

**NBTA**  
Ad Hoc Committee  
On  
Student Discipline

**FINAL REPORT**

Submitted to:

NBTA Board of Directors  
February 2003

## **NBTA Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline**

“As I have stated in the past, standards of discipline have increasingly deteriorated and inappropriate behaviour has mushroomed. You and I both know how hard teachers and administrators work to find variables to keep students in school and engaged in their learning. We take this responsibility very seriously, but have gradually felt more and more powerless in our classrooms and schools. It is definitely time for a change.”

**President’s Message**  
**September 2002 Issue**  
**NBTA News**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Solving issues surrounding discipline in schools and the need for an orderly school climate has been the number one priority of Mary Wilson during her term as President of the New Brunswick Teachers’ Association. As a first step, Mary sought and obtained approval from the NBTA Board of Directors to form an Ad Hoc Committee to study the issue of student discipline and to develop a series of recommended actions to be taken by the NBTA. This report outlines the activities undertaken by the Committee, the nine major concerns that it addressed, and the recommended actions associated with each of the major concerns.

As a consequence of the high profile given to the work of the Committee, particularly by the media, several co-operative initiatives between the Department of Education, the Education Group, District Office personnel and the NBTA are already underway. Details of these activities are included in this report – following the recommendations to the Board of Directors.

## THE COMMITTEE

### Committee Activities

The makeup of the Committee on School Discipline offered a wide-range of teacher and administrator expertise. Norm Delano, the Principal of Havelock School served as Director for the 2001-2002 school year. Elva Sullivan joined the Committee in 2002-2003 replacing Norm as the Director attached. Elva is a guidance counsellor at Summerhill Street Elementary School in Oromocto. Krista Ingraham-Côté, a classroom teacher from the JMA/SMS Education Complex in Salisbury, added the perspective of an early-career educator. Randy Moore, a classroom teacher from Simonds Middle School, offered insight from a team approach coupled with a no-nonsense, firm but fair, consistent approach to discipline. Noreen Bonnell, Principal of Gesner Street Elementary School in Oromocto contributed a second administrator's perspective. In addition, Noreen brought a more global view to the table having taught in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island prior to moving to New Brunswick. The Committee was ably chaired by Donna Seymour, a classroom teacher from Nackawic Senior High. As a former methods and resource teacher, Donna contributed yet another unique perspective. Also attending the meetings were Paulette Moore, Jim Dysart, Bob Fitzpatrick, Melinda Cook and, of course, Mary Wilson.

- I. Obviously, the first task of any committee charged with the mandate of examining an issue, defining the problems, and recommending solutions is to examine the historical data. The difficulties surrounding Classroom Management and Discipline are not new and have been of concern and high priority for a long time. The Committee discovered the following:

- In 1990, a Provincial Committee was formed to look into discipline concerns, determine the perceived needs and find possible solutions. It included representatives from the Department of Education, the New Brunswick Trustees' Association, the New Brunswick Federation of Home and School Association, the New Brunswick School Superintendents' Association, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association, the University of New Brunswick and the Youth Council of New Brunswick.

In August of that year, this group sponsored one of the largest summer conferences ever held by education groups in this Province. The theme of the Conference , “ ***The Discipline Dilemma: Collaboration for the Nineties***”, was designed to examine the concerns and to propose solutions. To that end, the Conference was a success. Participants returned to their districts with a commitment to review policies and practices relating to discipline and to be pro-active in a search for solution:

- To continue the momentum, a second symposium (***Symposium on Schools as Orderly Places of Learning***) was held in August of 1994. This Conference provided active working sessions for district teams. Teams included a wide-range of community partners, including parents. The goal was to have each team member return to his/her community informed, sensitive, and ready to continue a pro-active, cooperative approach at the local level.
- In 1996, a NBTA Teacher Survey resulted in the preparation of a brief to the then Minister of Education – the Honorable James Lockyer. This brief outlined the issues facing teachers and students, the impact of those issues and suggestions for possible improvement.

It was clear from the brief that teachers accepted that they had prime responsibility for maintaining orderly classroom behavior, yet recognized that they had neither the authority, nor the resources to be able to respond to many situations.

A review of previous initiatives would not be complete without mentioning the finalization and printing in 1995 of “***Strategies and Guidelines for Teachers and Administrators – Discipline and Classroom Management***”.

- II. Following a review of the initiatives reflecting NBTA involvement in the area of School Discipline, the Committee spent the major portion of one

meeting in a wide-open discussion of major concerns and problems related to discipline.

