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NBEA NEWS

NEW BRUNSWICK TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



Branch Presidents' Workshop
Outdoor Classrooms
Reflections on Teaching Overseas



Your NBTA, Your Magazine

Have you ever thought about writing something for the *NBTA News*? If so, we would love to hear from you! We are always looking for interesting articles, stories or information about the amazing activities taking place in your schools. This magazine belongs to you, the members of the NBTA. Your submissions are essential in making this the best publication possible.

For more information about the *NBTA News* or to submit an article, contact Chantal Lafargue, editor of the *NBTA News* by email at chantal.lafargue@nbta.ca or nbtanews@nbta.ca.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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Front Cover: The Education Support Services Committee met at the NBTF Building in Fredericton on October 6. (from left to right) Brenda Graves, Brian Richardson, Tammy Gallant. Not pictured: Benjamin Allerston, Randy Jones, John Tingley. Also on the committee: Nicole Chaisson, Curry Winchester.

Message from the President



October 5, 2020 celebrated teachers worldwide on International World Teachers' Day. That acknowledgement of the teaching profession is, perhaps, even more appropriate during these current COVID-19 times of crisis, uncertainty, and inequity. New Brunswick students have resumed

learning in safe conditions due in large part to the sustained work effort of New Brunswick teachers.

Teachers find themselves in the position of maneuvering between "business as usual" and "new normal", both of which are overflowing full-time work! This year NBTA members are doing whatever it takes to make schools safe: monitoring mask use; physical distancing; implementing class bubbles; changing instructional methods (at times, daily!); preparing work for medically vulnerable students unable to attend school; and increasing supervision duties to accommodate COVID restrictions. All of the above "new normal" work is being incorporated into the regular lesson planning, assessment, social-emotional learning, and professional learning that teachers complete on an ongoing basis. It is also important to note that many members are doing this while coping with their own COVID-19 anxieties or medical vulnerabilities.

Merely acknowledging the challenge and complexity of layering the "new normal" on top of "business as usual" is not enough. NBTA does represent a strong and respected professional voice to government while NBTF brings the credible and reliable syndical knowledge to the forefront. Teacher voice must remain influential and trusted. Government needs to understand your reality, not political rhetoric, if the best possible educational decisions are to be made to carry us through and beyond the pandemic.

I have spoken regularly with my Canadian Teachers' Federation colleagues to know exactly how those in other Canadian jurisdictions are finding solutions that could also work for New Brunswick. For example, some jurisdictions have called for a reduction in the number of reporting periods expected this year given all the challenges and others have called for no new initiatives

in education. In this province, much of the system's energy has been devoted to planning for change, returning to learning in a new paradigm and, of course, a safe return to school for all. The conversation that needs to continue with stakeholders is the unsustainability of the current measures and the lessons learned along the way.

As President, I have focused public messaging on three key areas: shining a spotlight on the tremendous efforts and contributions of teachers during the return to school period; underscoring the dire need for the human resources and associated funding to support the current model of inclusion; and highlighting the urgent need for a strategy on teacher recruitment and retention. I have also been focused on sending a clear message to government that now is not the time for any new initiatives. New Brunswick is already conducting the largest education pilot project in its history – "Teaching and Learning in a Pandemic"! Now is the time for a period of sustained stability over that which we have collective control.

Your voice continues to strengthen these messages when you share your concerns, your solutions, and your victories with us. When policy-makers react to what NBTA has shared with them and act on these concerns or implement your solutions, it is clear that member feedback can lead to workable adjustments that teachers view as feasible and pressing.

I know that New Brunswick's teachers are unparalleled professionals who are working in unprecedented times. You need to be trusted to do what you do best, which is to teach. You've told me that although you're happy to be back with your students, you're also feeling drained by the constant demands and the uncertain future. Now is not the time to entertain, or enact, any further changes to public education in New Brunswick. I believe that your health and wellness are critical at this juncture in our response to the pandemic. We will continue to celebrate the wins of teachers, big and small, as we collectively rise to the challenge of getting through the pandemic while positioning the next generation of citizens with the requisite skills and knowledge to lead New Brunswick in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Cuming". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.



BRANCH PRESIDENTS' WORKSHOP

Leading Branches Through Uncertain Times

Submitted by NBTA Branch Presidents Benjamin Allerston, Marla Anderson, Sean Newlands, Laura Perry, and NBTA Staff Tina Estabrooks, Michael Ketchum, and Chantal Lafargue

NBTA Branch Presidents met for a full-day online workshop on September 29, 2020. During the meeting, the branch presidents were provided information about NBTA governance and services and, most importantly, they were afforded an opportunity to have dialogue about the many challenges and opportunities related to leading branches during these unique times. NBTA President, Rick Cuming, and staff also heard the many concerns and issues voiced by presidents that have been brought forward by members since the reopening of schools to students in September. Participants also identified a need to engage the members of their respective branches to consider serving in leadership capacities. Consequently, one branch president from each district was invited to share their varied experiences in interview format.

How did you get involved with your branch?

"I first became involved in my branch in the fall of 2009. I had just returned from an educational leave and I had graduated with my master's degree. A colleague and friend, who at the time was the branch president, said I should put my new education to good use by joining our local branch as professional learning chair. I decided to give it a try, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions of my professional life." (Sean Newlands)

"Prior to becoming branch president, I'd always been interested in all things NBTA. I had always been active on various school committees, but had not taken the opportunity to sit on the branch rep. council. Early in my career I was an observer at an NBTA AGM, but with a busy family life my volunteerism with NBTA didn't go further than that. In 2017, I was on an educational leave and I was approached by our branch nominating committee to consider letting my name stand for branch president. I'm not sure what made me accept, but I did. The first branch rep. council meeting I ever attended, I did so as chair, serving in the role of branch president — perhaps not the best idea, but it all worked out in the end." (Laura Perry)

"I got involved with Branch 1023 as a school rep. in my second year of teaching. The vice principal at the time called me into his office and asked if I would be interested. He told me it was a great learning opportunity to see exactly what the other side of the teaching profession is all about. I attended my first AGM the following year and was asked to run as president for our branch the year after that. For the last 20 years I have been involved with the NBTA in some capacity either at the local or provincial level." (Marla Anderson)

"I first became involved in the branch as a supply teacher. I was asked to be an alternate to the supply teacher rep., and figured it was the best venue to voice concerns that I had as a supply teacher. By attending branch meetings, I was intrigued at how much more I could learn about the profession, while being a voice for teachers. Branch meetings are also a great networking opportunity." (Benjamin Allerston)

What do you see as your primary roles as branch president?

