is a Teacher-Librarian/Core French teacher at St. Matthew's Elementary in St. John's. He holds a B.Ed., a B.A., and a Master of Education in French Literature and Culture. Shoemaker is an active volunteer with FSL and EAL associations within and beyond the province. He lives in St. John's, NL with his wife, Caroline; daughter, Sophie; and three poodles, Bella, Harlow, and Emma.





Learning by Doing (and Sometimes by Cooking): One Pre-Service Teacher's Crash Course in Experiential Education

by Zachary Gray

My name is Zachary Gray. I'm a 39-year-old Visual Art and Social Studies pre-service teacher finishing my B.Ed. at Memorial University this August – a rather late-in-life career change, I'm aware, but one I needed after fifteen years as a freelance multimedia/web developer and film/television composer. From January to April 2025, I completed my teaching internship at O'Donel High School in Mount Pearl, where I was fortunate to be paired with Social Studies teacher Mike Torriville – one half of my mentor team who guided me through the Social Studies portion of the internship.

Mike runs on Bruins hockey, Newfoundland pride, and the belief that “giving back” is more than just a warm, fuzzy feeling, it's a duty. He's a master at his craft who could teach the art of cod-drying to a rock and make it care – no joke. So, when he pitched the idea of organizing a military appreciation dinner for Canadian veterans, I nodded and said, “Sure, sounds great.” What I should've said was, “What am I getting into?”

The Dash Before the Dinner

Planning a dinner for nearly 200 people sounds romantic until you realize it means begging teenagers to fold tablecloths properly and not wander off mid-shift to check Snapchat. But Mike and I made it happen. We coordinated with Legion staff and the ever-capable Ladies Auxiliary to organize our team: 22 students during the day, and 40 more for the evening event. The support from students was inspiring – they were excited to be involved, many having personal or family connections to the military and seeing it as an opportunity to give back to those who have given us so much.

The daytime crew set up the room – tables, chairs, tablecloths – and even helped in the kitchen. The Ladies Auxiliary, a force of nature, prepped a full-course meal: stuffed chicken breasts, mashed potatoes, vegetables, and a sweet dessert to finish. Evening students took over front-of-house duties: ticket collection, seating, serving, and cleanup. They didn't complain. Under the direction of

Ms. Susan Alexander, the music students of O'Donel provided the evening's entertainment, lending a soundtrack to what became something more than just dinner.

Amid the mild logistical chaos, something meaningful took root. The veterans didn't just eat; they talked, and the students listened. There's a certain gravity in the room when an 80-year-old veteran explains what “fear” really feels like. It beats anything I've seen in a textbook.

Why Experiential Learning Matters

I champion experiential learning for this exact reason. These moments do what handouts and lectures can't: they humanize history. When you see a teenager pause, mid-sentence, to really hear a veteran describe losing a friend on the battlefield, you realize education isn't about content; it's about connection.

Today's students face a widening gap in historical awareness: in 2019 CBC reported on a survey found that one in five Canadian youths was unsure what the Holocaust even was, and 49 percent of Canadian respondents couldn't name a single concentration camp. When learning about the past is reduced to memorizing dates or events for a test, only to be forgotten days later, it becomes a hollow exercise. The past is far from hollow – it's dense with meaning, sacrifice, resilience, and lessons we can't afford to overlook. To treat it as mere trivia is to miss the point entirely. This is precisely how the lessons of the past slip away – and why history has a way of repeating itself.

If we want young people to understand the past, we must put them in rooms with those who lived it, literally. Of course this isn't always possible, but when it is, it has the power to forge deep connections. We lose firsthand witnesses every year: World War I veterans are gone; World War II veterans are fading into statistics. Demographic math is not hypothetical; it's urgent. Every lost voice is a living link to history severed.



My Grandfather, the Tank Mechanic-Turned-Inventor

There's a reason I reference the Second World War. This experience wasn't just a professional milestone – it was deeply personal. My grandfather, Frank Gray, was born in Toronto in 1915. He left school after Grade 8 to work, eventually serving in World War II as a tank driver and mechanic. When he came home, he did what people of his generation did: he worked, raised a family, and spent decades inventing strange and wonderful things (including the pooper-scooper – you're welcome dog owners).