- III. The Committee also reviewed and discussed the Education Act, Policy 701 – Pupil Protection Policy and Policy 703 – Positive Learning Environment Policy.
- IV. In order to determine what schools are presently doing with regard to discipline throughout the Province, a letter was sent, by the President, to each school requesting copies of discipline policies and discipline handbooks. The overwhelming response provided the Committee with an extensive sample of discipline approaches being used in our schools.
- V. Throughout the entire process, the Committee was kept informed of external attention by reviewing newspaper clippings and receiving updates from Mary Wilson. As mentioned earlier, the issues around discipline have generated a high level of attention during the past year, particularly from the media.
- VI. In an attempt to examine all sides of the issues, the Committee invited Juanita Mureika to a meeting in order to hear a view from the Department of Education.
- VII. Juanita explained that the Department was lacking hard data related to student discipline. As a response, she has developed a “Behaviour Tracking Form” that has been given to School District 17 to run as a pilot.
- VIII. Other topics discussed were Policies 701 and 703, Alternate Settings, Liaison Committee meetings, student responsibilities, and the pamphlet “***When Conflict Arises: Communication between Home and School***”.
- IX. This meeting was very positive and led to a later meeting with District representatives responsible for implementation of the Positive Learning Environment Policy along with the Directors of Education from four of the twelve School Districts. This meeting in turn led to the formation of a Joint Provincial Committee on Positive Behaviour in Schools.

VII. From all of the discussion, the review, the research and the meetings, a list of nine major concerns was drafted. The Committee recognized that the list was not all encompassing, yet felt each concern was “major” and if addressed and alleviated would lead to marked improvement in the system.

**The concerns follow in no particular order of priority:**

- There is a lack of consistency between grades, between the three levels of schooling, between teachers, and between administrators.
- Teachers feel they are not being supported:
  - by School Administration
  - by District Office
  - by the Department
  - by Parents
- Alternate settings to the regular classroom are not working well.
- Teachers and Administrators need training. They need to be taught how to stand-up and be strong in a professional way. New Teachers need information and in-service. In-servicing needs to be offered continuously on:
  - Policy 701
  - Policy 703
  - Education Act
- We cannot accept inappropriate behaviour on the part of parents.
- Teachers need to be free to use their own judgement. Schools should make the decisions on discipline.
- Family and Community Service personnel do not always tell the full story.
- Expulsion of a student is not permitted under the Education Act.
- Communication between the Schools, District Offices, and Department of Education has to be improved.

VIII. The following summarizes the result of four days of meetings. These days were spent discussing the nine major issues by defining the problem, determining what can be done and by whom, and finally drafting recommendations for consideration by the NBTA Board of Directors in October of 2002.

- A. There is lack of consistency between grades, between the three levels of schooling and between administrators.

**The Problem**

In the view of this Committee, existing rules of behaviour and the consequences of misbehaviour are often being applied unequally and inconsistently. Another serious concern is that applying these rules requires a large amount of paperwork involved in tracking student behaviour. Although it is recognized that there are developmental differences between the three levels of learning, schools need to be on the same page regarding discipline and responsibility.

**Recommendations**

That the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

1. That the revised issue of the Discipline and Classroom Management – Strategies and Guidelines for Teachers and Administrators be released as soon as possible and that every teacher receive a copy.
  2. That the NBTA produce a video to be used by Branches and Schools for presentations on the Discipline handbook.
  3. That Districts be encouraged to provide a behaviour tracking form, similar to the one in the “Discipline and Classroom Management Handbook”, for use by schools.
  4. That time be devoted to training on the Discipline Handbook at the NBTA Leadership Workshop in August, 2003. The content, format, and delivery of the training is to be determined by the new NBTA President, the Past President and Staff.
  5. That every family receive a copy of the pamphlet, “When Conflict Arises” as soon as possible.
- B. Teachers feel they are not being supported by –  
School Administrators  
District Office  
The Department  
Parents

### **The Problem**

Teachers feel that District Office personnel and the Department Officials often bow to public pressure. In the view of teachers, political sensitivity leads to diminished authority at the school level. Parents need to know that there are proper procedures to follow and everyone in the system needs to insist that these procedures be followed.

### **Recommendations**

That the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

6. The Discipline and Classroom Management handbook include the duties of parents as written in the Education Act.
7. That we urge the Department of Education to provide adequate training on Policy 703 with the same consistency and thoroughness as that provided for Policy 701.
8. That NBTA support and encourage student led conferencing at all levels because of the positive parent-teacher interaction.
9. That NBTA encourage Home and School to have a greater presence in schools particularly at the middle and high school levels.

C. Alternate settings to the regular classroom are not working well.

### **The Problem**

Although there are some success stories related to alternate settings, the Committee is very concerned with the lack of success reported in some areas of the Province. There is a pressing need to identify alternate settings which are perceived as being accessible and effective and applying the elements of that success province-wide.

### **Recommendations**

That the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

10. That NBTA support the concept of alternate settings and advocate for settings outside existing schools whenever possible.

11. That NBTA support and encourage the development of a province-wide program for alternate settings for children who cannot function successfully within the system. Further, that alternate programs be fair and equitable and characterized by expectations for students that are consistent with behaviour standards and expectations in schools.

D. Teachers and Administrators need training. They need to be taught how to stand up and be strong in a professional way. New Teachers need information and in-service. In-service needs to be offered on a regular and ongoing basis on:

- Policy 701
- Policy 703
- Education Act

### **The Problem**

Policies 701, 703 and the Education Act are not reviewed annually by schools and Districts.