"While my formal role as branch president is to coordinate the business of the branch, I feel my primary role, and what gives me the most satisfaction, is serving our members, ensuring that their concerns are heard and addressed at the appropriate level by the best person." (Sean Newlands)

"As branch president I feel that my primary role is to communicate NBTA updates and news effectively to our branch membership via school reps. This is mainly done through email and rep. council meetings. It is important that this communication goes both ways as I am sometimes tasked with raising questions or concerns at rep. council meetings on behalf of the branch. Additionally, my role involves meeting twice yearly with district staff (superintendent, director of schools, human resources, etc.) during scheduled liaison meetings. These liaison meetings provide an opportunity for me to speak on behalf of the branch and raise their concerns. AGM season is also a large part of my role, both in preparing and chairing our branch AGM, as well as attending the provincial AGM in Fredericton." (Laura Perry)

"The branch president is the person responsible for organizing the business of the branch meetings. The branch president should also be familiar with the branch constitution, the NBTA Members Handbook, and the Collective Agreement. However, I feel the primary role of the branch president is to serve the members of the branch. Teachers need someone to look to when they have questions and the branch president is usually the person they look to find those answers. Most of the time it's just directing the teacher to the right person at the NBTA. Other times it's listening to the teachers and being their voice at the district level." (Marla Anderson)

"As branch president my primary role is communication. Teachers who have questions or concerns can be unsure of where to turn. I help connect teachers to where they can get answers." (Benjamin Allerston)

“As branch president my primary role is communication. Teachers who have questions or concerns can be unsure of where to turn. I help connect teachers to where they can get answers.”
~ Benjamin Allerston, Branch 0215 President

What advice would you give to a new teacher who is thinking about getting involved with the NBTA?

“The best advice I could give to a new teacher who is thinking about getting involved in the NBTA is to stop thinking about it and get involved now! Most of the best PL opportunities I have experienced have been a result of my various roles with the NBTA. Involvement in the NBTA also provides you with a vast network of supportive colleagues around the province.” (Sean Newlands)

“In short, do it! Our professional association offers so much to its members. In the time that I’ve been involved with NBTA I have learned a great deal, and met so many amazing colleagues. It has been a very rewarding experience.” (Laura Perry)

“The best thing I could say to a new teacher thinking about getting involved with the NBTA is to go for it. I am so glad I got involved as early in my career as I did. It has been an incredibly rewarding decision. Being in front of the students is only one aspect of teaching. The benefits of meeting other teachers through committees and professional learning opportunities are priceless. We are not just teachers in our schools, we are professionals in a very large and supportive organization. It is so important to learn that as a new teacher.” (Marla Anderson)

“I encourage new teachers to attend a branch meeting to see what is involved. I also encourage them to ask questions that they have. New teachers can be overwhelmed by things like pension, contracts, benefits, and wages. Branch meetings and school reps can be an excellent resource for answers.” (Benjamin Allerston)

The NBTA thanks all of its branch presidents and leaders who volunteer countless hours to support teachers across the province. The NBTA also acknowledges the presidents featured in this article for their contribution.



Benjamin Allerston
Branch 0215



Marla Anderson
Branch 1023



Sean Newlands
Branch 1428



Laura Perry
Branch 1608

For more information about how to get involved in your branch, please reach out to your branch leadership. Branch contact information can be found by going to www.nbta.ca and clicking on “Branches” > Branch Number > Officers

You can also connect with NBTA staff or NBTA President, Rick Cuming, about how to get involved with the NBTA.

Outdoor Learning at Gibson-Neill Memorial

Submitted by Sherry Norton Graham, Principal
and Lynn McGinn, Guidance - GNMES

photo submitted by Bruce Sudds, Engagers

A quick Google search for “Outdoor Learning” will provide hundreds of scientific research papers and summaries of the benefits of nature experiences for children and adults. This is something that the staff at Gibson-Neill Memorial Elementary School in Fredericton (GNMES), have been embedding into their school culture and teaching practices since they opened their doors in January 2013. Learning outdoors provides many opportunities for risk taking, problem solving, engaging in teamwork, developing social skills, improving behaviour and reducing stress while pausing to look, smell, touch and absorb the natural surroundings and respite that it brings. Since returning to schools this fall during the COVID-19 pandemic, learning outside has been encouraged to help schools lower the risk of exposure and GNMES has taken that seriously.

The students and staff at Gibson-Neill have several outdoor learning spaces that they can use throughout the day. With the help of Dave Milburn from Focal Point Land Scape, they designed their first outdoor classroom in 2015. Students are often seen reading, writing or creating artwork in this space. In 2016, 4 outdoor musical instruments were added to the reading corner which is an area with benches and picnic tables. In 2017, staff designed and cleared an area on the property for a Learning Path that students and staff can use to deliver a variety of lessons. This half kilometer meandering forest walkway showcases nature at its finest. From 200-year-old white pines, to deer and bird habitats, returning students and teachers on the walk always discover something new! Weather-proof cameras attached to trees capture lots of wildlife that the teachers display on big TVs in the school. Guests, like Nashwaak Watershed and Great



“Students can often be heard saying, ‘I wish we could do this every day’ and teachers have reported that students are calmer and more engaged when learning outdoors.”

Minds Think Outside, use this space to deliver special programs, curriculum and professional learning. In 2019, staff designed a natural playground space that quickly became a favourite outdoor learning and playing space for all students. Building forts out of sticks, observing nature and using their imaginations are just a few of the things that students can be found doing at recess or outdoor learning times.