I recently came into possession of his six-year war medal, and I've been thinking about what his life might've looked like if he'd had access to experiential education – project-based learning, maker spaces, collaborative tech hubs – instead of just a wrench, a manual, and a mind that wouldn't quit. What innovations might he have pursued? What confidence might he have gained? His story reminds me that experiential learning doesn't just teach content; it unlocks potential.

From Chicken Dinners to Critical Thinking

That dinner at the Legion didn't change the world, but it provided new perspectives – and that's a start. It reminded me that experiential learning isn't a buzzword; it's the bridge between theory and humanity. Between history as something you study and history as something you feel.

There's no digital substitute for the weight of war captured in a veteran's eyes as they recall waiting in a trench or crossing foreign terrain on foot. You can't simulate the way a student's posture shifts when they realize they're in the presence of someone who lived through a world war. We need more of that. We need to make space for students to experience history, science, art, and politics in the world – not just in the classroom. When students connect what they learn in the classroom with real-world experiences, it sticks with them.

That's what life has taught me – experience shapes us. My winding path through the creative industries led me to teaching not in spite of the detours, but because of them. Like my grandfather, whose time as a World War II tank mechanic sparked a lifelong drive to invent, I found that hands-on experience unlocks purpose. He turned wrenches into ideas; I turned years of building and creating into a passion for meaningful, human-centered learning. Experiences like the military appreciation dinner don't just teach history – they help students see what's possible. When students engage with real people and real stories, they're not just learning – they're becoming.

So, let's keep sending curious minds into the world. Let them meet the veterans. Let them fold the tablecloths (badly, then better). Let them learn what it means to serve – not just food, but each other.



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EAP Coordinator
Leslie Brown

Prioritizing Your Well-being: The Heart of a Successful School Year

by Leslie Brown

You pour your heart and soul into helping students learn, grow, and succeed. But in the chaos of lesson planning, grading, and attending meetings, it's easy to forget about yourself.

The fresh start of a new school year is an ideal time to reflect on the balance between your passion for teaching and your own well-being. Think of it like putting your own mask on before helping others. It's not just practical; it is essential for long-term success and happiness.

Self-care: Small steps, big impact

Self-care isn't the same for everyone, and that's ok. It might mean taking a walk at lunchtime, reading a book, or playing board games with friends. It's important to remember that it doesn't need to be large or time-consuming. Self-care has been shown to improve mental health, enhance self-esteem, and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

- **Mindful breathing:** Deep breathing can calm your nervous system. There are apps or online tools that offer free guided breathing exercises to make it easy.
- **Stretching or movement:** A stretch between classes or a 10-minute walk during lunch, when possible. Small things can have big impacts on your energy and mood.
- **Make time for yourself:** Even if it's just five minutes, take that time for yourself. Whether you read, journal, or just sit quietly, a small act can make a big difference.

Reflection:

1. What self-care practices can you integrate into your daily routine, even if only for five minutes?
2. How often do you take a break? When you do, how does it impact your mood and productivity?

Build a support system: You don't have to do it alone

Research consistently shows that strong social connections are as vital to our health as proper nutrition and regular exercise. Having a strong network

can often make you feel less stressed and more content at work.

- **Buddy-up:** Find colleagues you connect with and share resources, lesson plans, or even a self-care activity.
- **Mentorship:** Mentorship (as a mentee or mentor) can bring many formal and informal benefits for those involved.
- **Find your tribe:** A lunch group, a weekly Zoom chat, or an online space to share advice. Find your people and stay connected.

Reflection:

1. Who can you reach out to for support with your professional journey?
2. How can you nurture meaningful connections with colleagues this year?

Setting realistic expectations:

Perfection isn't the goal

There will always be something on your plate. We often feel the pressure to be "perfect," but in truth, no one is. Striving for perfection can lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout. What really matters is progress, not perfection.

- **Celebrate the wins:** even the small ones. It could be a successful lesson or a breakthrough moment with a student; take time to celebrate the little victories. These moments matter.
- **Break it down:** When tasks seem overwhelming, break them into smaller, manageable steps. Prioritize based on urgency and importance.

Reflection:

1. In what areas are you striving for perfection? Does this impact your well-being?
2. How can you celebrate small successes that contribute to your growth and the success of your students?

