

*I believe that one of the best sources of inspiration and professional growth for teachers can be found in professional conversation with a trusted colleague who you know understands what it is like to “walk a mile in your shoes”.*

*I am so thankful for the multitude of educators who have made time to inspire, mentor and challenge my thinking over the years. In the spirit of reinforcing this collegiality, for this month’s Growing, Learning and Living, I asked permission from one of my dear colleagues, Beverley Park, (Senior Administrative Officer in Professional Development at NLTA) if I could share some of her thoughts with you. After reading I am sure you will understand why I count her as one of my best sources...thanks Bev!*

## 2B or not 2B? OMG! You’ve Got 2B Kidding!

*adapted by Beverley Park from The Bulletin, Vol. 54/No. 4 (NLTA)*

I suspect Willy Shakespeare would be turning in his grave to see that title... or would he? Perhaps, as a man who was a master of language and who loved to manipulate words, he would have an appreciation for the creativity of youth who can now communicate with an efficiency as never before seen. The only thing I can think to compare it to would be the primitive cave drawings or hieroglyphics which could depict whole tales in a series of simple images.

I am a lover of language and whether it is in my reading of a good book or indulging my addiction to CBC Radio and hearing Gian or Rex, I take great pleasure in a well-turned phrase. In this age of instant messaging, texting and tweeting, the well-turned phrase may be a dying art. Can one actually afford those extra words when the message is limited to 140 characters? There is a hue and cry of the loss of standards. (My God, they can’t write a sentence!) I remember the same being said about me and my classmates when in high school we piloted a new English Language curriculum and we were given much less structured writing assignments. Similarly, students today are criticized when they use the shortcuts of symbols to write text messages. While teachers may decry this trend to brevity and a new set of symbols to communicate, like it or not, I don’t think we can ignore it. Here’s my take on it.

I believe that in dealing with our students we must be particularly mindful of - and respectful of - youth culture. If we dig our heads in the sand and ignore that which is all around them (and us), trends will continue to evolve and we will have

less and less common ground upon which to build the student-teacher relationships that are critical to our success as teachers and our students’ success as learners. That is not to say that we condone everything that is done in the name of popular culture, but some things, like the ways people connect and communicate are pretty basic. I am not suggesting for a minute that you all start sending text messages to your students...absolutely not! What I am suggesting is that use it or not, we need to understand this emergent language.

As a rule, I only text sparingly. Still preferring the sound of someone’s voice, I more often use that device known as the telephone! For one thing, I inherited my father’s hands, and there isn’t a Blackberry made that can accommodate my thumbs. But as a teacher, I would make it my business to understand the language of the users of the new media. As a teacher, I regularly intercepted notes (heck, as a student, I even wrote a few!). I remember the junior high student’s quickly scribbled “I ♥ U” (obviously hoping for a “I ♥ U 2” reply). Efficient though it was, I cannot imagine that replacing a well-written love letter! But gone are the days when a “note” was a scrap of paper folded into a small package and winged across the classroom. Gone too are the days when a tweet was the sound of a bird song! These days they’re more likely to be a beep on a cell phone. LOL!

I actually think it smart that users have devised an efficient and time-saving code which fits their communication needs and the media they use. The issue is not that the language I so appreciate is good and chat lingo is bad; they simply must co-

exist the way other languages co-exist. Try this experiment. Turn on a tape recorder and tape a Student Services meeting. In a half hour you will hear more edu-speak (i.e. jargon for the work we do) than you ever imagined. We teachers have our own language. And if you don’t think that’s true, ask someone who is not a teacher to listen in and try and interpret what we say. They’ll be quick to point out that we use words and phrases that are not commonly understood by those not in the club. Now consider parents who are non-educators. They don’t have the luxury of throwing up their hands and saying that they cannot understand teacher talk. No, the fact is they actually learn our language out of necessity - the need to understand things that are important to them - CRTs and outcomes and rubrics. The same idea applies to our learning the language of our students.