This fall, two new outdoor classrooms were added to the Gibson-Neill landscape. Designed in British Columbia by Outdoorclassrooms.com, these outdoor classrooms came with a chalkboard, natural log teacher’s desk and 15 student desks. Teachers are taking their students outside to deliver a variety of lessons. Students can often be heard saying, “I wish we could do this every day” and teachers have reported that students

are calmer and more engaged when learning outdoors. When students are outside at recess, these new classrooms are part of the playground and students can be seen sitting reading, playing “school” or jumping off the stumps.

The students love being outside, but don’t take our word for it. Here is what the kids say: “The woods is great and I love it. I can’t think of a greater place to learn.” “It’s awesome to listen to nature.” “We have more room outside and the time goes faster.” “The forest is beautiful and the fresh air is great.” “It’s fun to explore new things.” “You get to have more room than inside the classroom.” “I also like to sit on the fallen down trees. It’s just a fun thing to do.” “I feel happy in my insides.” Special thanks to Mrs. Douglas and her grade 4 students for these reflections.



Teaching Overseas (and why you should add it to your bucket list)

Submitted by Greg Tucker, Oromocto High School

It seems strange to write an article on teaching overseas during a global pandemic. Travel is not necessarily a priority for many people right now, however, there may be a variety of reasons for why you might want to consider teaching overseas in the future. The range of reasons are as varied as the individuals: retired professionals who want to continue teaching, but in a different environment; beginning teachers who want valuable teaching experience and global insights; or mid-career teachers who want to add a new perspective to their pedagogy. If you have ever considered teaching overseas, or want to in the future, this article might help you navigate the process.

1. Consider why you want to teach overseas

Depending on the school and country where you teach, it can be financially advantageous to teach overseas. My wife, Sandy, and I taught in Beijing, China from 2016-2018 and our family of four comfortably lived on 80% of one salary and sent any extra money home to pay off student loans and other debts. While the initial salary was less than what we made in New Brunswick, our expenses also decreased. Our apartment in Beijing was paid for, and we didn't own/need a car. Our kids' tuition was covered, and our flights home in the summer were paid for. Each school will have a different set of financial benefits, so it is worthwhile to see what they offer. For example, some schools pay coaches/volunteers for after school activities, others offer housing allowances. Some will offer summer and winter flights, depending on the number of years in your contract. The country you choose to live in, the amount of travel you do, or the lifestyle you want, will impact how much you save.

Teaching overseas will give you a new perspective on culture and differing educational systems. Sandy and I were at points in our careers where things were starting to become routine and automatic, and to be honest, we were getting burned out. Teaching

overseas provided professional development opportunities that enhanced our teaching practices. In many ways, it injected a much-needed educational boost into our professional and personal lives. We wanted to understand what it meant to be global citizens. Our international school represented 50 countries and staff members came from various countries around the globe. It was a cultural immersion and we were exposed to new ideas, cultures, and beliefs.

Travel is an ingrained part of teaching overseas. There is an inherent "nomadic" component to those teaching abroad and it was interesting to learn where teachers came from, and on the various holidays or breaks, where they were going. Many international schools use a different school calendar, often infusing week-long breaks multiple times during the school year, and in our case, two weeks for our New Year celebrations, and two weeks for Chinese New Year holidays. It seemed like an endless list of "must-see" locations, whether it was hiking a portion of the Great Wall, experiencing the cherry-blossom festival in Japan, or sunbathing on a beach in Sydney. There just simply wasn't enough time to see it all.

2. Consider the time it takes to complete the process

There's a reason overseas schools start preparing for their upcoming year as early as November. Once you have a job offer (which may be the quickest part of the process) it will take time to complete the rest of the requirements. We actively started applying for jobs in January 2016 and it took several months to update passports, apply for work visas and have legal documents notarized and verified by foreign embassies. There are companies you can hire that will help expediate the process and while there is a fee involved, the comfort of knowing things have been taken care of properly was, for us, a good investment. You might also want to consider what to do with any assets that



“Teaching overseas will give you a new perspective on culture and differing educational systems.”

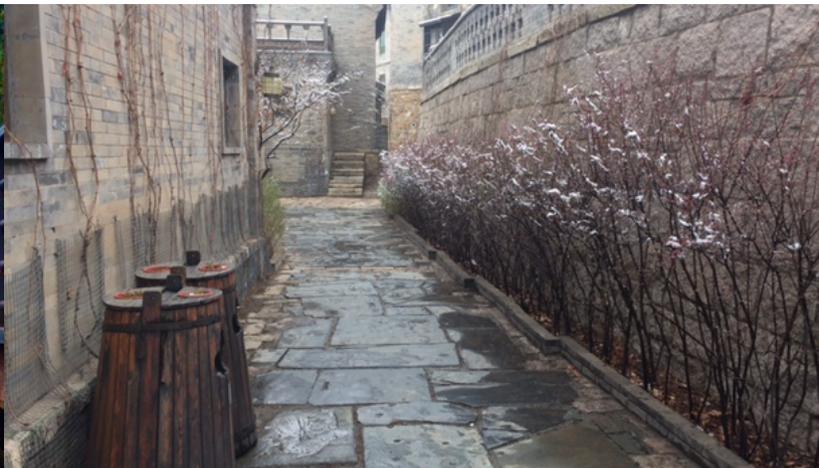
remain in New Brunswick. Things like pets, cars, houses or family responsibilities may be significant factors to consider.

3. Consider where you want to teach

The international teaching world is vast. This was by far the most enjoyable part of the initial process. Once we made the decision to teach overseas, we spent many nights researching which country we wanted to live in. We were amazed at the number of international schools and how extensive a global network it was. In some ways it was a bit daunting because we could go almost anywhere in the world. There are a number of online recruitment agencies that connect job seekers with schools looking to hire. The New Brunswick based company, Atlantic Education International (www.aei-inc.ca) or Search Associates (www.searchassociates.com) are great resources to help with this process. These agencies provide specific information such as: average teaching salary, school demographics, or travel/housing allotments. The data was helpful in finding the right school for our circumstances and made the process easier to navigate. With Search Associates, schools can also browse potential candidate’s resumes and make contact directly.

