

## Lessons from Highway 10

Since coming to work at the NBTA, a reality of my workday is that I spend more time than I might like in my car, driving the lonely road between my home in Chipman and our NBTF Building in Fredericton. (Or wherever else in the province my work may take me.) Most days I don't mind the drive – I like to think it gives me good “think” time. After two years, it has become part of my daily ritual, like brushing my teeth, washing my face or taking my medication.

Scarily, my commute has become so routine that there are some days I am horrified to realize that I have driven most of the way to town and can remember very little about the trip. Other days, the trip is very memorable due to terrible road conditions or a near miss with that Bull Moose that continues to challenge me for ownership of the road. More often than not, however, my drive is a gift of quiet reflection time allowing me to pay homage to that beautiful sunset or catch up with the world via the CBC.



There are many days when the drive seems too quick and I long for just a few more minutes of quiet in my car before having to enter the busyness of our office and the other realities of my day.

***“...it is important that the teacher be present-minded and make intentional and consciously skilled decisions...”***

As I consider teaching in relation to my commute over Highway 10, it strikes me that there may be some similarities. In her book, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, Charlotte Danielson refers to “Four Steps to Teaching Expertise”. These four steps range from “unconsciously unskilled” to “consciously unskilled” to “consciously skilled” and finally “unconsciously skilled”. Danielson suggests that teachers, who are in the first category, “unconsciously unskilled”, may not even know or recognize the complexities of teaching. “They may not even know what they don’t know.” She suggests that this stage creates as many potential traps for the teacher as the “unconsciously skilled” stage. Teachers reach this step when they



become so competent, they may not even question why they are making certain instructional decisions; they simply go on auto-pilot or cruise control, making decisions based on past experience rather than the context of their changing classroom.

Like a driver on the highway, it is important that the teacher be present-minded and make intentional and consciously skilled decisions that are based on the changing environment of their classroom and in the best interest of all students. Indeed, it is easy to underestimate the enormity of this task.

Like the consciously skilled teacher, I have come to the realization that each day my commute, although the same route, is never quite the same experience. Each journey is unique and is dependent on factors too numerous and complex to count.

*Adith*

### Website of the Month

[www.schooltube.com](http://www.schooltube.com)

SchoolTube.com is a website dedicated to student video and media sharing for entertainment and classroom use.



## May I Recommend?

The January 2009 issue of *Educational Leadership* is entitled *Data: Now What?* and contains one of my favourite articles, "The New Stupid" by Frederick M. Hess, (pg 12-17). "Educators have made great strides in using data. But danger lies ahead for those who misunderstand what data can and can't do." Hess suggests that there are three key elements or trends emerging that may contribute to this "new stupid". Firstly, using data in half-baked, poorly thought-out ways. Secondly, translating research simplistically. And thirdly, giving short shrift to management data and allowing the system to be driven by standardized achievement data as opposed to a well-rounded data set.

Also worth checking out is Dale Willow's article in the December issue of *Education Canada* entitled, "Implementing a Balanced and Flexible Literacy Diet". Willow presents an overview of the principles of an effective literacy education by comparing the literacy components to "food groups" in Canada's Food Guide. (Definitely a must read for teachers K-6.)

"20 Minutes to Change a Life" by Ben Levin in the January issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* reminds us of the important role we as educators can play in the lives of our

students.

"As little as 20 - 30 minutes of supportive adult attention can often move a student from the wrong path to the right one...Study after study has pointed to the importance of personal connections in giving students, especially those facing real challenges, the desire to persist."



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### Closing Quote:

*"We are assessing the children's literacy skills, so there will be no reading this week"*

– note on the door of a London classroom