### **Recommendations**

That the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

12. That NBTA lobby the Department of Education to provide an in-service day in the Fall so that schools, districts and branches can provide training on policies, practices, procedures and the laws governing discipline.

13. That NBTA recommend that the universities include full coverage of Policies 701, 703 and 311 in all courses related to education law or legal aspects.

14. That the In-School Administration Committee examine the induction and mentorship programs for new administrators to assure they are receiving collegial support similar to that offered through the IDEA groupings.

15. That the In-School Administration Committee develop a brochure for administrators with advice on "Who To Call" under various scenarios.

E. We cannot accept inappropriate behaviour on the part of parents.

### **The Problem**

Teachers often do not feel confident in their ability or authority to deal with difficult parents and too many schools lack the necessary safeguards or guidelines to prevent people from entering at will. Schools also lack instruction and direction for dealing with parents or other individuals who enter schools unannounced or who act inappropriately in their interaction with the school and/or teachers.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

16. That NBTA recommend to the Department of Education that all personnel visiting or working in schools on a non-permanent basis be required to wear identification tags while visiting schools.
  17. That the video being recommended as an accompaniment for in-service on the Classroom Management and Discipline Handbook include a section on dealing with difficult parents.
  18. That NBTA assist in the production, printing and distribution to every family, of the pamphlet "When Conflict Arises".
  19. That NBTA recommend that each school regularly review policies related to school security.
- F. Teachers need to be free to use their own judgement. Schools should make the decisions on discipline.
- G. Expulsion of a student is not permitted under the Act.

### **The Problem**

Schools need clear expectations and policies. Enforcement must be consistent with input from teachers.

### **Recommendations:**

That the NBTA Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

20. That NBTA continue to promote its position that disciplinary decisions made by teachers and in-school administrators should be supported by district personnel.
21. That NBTA lobby the Provincial Government for changes to the Education Act that would give school administrators more decision-making power related to long-term suspension.

H. Family and Community Service personnel do not always tell the full story.

**The Problems**

Schools are often left in the dark regarding sociological, psychological and sometimes criminal behaviour of students. Schools are often not informed of inter-agency involvement.

**Recommendation**

That the NBTA Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

22. That administrators be made aware that they are entitled to seek full information before they accept a student with a problem background to their schools.

I. Communication between the Schools, District Offices and Department of Education has to be improved.

**The Problem**

Lack of clear communication leads to misunderstandings. At times, it appears that the parties involved are each going alone, in their separate and unsupported directions.

**Recommendations**

That the NBTA Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline recommend to the NBTA Board of Directors:

23. That NBTA, continue to participate in and support the joint committee with the Department of Education, Superintendents and Directors, District Offices, and the NBTA Ad Hoc Committee on Student Discipline to promote positive, responsible behaviour in schools.

24. That NBTA encourage the Joint Committee to continue exploring improved communications.

25. That the NBTA Board of Directors discuss the issue of improved communications between the District Liaison Committees and teachers.

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the revised issue of the Discipline and Classroom Management – Strategies and Guidelines for Teachers and Administrators be released as soon as possible and that every teacher receive a copy.
2. That the NBTA produce a video to be used by Branches and Schools for presentations on the Discipline handbook.
3. That Districts be encouraged to provide a behaviour tracking form, similar to the one in the “Discipline and Classroom Management Handbook”, for use by schools.
4. That time be devoted to training on the Discipline Handbook at the NBTA Leadership Workshop in August, 2003. The content, format, and delivery of the training is to be determined by the new NBTA President, the Past President and Staff.
5. That every family receive a copy of the pamphlet, “When Conflict Arises” as soon as possible.
6. That the Discipline and Classroom Management handbook include the duties of parents as written in the Education Act.
7. That we urge the Department of Education to provide adequate training on Policy 703 with the same consistency and thoroughness as that provided for Policy 701.
8. That NBTA support and encourage student led conferencing at all levels because of the positive parent-teacher interaction.
9. That NBTA encourage Home and School to have a greater presence in schools particularly at the middle and high school levels.
10. That NBTA support the concept of alternate settings and advocate for settings outside existing schools whenever practicable.
11. That NBTA support and encourage the development of a province-wide program for alternate settings for children who cannot function within the system. Further that alternate programs be fair and equitable and characterized by expectations for students that are consistent with behaviour standards and expectations in schools.

12. That NBTA lobby the Department of Education to provide an in-service day in the Fall so that Schools, Districts and Branches can provide training on policies, practices, procedures and the laws governing Discipline.
13. That NBTA recommend that the universities include full coverage of Policies 701, 703 and 311 in all courses related to education law or legal aspects.
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18. That NBTA assist in the production, printing and distribution to every family, of the pamphlet "When Conflict Arises".
19. That NBTA recommend that each school regularly review policies related to school security.
20. That NBTA continue to promote its position that disciplinary decisions made by teachers and in-school administrators should be supported by district personnel.
21. That NBTA lobby the Provincial Government for changes to the Education Act that would give school administrators more decision-making power related to long-term suspension.
22. That administrators be made aware that they are entitled to seek full information before they accept a student with a problem background to their schools.
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