We often are asked, “was the experience worth it?” And without hesitation, it is a resounding yes. Initially, it felt like an overwhelming process, but the memories, personal growth, global connections and teaching environment was worth it...but do your research. Ask questions, talk to teachers who have been overseas, or look for online school reviews. You just might find yourself teaching in a foreign country after the pandemic and loving every minute of it.

You can contact either Greg or Sandy for further information at:
Greg.Tucker@nbed.nb.ca
Sandra.Tucker@nbed.nb.ca



School Improvement Planning: A synopsis of 10 Steps to Managing Change in Schools: How do we take initiatives from goals to actions?

by Tina Estabrooks,
NBTA Staff Officer



In a time when all available energy is consumed surviving day-to-day, how can school leaders shine a bit of light into the COVID darkness? As the realities of this pandemic settle and we reconcile with our new existence, a movement towards historical practices may satisfy our desire to feel a bit normal. Perhaps glancing towards the future, one without COVID, would be a welcomed diversion. With that in mind, this article explores school improvement planning. This work highlights an action plan model that uses a democratic approach and serves to strengthen the collective vision and motivation of educators. Jeffrey Benson’s book: *10 Steps to Managing Change in Schools: How do we take initiatives from goals to actions* (a quick 50-page read), lends to the creation of collective agency, a condition where teachers continuously seek change for the purpose of improvement and become leaders in their own right. It would be a valuable tool for any new administrator looking for ideas and even useful for our veteran leaders who strive to enhance their current approaches to school improvement. If this read sparks an interest for you, the book is available through ASCD.

In **step one**, Benson describes the three catalysts for change. One, *regulatory directives*, are hierarchical and often have high stakes (i.e. provincially established goals report to the public); two, *a crisis*, which may be the result of neglect or an unpredictable event, and; three, *a need or desire for improvement*. Categorizing school improvement ideas as one of the three catalysts and coupling this process with a risk analysis, helps to clarify and prioritize actions. Benson notes that dedicating time to this preliminary work, reduces fear and increases motivation. School leaders who fail to identify why a proposed change is happening will likely witness the action plan quickly dying on the runway.

The work of Douglas Reeves is a beneficial supplement to this step of Benson’s work. In *Leading Change in Your School: How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results* (pp. 26-35), Reeves proposes a Change Readiness Assessment. His tool reflects on past experiences and characterizes the organization as ready for leaning, ready for change, ready for resistance or ready for frustration. Failure to understand why the change is required and the system willingness to engage will likely result in a short-lived failure that only increases resistance in the future.

Step two illustrates the need to ensure all change initiatives are based upon shared *interests* rather than *positions*. Our position is *what we want* while our interest is *why we want it*. When managing change, Benson contends that “... invoking the school’s deepest

shared interests... bring[s] passion...and... ownership.” (2015, p. 9) He also maintains that when actions are grounded in betterment for all rather than personal gain, those involved are more apt to unite. Conceivably, knowing that the goal of the initiative will improve life for the entire community will help generate a stick-to-it mindset and reduce the natural instinct to cling to known practices which impede or prevent growth.

In **step three**, Benson leads us through a process to create a visual of what success looks like and advances into identifying primary targets. These targets serve as markers of success and fuel the motivation while teams are on the journey. Here is an example of what interests and targets might look like for a hypothetical goal:

Goal: All students attain an appropriate level of language comprehension prior to middle school transition.

Critical Interests	Primary Targets
Inspired readers in all grades	Increased attendance at literacy events
Teacher mentor network fostering language acquisition	Increased reading level trajectory
Engendering pride in our accomplishments	Increase in co-teaching

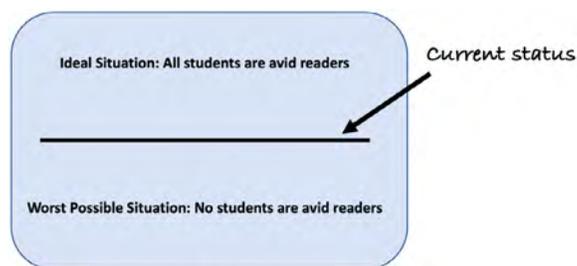
It is important to note that the targets are not meant to align with individual interests, but rather jointly support the attainment of all critical elements.

Step four examines the collection and use of data. Benson notes that “many schools struggle to develop a sense of ownership over information and that “teachers perceive the gathering of data as an interruption of their work.” (2015, p.16) He notes, however, that it is vital for teachers to see progress happening and that data is needed to create positive energy. Benson contends that “data should be unambiguous, easy to gather, and invigorating for the school community” (2015, p. 17) He provides three types of evidence to consider: Institutional data which is already available, uncollected data which is gathered in an ad hoc fashion to support the action plan and, isolated data or information that is not instinctively recognized as a measurement related to the action plan. After generating a list of possible sources, the school team determines which data source is the best indicator of progress.

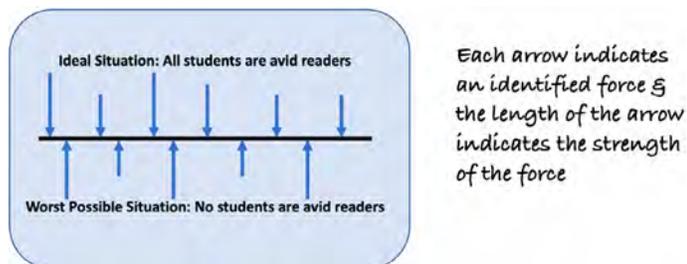
Step five cautions that “the consequences of failure are significant” and school leaders should never just “jump into

“As the realities of this pandemic settle and we reconcile with our new existence, a movement towards historical practices may satisfy our desire to feel a bit normal. Perhaps glancing towards the future, one without COVID, would be a welcomed diversion.”

action” (2015, p. 22). Benson suggests that, to avoid this potential aftermath, schools participate in a force field analysis. In this two-task step, the team begins by determining the ideal situation and the worst possible situation. These opposing ideas are recorded on chart paper and a horizontal line between the two indicates the current status of the school:



Next, the team determines the driving forces pushing the school towards the ideal situation and those pushing the school towards the worst possible situation.

