

CSI: NBTA Classroom Scene Investigation

♪ Who are you? Who, who? Who, who? ♪

by Ardith Shirley, NBTA Staff Officer

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In case you haven't guessed by now, I could be accused of being a bit of a TV and pop culture junkie. I think one of the BEST inventions in recent years has been that of the PVR which allows me to record new episodes of all my favourite TV shows any time of the day or night, and have them waiting for me to playback and enjoy at my convenience. During one of our recent snowstorms, I found myself a bit bored, and, while avoiding more productive endeavors, sought distraction and escape. As I scrolled through the shows that I had programmed to record, it occurred to me there might be a bit of a pattern. Multiple CSIs, several episodes of Law and Order and a recent addition to my list – Republic of Doyle. While the latter is perhaps a more comedic form of detective/crime scene investigator show, I quite enjoy the laughs as well as the Canadian content (OK, OK - I may have a bit of a crush on Alan Hawco as well, but I digress...).

As I consider my interest in the genre, it occurs to me that many comparisons could be made between teaching and the world of detectives and crime scene investigators. While this may be a bit of a stretch for some, please bear with me.

As teachers, we begin each September with several new cases assigned to us in the form of students. While there may be many similarities between the cases we encounter over our careers, we understand that each "case" is unique and must be treated accordingly. Each day, we carefully collect clues in our classrooms. Expe-



rience has taught us that any one of these clues could be just the piece of evidence needed to prove that learning has occurred, or to unlock the mystery of why it may not have occurred to date. We appreciate that even the most inconsequential can have meaning when reviewed later, and, therefore, careful documentation of all of the evidence is key.

One of the mistakes that investigators can make is relying too heavily on one particular kind of evidence. While the eye witness observation or DNA analysis may be tempting to submit as all the proof required, an experienced investigator always looks for at least 3 different pieces of evidence to prove the case beyond a shadow of a doubt. Investigators that rely too heavily on their "gut" or the "obvious" may find themselves on the wrong track. After all, many have erred by making assumptions and developing foregone conclusions based on DNA, past experience or precedent. (Her brother couldn't put two and two together – we can't expect her to be good at Math!) Sadly, and despite our best efforts, more than

one innocent person has spent time in a detention centre! Hence, the importance of our investigative work is underscored and we know that it is essential that we leave no stone unturned.

As educators, we realize that while one episode of a TV mystery has the luxury of being able to focus on a single case, our beat involves working many cases at once. While this is our reality, we also know that for the families involved with our cases, their loved one is always most important and we are mindful of this in all of our communications and briefings to them.

Like investigators, each of us has our own specialty and area of expertise. We know that when we are assigned a really tough or complex case, it is always advantageous to work with a team. We also understand that sometimes when a team has worked long and hard on a case and it has gone "cold", there is merit to bringing in fresh eyes to review documentation and evidence.

Whether our individual detective styles be that of a Horatio Cane, Jessica Fletcher, Columbo, Perry Mason, Nancy Drew or Jake Doyle, our ultimate goal is the same – to prove (and in turn improve) the outcome of each of the cases in which we come into contact.

Hey, let's be careful out there!

Ardith

May I Recommend?

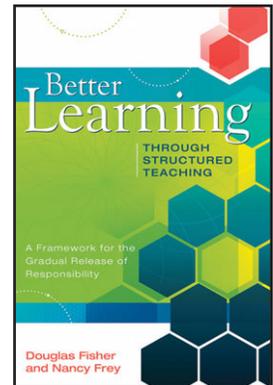
The first article I recommend this month comes from the November issue of *Kappan* Magazine and is titled, *Rookie Teachers: The first 90 days* by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. This is a great read for mentors, administrators, professors or anyone involved with supporting new teachers. I love the chart of suggestions of which skills to focus on at each of the milestones as a new teacher begins – after all – we recognize that the work is far too complex to expect mastery in all areas to begin!

Another great read is found in the November/December issue of *AMLE* Magazine. *Leading Learning for Children from Poverty* by Cynthia Johnson explores seven ways for educators to connect and validate those children who experience poverty.

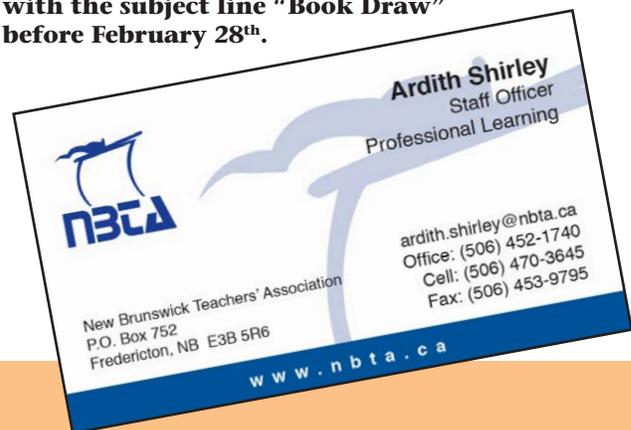
I believe that we would be hard-pressed to find a NB teacher at any level in any subject who is not faced with assisting students to master reading informational text. *Points of Entry* by Nancy Frey and Doug Fisher in November's *Educational Leadership* is therefore a great professional read as they remind us of four "Access Points" to assist all students as we support them in gaining skills in this literacy.

Book Give-Away!

Congratulations to Allison Whately-Doucet of Claude D. Taylor in Anglophone East on winning last month's draw for *Causes & Cures in the Classroom: Getting to the Root of Academic and Behavior Problems* by Margaret Searle. This month's giveaway is for *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching* by D. Fisher and N. Frey



Sound intriguing? Send me an email with the subject line "Book Draw" before February 28th.



Closing Quote:

"We must loosen our death grip on whatever we need to be the truth simply because it is how we want the truth to look. We must be honest with ourselves and invite honesty from others."

— Susan Scott (2009)

Are you an early career teacher looking for a salary increase?

Apply for Your Work Experience!

New teachers should note that you may apply to have your previous work experience evaluated for an increase on the salary grid. Recognition may be given for work that is related to teaching upon application to the Office of Teacher Certification at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The form you need is available from the NBTA website www.nbta.ca. Click the Certification button and download the form called **Application for Work-Related Experience for Salary Purposes**. You should also contact your district office to ensure that all supply teaching experience has been credited.

Remember: **The deadline is March 31 to have the increase back-dated to January 1!**

Are you a teacher looking for a certification increase?

Apply for your upgrade!

The form you need is available from the NBTA website www.nbta.ca. Click the Certification button and look for the **Application for Upgrading Teacher Certification Level** at the bottom of the page with other forms.

Remember: **The deadline is March 31 to have the increase back-dated to January 1!**

Don't forget to include the evaluation fee (\$70.00)!