Finding Work-Life Integration: Work, life, and everything in between

Balance can be tricky. Finding it is vital to burnout prevention. Achieving work-life integration

between your professional and personal life is key to your well-being and can help with long-term job satisfaction.

- **Set Boundaries:** It's okay to say "no." Read that last sentence again. Protecting your time and space is crucial for your mental health.
- **Unplug:** It's easy to forget (or maybe ignore?) how technology impacts you. Find a relationship with technology that adds value to your life, and if it's necessary, create habits to disconnect and recharge.
- **Hobbies and socializing:** Some of us hate to miss out. Others live life with JOMO (joy of missing out). Find what works for you. Perhaps it's playing an instrument, hiking, or enjoying dinner with friends. Make time for activities that bring joy and fill up your cup.

Reflection:

1. Where are you currently feeling off-balance?
2. What is one boundary you could establish right now to protect your time and energy?
3. What activities outside of work fill your cup? How can you incorporate them more into your life?

Nourishing your body: You can't teach on empty

The food you eat directly impacts you, and more and more we are realizing not only a psychological connection but a biochemical and physical connection between what we eat, the way it makes us feel, and our mental health.

- **Hydrate:** Drink water throughout the day. Dehydration can cause fatigue, headaches, and mood swings.
- **Healthy snacks:** Keep healthy snacks nearby to boost energy when you need it. Avoid sugary snacks or excessive caffeine (sorry) that lead to crashes later.
- **Balanced meals:** Look for meals that combine protein, healthy fats, and complex carbs to keep your energy levels steady.

Reflection:

1. How does your diet affect your energy levels and ability to focus?
2. What small changes can you make to nourish your body for better performance at work and home?

Need nutrition advice? **Dial-a-Dietitian** is a free service that connects you with local dietitians who can help answer questions and provide practical guidance. You can access this service by calling 811.

Mindfulness: A few minutes can make a big difference

Mindfulness techniques can help you stay calm, focused, and present—both for your students and yourself.

- **Start your day with intention:** Begin your morning reflecting on what you're grateful for and set a positive intention for the day.
- **Mindful pauses:** When you're feeling overwhelmed, take 30 seconds to close your eyes and breathe deeply. This simple act can help you reset and regain your focus.

- **Guided meditations:** Apps like Headspace, Calm, or YouTube offer short, guided meditation sessions that can fit easily into your busy day.

Reflection:

1. How can you realistically incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine?
2. What is one mindful practice you can begin now to set a positive tone for the day?

Reach out for help: You are never alone

Life can come with many challenges. It's important to acknowledge when you need support and know that seeking support is not a sign of weakness. In fact, it's a sign of strength and self-awareness. Just as you support your students, it's crucial to support yourself by reaching out for help when needed.

- **Crisis support:** If you're in immediate need of support or feel you are in crisis, contact 811. This service is available anywhere in the province 24/7 for urgent needs, including mental health or emotional crises.
- **Local Doorways walk-in counselling:** Doorways is a provincial network of same-day/same-week, no-cost mental health counselling for individuals experiencing mental health issues. To find a Doorways near you, visit www.bridgethegapp.ca or call 811, and a Healthline nurse will provide you with information for your area.
- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** EAP for Teachers is here for you. We help connect you with confidential counselling and support services for personal or professional challenges. You can learn more about EAP by visiting www.nlta.nl.ca.

Reflection:

1. How comfortable are you with asking for help? What steps can you take to make it easier when you need support?

As we head into this school year, remember that your well-being is crucial to your students' success. Prioritizing self-care, building a strong support system, setting realistic expectations, and finding balance will not only help you thrive as a teacher but also set a powerful example for your students about the importance of mental and physical health.

Here's to a healthy, happy, and successful school year!

Leslie Brown is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Lori Hewitt (733-3242), lhewitt@eapnlteachers.ca, Kathy Taylor-Rogers (733-3265), ktrogers@eapnlteachers.ca or Leslie Brown (733-3269), lbrown@eapnlteachers.ca

References:

Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada (www.fhpc.ca/en/)
 Health & Wellness Canada (www.healthcouncilcanada.ca)
 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (www.camh.ca)

NLTA STUFF THE BUS FOR CBN A HUGE SUCCESS

On August 20, 2025, the NLTA held its Stuff the Bus for CBN event, and the response was overwhelming. Thanks to the generosity of NLTA members and the public, four school buses were filled with supplies, along with significant monetary contributions. That generosity continued on September 11 when, on behalf of members, NLTA President Dale Lambe presented a \$15,000 cheque to the Red Cross. With matching donations from both the Provincial and Federal governments, the donation was tripled, ensuring even greater help to those in need.