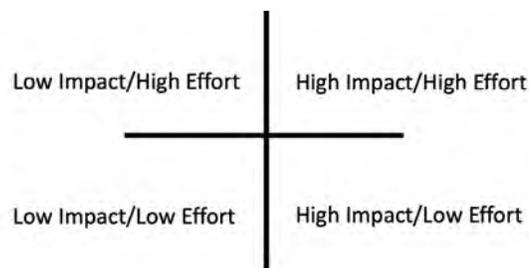


In **step six – Frame Your Efforts**, the team identifies the forces that can be successfully influenced and considers how to frame the elements of the change initiative. Identifying forces that can be influenced is fairly easy. It is also particularly useful because it lessens the attention given to systemic forces over which there is little or no control. For example, the timing of a standardized assessment may be an identified force that pushes towards the worst possible situation but there is little to nothing that can be done; any effort spent deliberating this reality is not a productive use of energy.

Benson suggests that structural, human resources, symbolic and power/politics define the type of force that should be considered when determining what will most support potential change to the areas of influence. An idea involving alteration to the rules and procedures would be classified as structural. Increasing professional learning is an example of a human resource influence. Symbolic is how we prioritize our school

agendas or “how we do things around here” (Benson, 2015, p. 28). When we alter the symbolic nature of a school, we alter what the community understands as meaningful. Finally, influencing power and politics involves building cohorts who can influence the team. Benson (2015) claims that organizing opportunities for action within these categories maximizes the team’s effort.

In **step seven**, Benson contends that you “can’t do everything so you must decide what you will do” (2015, p.32). He recommends that the team determine and focus on those actions which provide for high impact. For this step it is useful to use the following cartography:



Plotting all potential and agreed upon initiatives onto the cartography democratically determines the most relevant actions and the associated work implications.

“One reason change can be hard is that, by definition, it shifts the meaning of ‘how we do things around here’ [or who does what]. Uncertainty about roles and responsibilities can breed confusion and ultimately derail your change initiative.” (Benson, 2015, p. 35)

Step eight provides six steps for leaders to use when articulating responsibility:

Tell	Leaders decide who does what.
Sell	Leaders describe the benefits of the decision.
Test	Leaders seek feedback from the community.
Consult	Leaders solicit the input of the community before decisions are made.
Collaborate	Leaders work with the community to plan for the change.
Delegate	Leaders relinquish control in order to empower but remain involved to show commitment.

These steps do not need to occur in order, but school leaders must remember to include themselves and demonstrate their personal contribute and lead by example.

Step nine uses all learnings gained in steps 1 through 8 and transforms this knowledge into the comprehensive plan. Benson (2015) suggests the following guiding principles:

- Reminding the team that change is an ongoing process
- Be organized
- Model your commitment to changes and the vision
- Reconvene to review data, hear stories and adjust
- Remember to celebrate every positive accomplishment

He also proposes that it is useful for the school leader to use an action plan worksheet as a way to keep track of progress and as a tool to communicate to the team. The book suggests the following organization: Vision of change/main interests, short-term goals, current data to collect, specific actions. When the team reconvenes, this worksheet is a foundational piece to begin the next necessary conversation.

In the **final step**, Benson asserts that “all of the good that happens in school can only be accomplished through continual attention” (2015, p.44). He proposes a six-itemed checklist to verify if your change initiative has taken root and become part of the school’s culture:

- The team continues to meet and update actions without the school leader;
- Ongoing structural support is provided;
- The team disseminates evidence of progress;
- The team makes time to collect and review data;
- The team identifies additional opportunity to collect relevant data; and,
- Team membership evolves.

Reflecting upon my prior experience as a school leader, I recall two elements of school improvement planning that posed the most challenge: Planning the event itself (a very large and important lesson plan) and knowing how to keep everyone in the game once the action plans were determined. Benson’s Ten Steps provide a model that is thorough, simple and makes good sense. Recently, I was privileged to spend a day with a school involved in improvement planning and, having read Benson’s work, decided to use it as a model for our day. It was a day of personal learning and there are elements of my delivery that I

will change, but overall it was a success. Teachers understood the tasks, conversations were on-point and intentional and, although we would have enjoyed more time, we were collectively forging a new pathway. I would encourage any administrators who want to enhance what you already do, or who want to streamline your improvement planning process, to invest in this read. On that note, I have one free copy for the first member who emails with interest. Please send along an email with the subject line “10 Steps” to get entered in the draw.

Finally, I want to commend all teachers and school leaders. You continue to find ways to navigate these ever-evolving and extraordinary times while illustrating the important function of public education. Bravo! Sending thoughts of strength and courage your way.

Tina

We hope you find value in this addition to the *NBTA News*. We invite you to contribute to **The Leadership Corner** by sharing your own research and reflections that may serve colleagues across the province. If you have questions or work for consideration, please email Tina Estabrooks (tina.estabrooks@nbta.ca)

Works Consulted:

Benson, J. (2015). *10 Steps to Managing Change in Schools: How do we take initiatives from goals to actions?* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Reeves, D. (2009). *Leading Change in Your School: How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



“Great News Stories”

on NBTA’s Facebook

There is always something newsworthy happening in the schools of New Brunswick!
Share it with us and we will spread the word about these wonderful initiatives.
We know you are busy, but even a good photo and a three-line caption is all it takes.



**St. Stephen Middle School
Thanksgiving Food Drive**



**Rothesay Park School
Welcome Back!**



**Campobello Island Consolidated
Welcome Back!**

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Send your NBTA Facebook page submissions to
nbta.communications@nbta.ca and once you see that it has been posted, start sharing!

Balancing Responsibility, Relationships, and Grace as we Strive to be Resilient

by Ardith Shirley,
NBTA Staff Officer



**“We are relationships, we cannot dissociate from them.
Our relations with others shape us and give meaning to our world.”**

~ Scherto Gill, Ph.D (August 2020)

As I sit down to write to you this month, I find myself gripped by distractions. Although only the first of October, my 2020-21 school year ‘to do’ list is already long and growing by the minute. The realities of supporting teachers and schools as they try to do their important work with students during a pandemic is complex.

