

The Countdown is ON...I can smell SUMMER!

My nephew, Dylan, reported to me last night that there are exactly 11 school days left before summer vacation. (The countdown is officially on for his classmates and him.) Upon his pronouncement, I had to smile. In his childhood innocence, his grade one year feels like it has lasted an eternity. It struck me that at the same time Dylan's grade one class begins the countdown, many of us may be asking ourselves where this year has gone? A blur of faces, events, work, successes, near-successes and celebrations have filled the past ten months at a whirlwind pace.

Isn't June a joyful month to be in education? Oh, sure, it is plagued with too many things on the to-do list, students who think that summer vacation has already started, and challenges that occasionally reach the boil-over point, but essentially June offers teachers something which is quite unique...a finish. The opportunity to tidy the files and complete the endless lists, say our good-byes and look back on another successful year is, in my opinion, one of the most satisfying experiences we have as teachers. This "closure" is really special...and the period of rest and renewal that follows is vital to our profession.

Because I know that in June you are often too tired to read, I have listed just a few thoughts that might catch your weary eye and give you something to ponder. However, once you are rested (and you will be rested!), you may want me to send you one of the articles listed below or more information on certification upgrading options or another PD opportunity!

Certification Web Tool – we are pleased to have a section of our web site devoted to assisting those of you who are interested in upgrading your

certification. Simply go to www.nbta.ca, click on **Services**, then **Teacher Certification**. Check it out!

DSS – (July 20-23) Developing Successful Schools is a wonderful summer learning opportunity for Administrators.

CONTACT – (August 4-7) Conference on New Teaching and Classroom Techniques is being hosted by PEITF this year at UPEI in Charlottetown. This is a wonderful conference organized by K-12 Atlantic Teachers for K-12 Atlantic Teachers. (See ad on page 26)



May I Recommend?

If you are a teacher responsible for teaching numeracy and are looking for more ideas on how to effectively incorporate and evaluate writing within a math lesson, **Using Writing to Improve Math Learning** by Vicki Urquart, in *Middle Ground* (April 2009), pg. 17-18 is a must read! The author is kind enough to share some of the writing prompts that she uses in her own classroom as well as a time-saving, three-point rubric and procedure that her class uses to assess their own learning on particular outcomes.

It was wonderful to open the pages of the latest issue of *Education Canada* and find a submission co-authored by the Dean of UNB's Faculty of Education, Dr. Sharon Rich and UNB President, Dr. John McLaughlin. In **Social Imperatives for Better Education: Putting Wisdom on the Agenda**, the pair explore the "new Canadian reality" where they suggest our society is faced with the need to move beyond merely attending to the interests and experiences of middle class, Canadian-born, main-stream

children and meet the challenges of today's classrooms where children of minority, poor and aboriginal population clearly outnumber the aforementioned and privileged group. The duo contend that a new vision for education is required in order to meet this challenge head-on: "we need to reflect on our core cultural values so that we can create a new story – one that recognizes that human beings need to nurture mind, body and spirit. (...) As we develop the wisdom and capitalize on the wisdom of our community,

we may be able to rewrite who we are and help our children and grandchildren understand that what matters most is not an accumulation of material wealth, but learning to live a good life, that respects everyone as a valued member of a sustainable and global environment. Education is a social imperative; we cannot afford to fail.”

(Dr. Sharon Rich and Dr. John McLaughlin, *Education Canada* (Spring 2009) Volume 49, No. 2, pg. 40-43)

It was also interesting to read a national view on our province’s French Second Language changes that have occurred in our Anglophone system over the past year.

A Collision of Culture, Values, and Education Policy: Scrapping Early French Immersion in New Brunswick by Max Cooke, *Education Canada* (Spring 2009) Volume 49, No. 2, pg. 46-50, provides such a view.

As teachers, we are well aware

that issues faced within our communities and society in general, often turn up in microcosm in our classrooms. It should come as no surprise to teachers then, when the realities of difficult economic times, start to have impact on our students, their families and our colleagues.

These Tough Economic Times by J. Desrochers, K. Cowan, and R. Christner, *Principal Leadership*, April 2009, pg. 10-14 offers several proactive short-term and long-term strategies that individual teachers and schools can implement to minimize the impacts of these difficult times and help teach resiliency to our children.

“Principals who are determined to help their teachers inspire all students to bold accomplishments while identifying the right strategies for their most complex and struggling learners need to have a relentless focus on making learning the core business of school. This isn’t the same as emphasizing assessment data, standards, and

instruction. Rather, it means focusing on the foundation upon which all those initiatives rest: an understanding of how people learn.”

The Science of Learning by Mary-Dean Barringer, *Principal Leadership*, April 2009, pg. 36-40

Schools of Conscience by Charles Haynes, *Educational Leadership*, May 2009, pg. 6-13 is my personal favourite article this month. Although clearly written from an American context, (further highlighted by the choice of graphics), Mr. Haynes had me when he wrote: “Developing students’ hearts, I believe, is what educators are called to do. Each and every small act of honesty, service, responsibility, and compassion that teachers and administrators encourage daily in their students – and model consistently in their own lives – helps create moral and civic habits of the heart that instill in students the courage to care.”

Have a restful and relaxing summer!



P.S. By all accounts, our Combined Council Day on May 1st was a success. (See insert that was published with this issue for some of the wonderful pictures!) Thanks goes to the teachers who served on our ad hoc Committee for the many hours spent planning the events! (Carter Assels, Connie Keating, John Irvine, Donna Losier, Martin Daigle, Bill Burroughs, Cathy Keirstead, Jessica Fenton, Nick Mattatall)



Closing Quote:

“What is important is to keep learning, to enjoy challenge, and to tolerate ambiguity. In the end there are no certain answers.”

- Martina Horner