Ceremony of Induction into the Teaching Profession: Thoughts from a Faculty of Education Graduate

by Mia Winsor

The following speech was delivered by Mia Winsor at the MUN Induction Ceremony into the Teaching Profession on May 30, 2025.

Good morning everyone and thank you all for being here today. It is truly an honor to stand before you representing graduating students and future teachers. I'd like to begin by expressing my appreciation to all the special guests who have joined us to celebrate this momentous occasion. To our families and friends, your unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in us has played an essential role in guiding us to this point. We truly couldn't have made it here without you. A special thank you to the Faculty of Education for your mentorship, guidance, and the valuable lessons you've shared with us throughout our journey. Your contributions have shaped us in ways we'll carry with us throughout our careers. Your presence here today makes this celebration even more meaningful. Thank you NLTA members and all those who have been part of our path. We are incredibly grateful to have you with us as we take this next step into our careers as educators.

Today is not only a celebration of the degree we've earned, but also of the journey we've all taken to get here. One filled with late nights, early mornings, challenges, growth, and countless moments of achievement along the way. Each of us has walked a unique path, and though it hasn't always been easy, we've come together as a community of future educators and formed friendships that will last a lifetime. As I look at my peers and fellow graduates, I feel a deep sense of excitement for what lies ahead. We've spent years learning, growing,

and shaping who we want to be as teachers. Now, as we step into this next chapter, we're ready to walk into classrooms where we can truly make a difference, shaping the lives of our students: one student, one lesson, and one connection at a time.

Throughout my time in the Education Faculty, I feel as though I've finally found where I'm meant to be. This program hasn't just prepared me to become a teacher, but has also helped me with self discovery. Growing up, I was a quiet student. The kid who stayed in the background, unsure of when or how to speak up, but throughout this journey, something shifted. I slowly started to come out of my shell, as I was surrounded by classmates and mentors who made me feel seen and supported. I've gained confidence, built strong friendships, and discovered a true sense of belonging.

Teaching has always been in my heart. Even as a child, I knew this was what I wanted to do and I'm so thankful to my parents who always encouraged that dream. Growing up with two parents who were educators, I got to see firsthand just how much heart and effort went into the job. Whether it was staying later after school or going the extra mile for their students, they always gave it their all. So much of what they did went unseen: countless hours behind the scenes, always doing what needed to be done to support and encourage their students. They've been such strong role models for me. I've always looked up to them, and I hope I can be as impactful, empathetic and well-respected as they are. The Education Program has confirmed that I'm exactly where I need to be. I've found my place, my purpose, my community.

Now, I'm excited to take everything I've learned and pour it into the kind of classroom where every student feels that same sense of belonging.



One of the most important lessons we've learned through our Education Program is the value of inclusion and belonging. Throughout my journey, I've been fortunate to be part of a community where every individual's voice is valued, and every student's unique perspective is celebrated. This has been a powerful reminder of how essential it is for students to feel that they belong in their learning spaces. My mentor teachers really emphasized the importance of creating a classroom environment where every student feels seen, heard, and respected. For many students, the classroom might be the only place where they truly feel safe. We don't always know what is going on in their lives outside of the school environment, and often, when a student acts out, there's a reason behind it. It's our job to meet those moments with patience, empathy, and encouragement. As I move forward into my own classroom, I hope to create an atmosphere where each student feels safe, supported, and confident in being themselves.

Throughout this program, teamwork and communication have been key to our experience and has influenced the way we approach teaching. Many of our projects have been group-based, and through those,

cont'd pg. 18

OUR POTENTIAL OUR PURPOSE

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we've gained a firsthand understanding of what it's really like to collaborate with others. As future educators, we'll be doing this every day, working alongside our colleagues, administration, and support staff. We've learned how to brainstorm ideas, offer support, and come together to achieve a common goal, and these skills will be just as essential in our classrooms. Teaching isn't just about standing in front of a classroom; it's about building connections, fostering teamwork, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued, heard, and supported. It's about working together to inspire, challenge, and encourage growth. As we move forward into our careers, we'll continue to learn from each other, collaborate, and keep striving to create classrooms where every student has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

One concept that really stuck with me is "the power of yet." It's the idea that we might not have all the answers right now or might not be able to do something "yet" but with time, effort, and perseverance, we will eventually get there. This mindset is just as important for us as future educators as it is for our students. It encourages us to embrace challenges, knowing that growth takes time. It's a reminder that both teachers and students are constantly learning, and even when something feels difficult, it doesn't mean it's impossible. By embracing this mindset, we can create a space where we, and our students, feel empowered as we grow and develop together.