Each of the particulars I have chosen to jot on my ever-growing list has already made it through the filters of ‘important’ and ‘urgent’. I have tried to carefully curate so as to make the best use of my most precious resources ~ time and energy. The feeling that there is work that urgently needs to be done suffuses.

Despite all best intentions, I become stalled in my efforts to ‘get at it’. I am distracted from my ‘tasks’ by ‘other’. *Distraction* (noun) is defined as:

1. a thing that prevents someone from giving full attention to something else.
2. extreme agitation of the mind or emotions.

I quickly become frustrated and the inevitable negative self-talk begins...*if only* I were more disciplined. *If only*, I was more organized. As I ruminate on all of my ‘*if only-s*’, I make attempts to categorize and rationalize. How can I be more productive? Maybe I need to practice more mindfulness or meditation? (well ok...maybe actually start the latter?)

I finally resort to asking myself, “What IS it that is competing for my precious and limited commodities of time and energy aforementioned?” WHAT is draining me? Why did I not seem to have as many such vexations during my educational leave which also happened during the pandemic? Inevitably, it eventually dawns on me. Most of the ‘annoying’ interruptions or ‘other’ preventing me from getting to those ‘tasks’ have to do with ‘people’ and ‘relationships’. During my leave, my circle of ‘people’ was exponentially smaller and therefore my level of distraction was as well...

Let me be clear, I AM a PEOPLE person. I chose my career as a teacher because it is centered in developing HUMANS. I also

really enjoy and like the people I work and live with...most days at least. That said, those PEOPLE I love, come with needs, emotions, unpredictability and the general ‘messiness’ of life that can torpedo my daily plans faster than an MK 54.

As is often my experience, when I am struggling, the universe finds a way to send me wisdom...this time, it came in the form of a book by Parker Palmer gifted to me by a dear friend and mentor...as I randomly flipped open a page these words jumped out at me:

“A vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which I must live – but rather the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life.” (Palmer, p. 4)

Parker’s words reminded me immediately of a robust discussion I once had with a prominent New Brunswicker who had very strong opinions about the limitations of our teacher certification system and how all would be ‘fixed’ within public education if we simply found a way to assure that every teacher could ‘prove’ they were ‘expert’ in their subject area...annually. Our conversation eventually took a more positive turn when I was able to convince him that in order to be a truly effective teacher, our ‘subject’ expertise is not ‘math’ or ‘technology’ – it IS our students. Our professional training makes us experts in the complex processes of human development, teaching and learning...our students ARE our curriculum. We also happen to use subject matter to achieve our most important curricular outcome – watching our students flourish.

...and then it hit me.

My **real** work isn’t found on my ever-growing ‘to do’ list. My **REAL** work is found in the daily conversations and interactions of the very people I have mistakenly allowed myself to temporarily think of as ‘distractions’. Supporting them as we all struggle to survive (let alone thrive) in this unknown abyss of leading learning in the midst of a pandemic is the most important task.

"A vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which I must live – but rather the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life."

~ Parker Palmer

Realizing that most humans are barely achieving the most basic needs as identified by Maslow's hierarchy (1943) right now and adjusting accordingly is imperative...some of the items on my list will just have to wait.

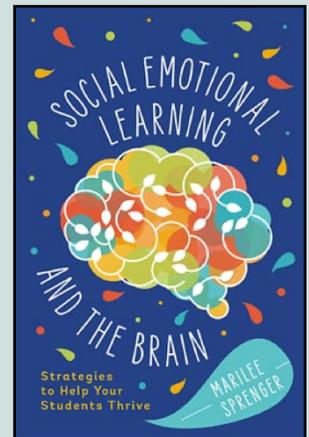
Thanks again Palmer! I'm going to close with a commitment to put my 'to do' list aside and give myself a break....I'm going to get better at being OK with ending my work day knowing I'm doing the best I can under the circumstances while learning LOTS of important lessons that will hopefully help inform tomorrow. I hope you can offer yourself that same grace...I think it's the only hope we have to be resilient enough to last to the end of this test!

Take care,



Book Give Away:

Congratulations to last month's winner, **Nathaniel Steeves at Riverview East School** in ASD-East. Up for grabs this month is a copy of **"Social Emotional Learning and the Brain: Strategies to Help Your Students Thrive"** by Marilee Sprenger. Sound intriguing? Send me an email at ardith.shirley@nbta.ca with 'Book Draw' as the subject line!



Works Consulted:

Gill, S. (2020, August). Approaching Educational Evaluation from a Relational Perspective. (R. Stratton-Berkessel, Interviewer)
Hall, K. V. (2019). *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
Palmer, P. (2000). *Let Your Life Speak, Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

May 7, 2021

Virtual Council Day 2021: Altogether Different



If Conflict Arises...



by Kim McKay,
NBTA Staff Officer

When I began my work as NBTA Staff Officer for Professional Issues in 2009, an early assignment was to collaborate with partners at the [then] New Brunswick Department of Education and the New Brunswick Home and School Federation to revise the informational brochure *If Conflict Arises*. Given the thousands of school system interactions that occur on any given day, conflict is inevitable. Learning to reach resolution when conflict occurs is a critical skill as early career teachers develop their professional voice.

In 2010, NBTA partnered with the New Brunswick Department of Education on the professional learning opportunity *Fierce Conversations*. Since that time, NBTA has certified over 600 educators in *Fierce Conversations*; the value of understanding *Fierce Confrontation Conversations* and *Fierce Accountability* holds true a decade later.

Identifying your role when conflict occurs (Fierce, Inc.®)

Villain: You will sometimes have a negative impact on other people, either intentionally or unwittingly, through your words or actions, or by something that you fail to do. When you do not take responsibility for your negative impact, you assume that role of villain. The villain role may be enacted by trying to “win” difficult conversations, not find solutions.

Victim: If you believe that you cannot get what you need and want by communicating in a direct manner, you are likely to try to influence others in a less straight-forward manner. This is a victim position. The victim role may be enacted by strategizing to get your own way rather than making a straight-forward request, or by waiting to be acted on by others rather than acting on your own behalf.