Content and context are the big determinants of the appropriateness of language. While most English literature teachers would not accept “2B or not 2B” as a quoting of the famous soliloquy, it should be acceptable that a student (or a teacher) would write BBFN in a text to his or her BF. It’s all about knowing what applies when - for us and our students. Just as they sometimes have to play by our rules, we also have to be able to relate to them on their terms. As a teacher of junior high, I recall making a conscious effort to watch some of the TV shows that my students watched. I admit that there were times it seemed like a waste of precious time until I realized that it was an investment. I saved on classroom management by the relationship building

that happened when I was able to enter into conversation with them about things of interest to them.

Recently, I heard of a teacher who had her students try to translate some key literary passages into the language of texting. That led to the whole comparative discussion of language. She commented on how much she had learned, but the big bonus was seeing her students delve deep into the literature to understand the message and, as is the practice, cut to the chase - with the fewest possible characters.

Oh well, like most things ~ @THEOTD.02 (at the end of the day, my [or your] two cents worth.)

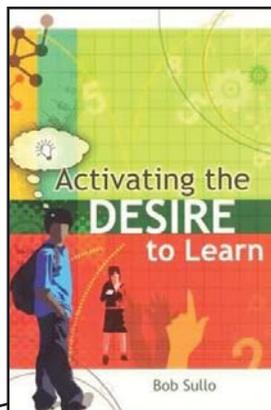
## Book Give-Away!

Congratulations to the winner of last month's book draw - Melissa Wilson-Smith of Harvey High School. Melissa will receive a copy of "Effective Collaboration for Educating the Whole Child" by Carol A. Knochlar-Bryant. Thanks to everyone who entered!

Next month, we are pleased to offer: "Activating the Desire to Learn" by Bob Sullo.

In order to have a chance to win, simply drop me an email at the email address below before Friday, May 6th (Council Day!) with the subject line - Book Give-Away.

*Ardith*



## May I Recommend?

Bev's theme of keeping up with kids and technology is further reinforced in the February 2011 issue of Educational Leadership, titled "Teaching Screenagers". There are several noteworthy articles in the issue. I particularly enjoyed Larry Rosen's "Teaching the iGeneration" as well as "How PowerPoint is Killing Education" by Marc Isseks. In general, much of what the articles discuss can be articulated in a quote from, "A Technology Plan that Works" by Overbay, Mollette and Vasu: "The most important lesson we've learned is that technology initiatives are about people."

"This They Believe: Young Adolescents Reveal their Needs in School" by Margaret Zoller Booth, appeared in the January 2011 issue of Middle Ground and reminds all of us the kinds of things that are important to students when coming to school. Ms. Booth categorizes the responses she received from interviewing several Middle School students into four general areas that she relates back to Maslow: physical needs, safety needs, academic needs and needs for esteem, - a good reminder for all of us about what matters to kids.

My favourite article this month is found in the February issue of Middle Ground. (A great journal for teachers of all levels - not just the Middle!) **Formative Assessment: The Driving Force Behind Differentiation** by Kristina J. Doubet does an excellent job of examining the interconnected relationships between instruction and formative assessment. In it she uses the analogy of a teacher's work to that of a water-ski boat driver. Like the boat driver, our job is two-fold: covering outcomes and curriculum is like driving the boat, but focus too much on that and when you get to your destination you may have lost all of your skiers. Doubet suggests that the second responsibility of the driver as spotter of skiers could be compared to the roles of formative assessment and then differentiation. I also enjoyed the various examples of differentiation that she sprinkled throughout this 3 page gem.

As always, if any of these tweak your interest, drop me an email and I would be happy to send you a copy!

## Closing Quote:

*"Education has to change. We can't pull kids into learning in school if they are engaged in a different world outside school."*

*"If you don't know how to use technology you are in trouble, but you can be in worse trouble if you know how to use it and use it poorly."*

Candidates for ASCDs Outstanding Young Educator Award

## Website of the Month:

Since I am such a fan of their journals, I thought I would note the National Middle School Association's website:

[www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org)

Although their target audience is Middle Level educators, I find much of their content very relevant for teachers of all grade levels.