As we move forward into this new chapter, I want to remind all of us that this is just the beginning. The journey we've started as educators will continue to evolve with each day, each lesson, and each student we encounter. Let's carry with us the lessons we've learned and bring them into our classrooms. Together, we are ready to make a difference, inspire change, and help students grow not just academically, but as individuals. I'm so proud to be standing here with all of you, and I'm excited for what the future holds for each and every one of us. Today marks the start of a new adventure for all of us. With our unique talents and shared passion for teaching, I know we'll make a real difference. Congratulations, fellow graduates, our journey is just beginning!

Stephanie Pennell Named as 2025 GSDSIC Rainbow Prism Award Winner

Stephanie Pennell has been selected as this year's winner of the Rainbow Prism Award for excellence in 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion. The NLTA's Gender and Sexual Diversity Special Interest Council created the award to recognize K-12 educators in Newfoundland and Labrador who are making 2SLGBTQIA+ equity a priority in their workplace. The award celebrates those who create space for 2SLGBTQIA+ adults and children in their classroom, in the curriculum, and in our school communities. Congratulations to Stephanie!



SAC Award Winners

On May 28, 2025, the School Administrators Council held a virtual event, and the following award winners were celebrated:

- **Mark Ash**, Carbonear Collegiate, Student Leadership Award (*Presented by Principal, Rodney Hodder*)
- **Stephanie Burt**, Distinguished Assistant Principal of the Year (*Nomination led by Principal, Noreen Stewart*)
- **Neil Kearley**, Distinguished Principal of the Year (*Nomination led by Assistant Principal, David Crane*)



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PROJET

- M** Motivating
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- E** Equity
Équité
- D** Diversity
Diversité
- I** Inclusion
Inclusion
- A** Anti-racism
Antiracisme

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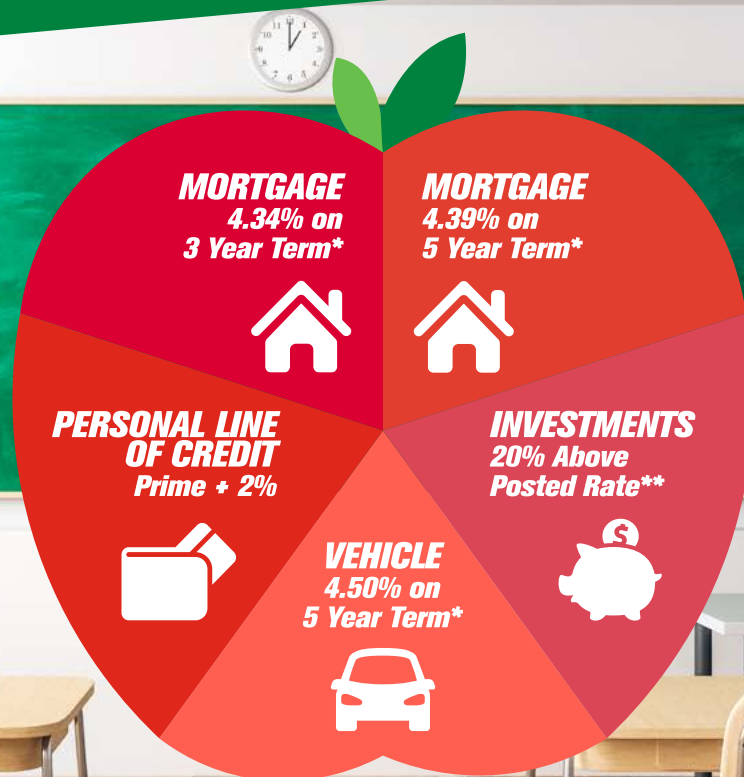
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