Rescuer: The only way a conflict can be resolved is for the person who is dissatisfied to talk directly to the colleague, parent or person in question. If the injured party is talking to you instead, you may be playing the role of rescuer and standing in the way of resolution. The rescuer role may be enacted by lending a “sympathetic ear”. Alternately, the rescuer may become the “third point” in the conflict, which usually creates an unproductive triangle.

The importance of engaging in difficult conversations (Fierce, Inc.®)

- A successful difficult conversation requires that the message be delivered in a way that others can hear.
- It is better to muddle through something challenging than to avoid it altogether. Having a difficult conversation is a messy process. It requires courage, and people respect us for showing up.
- If something is bothering you, telling the truth means being straight and direct about it with the other person. It takes personal discipline to not indulge in shaming, blaming, and judging while you are saying what is true for you.
- Every workplace conflict relates to problems in carrying out tasks, problems that colleagues have in relating to each other, or some combination of the two.
- Conversation is the single greatest learning tool in your workplace – more important than computers or sophisticated research. But when faced with contentious issues – when there are feelings about rights, or when two worthwhile principles come in conflict with one another – we tend to turn to defense mechanisms that impede communications.

The next POINT article in the NBTA News will identify how to create an opening statement in a difficult conversation.

Kimberley McKay

kim.mckay@nbta.ca

Uncharted 2020: *when there is no compass* **NBTA Virtual Early Career Teachers Conference**

November Sessions:

Grey Matter Series: Series sessions for October are completed and will not be re-offered. These sessions are available on the NBTA members' only site.

Grey Matter Series: These offerings provide participants a chance to go in-depth on a topic of interest.

November 3, 2020
3h30 – 4h15
Zoom

Grey Matter Series: Your Collective Agreement

Monique Caissie, NBTF Labour Relations Officer

What are my rights, obligations and responsibilities as a teacher? A general overview of your Collective Agreement.

Next scheduled sessions: December 1

November 17, 2020
3h45 – 4h30
Microsoft Teams

Grey Matter Series: LGBTQI2S+

Christina Barrington, Rothesay High & member of NBTA Diversity Committee

Christina will be joined by a panel of educators fighting for a more inclusive working and learning environment.

Next scheduled sessions: December 15, January 19; February 16

November 17, 2020
6h00 – 7h00
Zoom

Grey Matter Series: Supply Teacher Spot

Nicole LeBlanc, NBTF Labour Relations Officer

This series will allow for sharing of information pertinent to supply teachers. The next session will provide an overview of the collective agreement as it pertains to supply teachers as well as allow an opportunity for question.

November 23, 2020
4h00 – 4h45
Zoom

Grey Matter Series: Responding to Student Behaviour

Tina Estabrooks, NBTA Staff Officer for Finance

This session addresses the question "How do I prepare for student behaviour?". Participants will use the function of behaviour and theories of behaviour response to explore prevention practices for everyday classrooms.

Date TBA
Platform TBA

Grey Matter Series: Curriculum and Assessment

Presenters TBA

This session will provide a walk-through of resources accessible to New Brunswick teachers from the Critical Thinking Consortium (TC2). These resources focus on developing critical thinking and inquiry skills, with lesson plans and activities that can be used in any subject area, as well as subject-specific instructional materials. The online TC2 materials are free for NB teachers to use, and include the 3-5 cross-curricular resources designed specifically to support the New Brunswick prioritized curriculum.

November 19, 2020
3h45 – 4h30
Zoom

Your Virtual Voice

Kimberley McKay, NBTA Staff for Professional Issues, with guests

These sessions provide space for early career members to contribute input and feedback on key educational matters.

Next scheduled sessions: December 17, January 28, February 23



TEACHER DESIGNED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANTS 2021

by Kimberley McKay, NBTA Staff Officer

INTRODUCTION

The New Brunswick Teachers' Association recognizes that teacher professional learning occurs within a broad spectrum of experiences and processes that lead to deepened understanding and improvement of practice. Effective professional learning strongly links teacher and student learning and is guided by evidence. Further, research highlights that effective professional learning must be personalized and responsive to the complex and unique needs and context of the learner.

As adult learners, teacher motivation for professional learning is linked to relevance, meaning and choice. Developing competence and a sense of self-efficacy by directing one's efforts to meet student needs is key to teachers undertaking professional learning. An integrated design that focuses upon student and teacher learning activities within a job-embedded context and supported by both time and resources is the ideal professional learning context.

WHAT IS A TEACHER DESIGNED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANT?

TDPL is an annual school-based professional learning opportunity funded by the New Brunswick Teachers' Association. NBTA will award five \$1500 grants for the calendar year January 2021 – December 2021. Interested teams of 3-5 teachers are invited to apply. Application forms will be available on the NBTA website beginning November 9th, 2020.

The TDPLG is intended to fund proposals from teachers who seek a peer leadership role in curriculum, instructional practice or supporting other teachers.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE TDPL GRANTS?

There are three goals associated with this grant:

1. support teacher professional learning within the context of improving student learning
2. foster teacher leadership
3. facilitate the sharing of exemplary practices

3. facilitate the sharing of exemplary practices

WHAT IS THE TDPL GRANT SELECTION PROCESS?

- Applicant teams develop a project proposal and complete an application form. Applications received after 4h00 on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, will not be considered.
- The NBTA committee established to administer the grant fund will screen all applications received by the deadline. Proposal selection criteria are described in detail in the next section.
- Five successful team applicants will be notified by January 8, 2021. Start-up materials and funding will be delivered to each team.
- Unsuccessful team applicants will be notified by January 8, 2021.

WHAT IS THE SELECTION CRITERIA FOR TDPL GRANTS?

- I. The extent to which the project proposal is guided by characteristics of effective professional learning:
 - a. Coherent – project is designed within the context of both best practices for student learning and provincial/district/school mandates
 - b. Goal-Oriented - project clearly connected to student learning, daily practice and provincial/district/school mandates
 - c. Sustainable – proposal includes practice time, reflection time and a plan to progress over time with grant funding used for resources critical to the project
 - d. Evidence-Informed – proposal considers current research as well as any formal or informal relevant data
- II. The extent to which the project proposal demonstrates the following general characteristics:

- a. Quality – proposal is well thought out and realistic
- b. Impact – proposal has the potential to impact student development as well as the learning of participating teachers
- c. Measurable – project goals can be measured and clear description of how this will be done
- d. Sharing – proposal incorporates a specific plan for sharing the project with other educators
- e. Demographics – general consideration will be given to distributing grants to various levels (K-12) as well as geographic location, team composition, etc.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF SUCCESSFUL TEAM APPLICANTS?

