

*“We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.”
- Aristotle*

“How We Spend our Days...”

by Ardith Shirley, NBTA Staff Officer - Professional Development

As I sit down to type away at this last “Growing, Living and Learning” submission for the 2009-2010 school year, I am reminded of the words of Annie Dillard, “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives”. As with most quotes worth repeating, the beauty of this one lies in its depth and breadth disguised by simplicity.

One of the ways that NBTA Staff Officers tend to spend some of their days, (well actually evenings), in May and June is attending local branch retiring teacher celebrations. It was at

one such function earlier this week that I was once again awe struck with the reminder of the depth and breadth of impact that one person can have while simply “spending their days” teaching in the public school system. I won’t get into too many specific details on what it was about this retiring teacher’s story that touched me so, but suffice it to say that the obvious impact this educator had on their students, colleagues and community is one to which we all would hope to aspire. Even more poignant is the fact that all of this greatness was disguised

in the most humble and modest of packages that came up at the close of a successful 35-year career and accepted the accolades and gifts with a simple, “Thanks! I enjoyed every minute of every day that I had the privilege to teach our children.”

As you reflect upon this past school year, I trust you too will find that your days have been well spent.



May I Recommend?

Books:

Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy by Michael Fullan . At just under 80 pages this little book wastes no time getting to the essence of system improvement. Chalk full of common sense reminders such as - “Beware of fat plans” or “Behaviour before beliefs” - a good investment to help maintain focus while trying to effect lasting change.

The Café Book: Engaging All Students in Daily Literacy Assessment and Instruction by Gail Boushey & Joan Moser (The Sisters). This book, (a follow up to the popular *The Daily Five*), was first introduced to me by the members of Elementary Council as they began to plan for Council Day almost two years ago. While most Elementary teachers may find this recommendation old news, I am recommending it as a summer must read for teachers of literacy K-12.

May I Recommend?

Articles:

A refreshing reminder from a recently retired teacher about the many advancements that have been achieved in learning and working conditions over the past 30 years, "The Good Old Days are Now!" by Larry Bricker (Middle Ground, April 2010, pg. 21-24), is an optimistic reflection on a career in what he terms a "sacred calling" as a teaching administrator.

"Excellent Teachers Leading the Way: How to Cultivate Teacher Leadership" by Holly J. Thornton (Middle School Journal, March 2010, pg. 36-43). This article highlights the importance of fostering leadership among all teachers as well as reminding us of the barriers and actions that help support leadership for all.

"From Ringmaster to Conductor: 10 Simple Techniques Can Turn an Unruly Class Into a Productive One" by Matthew A. Kraft (Phi Delta Kappan, April 2010, pg. 44-47). A comprehensive and solid article that helps define the multiple contributing factors of positive discipline and classroom management.

Continuing on my "Assessment for Learning" theme, there are two articles that I recommend to you this month: "Eight Steps to Meaningful Grading" by H. Deddeh, E. Main & S. Ratzlaff-Fulkerson (Phi Delta Kappan, April 2010, pg. 53-58) and "Grade: When, Why, What Impact and How?" by Ken O'Connor (Education Canada, Spring 2010, pg. 38-41) are both worthwhile as you begin to plan for next year.

Wishing you a summer full of grandeur!



Closing Quote:

"I have always believed that small or unnoticed gestures – random acts of kindness – such as tending a garden, lighting a fire, carrying groceries or holding the door for someone – carry a grandeur and an emotion that give shape and devotion to the most important enterprise that human beings are able to achieve: the enterprise of living together."

Hermenegilde Chiasson
Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick

Website of the Month:

The Canadian Teachers' Federation at:

<http://www.ctf-fce.ca>