- meet with NBTA Staff Officer for a brief overview of TDPL requirements (school-based meeting/approx. 30 minutes)
 - carry out activities described in project proposal/application form
 - share project and team learning with colleagues via:
 - o Written article for *NBTA News* at project completion
- Or**
- o Team Choice (i.e. presentation to staff, offer Council Day session, electronic posting, etc.)
- submit a short report of the project using NBTA template
 - submit a financial report using NBTA template

Questions? Contact
kim.mckay@nbta.ca

2020-2021 NBTA Virtual Pension Seminars Registration Form

Date and Time of Seminar:

November 24 & 25 ASD-S
 January 12 & 13 ASD-E
 February 3 & 4 ASD-W
 February 22 & 23 Open to all

Deadline for Registration:

November 6
 December 21
 January 15
 February 5

*(For each of the above seminars: Part I will take place on the first evening;
 Part II will be the second evening. Both will be from 7:00 - 8:30 pm)*

Name of Teacher: _____ Birth Date _____

Email Address: _____

Certificate Level: _____

Do you receive a Responsibility Allowance (Principal/Vice Principal/SPR)? Yes No

Are you paid by pay bands (district staff)? Yes No

If "Yes" to either, please contact the HR Officer at your District to have your salary history, dated back to June 2014, emailed to tammy.boon@nbta.ca.

Form can be emailed or faxed to Tammy Boon

tammy.boon@nbta.ca

Phone: (506) 452-1722 Fax: (506) 453-9795

Seminar Guidelines

The following guidelines should be noted for participation in these seminars:

1. **All participants must pre-register; zoom link will be emailed.**
2. Questions relating to these seminars should be directed to:

Michael Ketchum
NBTA Staff Officer
New Brunswick Teachers' Association
P.O. Box 752
Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5R6 (Tel. 452-1722)
3. All teachers are welcome to attend.

Program

Part I: 7:00 - 8:30pm

- Teachers' Pension Act
- contribution rates
 - retirement options
 - pension calculations

Retirement Allowance

Canada Pension

Part II: 7:00 - 8:30pm

- Financial Planning for Retirement
- RRSPs
 - RRIFs
 - Annuities
 - Old Age Security

Survivor options

Purchase and transfer of Pension Service

Pre-retirement vacation

Work Time Flex

Group Insurance

**PLEASE NOTE: YOU WILL RECEIVE CONFIRMATION UPON
 RECEIPT OF REGISTRATION FORM.**

Celebrating 10 Years of Climate Change Education in New Brunswick Schools

Submitted by Jane Burchill, The Gaia Project

Teachers across New Brunswick have a passion for climate change education. But due to a lack of tools and training, this topic sometimes gets overlooked or left out of lesson plans. For over 10 years, The Gaia Project has been working with educators to foster their understanding and capacity to teach about this critical issue. Gaia is a provincial non-profit whose mission is to empower youth to take action on climate change through education. We work with students and teachers in N.B. on project-based learning modules, learning packages and provide professional learning opportunities.

To celebrate Gaia's 10th anniversary, we interviewed four teachers about their experience teaching climate change themes. Our goal is to inspire others to give it a try. As you will see, these educators teach various subjects, including math, literacy, technology and science at different grade levels, proving climate change themes are interdisciplinary and appropriate at every age.

Name: Jessica Curry
School: Nashwaaksis Middle School
Grade and subject: Grade 6 Science
Years teaching: 15 years

1. Why is teaching your students about climate change important to you?

Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and teaching my students about what is currently happening to our planet only empowers them to be part of the solution and not the problem.

2. Have you experienced any barriers or obstacles when trying to introduce climate change topics to your students, from students or administration? How did you overcome these?

Students and Admin both want to know what they can do to make a difference. A challenge is getting the students to understand the severity of it but, at the same time, leaving them hopeful.

3. How have community partners helped you overcome these barriers?

It's difficult to find the resources to convey the message to our students at the appropriate age level. Plus, the issue is always evolving. It can be a challenge to get up-to-date resources at the students' level, and that's where The Gaia Project comes in. They are able to assist me by providing me with up-to-date information and lesson plans.

4. What is your favourite climate change activity to do with your students?

Show them about alternate sources of energy. Advancements in wind, solar, tidal power.

5. Have you noticed a shift in your students' concern for climate change? If so, how do you help them cope with eco-anxiety?

Students do show concern about climate change, but I think the key is to empower them with knowledge so they can leave the classroom hopeful. That's the goal of any teacher, I'm sure! They need to know how they can make a difference through small actions that they can start doing now.

Name: Tomalyn Young & Pat Halford
School: Forest Hills School
Grade and subject: Grade 6 Research Learning & Literacy (Tomalyn), Grade k-8 Technology and Physical Education (Pat)
Years teaching: 7 years (Tomalyn), 8 years (Pat)

1. Why is teaching your students about climate change important to you?

We know that students are facing an unknown future due to climate change. There is a need to focus on the importance of climate action within the school setting and beyond. Their future requires an understanding of sustainable development that emphasizes the importance of green energy.

2. Have you experienced any barriers or obstacles when trying to introduce climate change topics to your students, from students or administration? How did you overcome these?

One barrier we have experienced is the occasional push-back and disagreement over whether climate change is human-caused or



The Gaia Project staff team is ready to work with you!
(Missing Guylaine Doucet Ferguson)

“There is a need to focus on the importance of climate action within the school setting and beyond. Their future requires an understanding of sustainable development that emphasizes the importance of green energy.”

~ Tomalyn Young and Pat Halford

natural. In order to overcome this, we provide students with the facts and tools that they need and allow them to draw their own conclusions.

3. How have community partners helped you overcome these barriers?

In addition to The Gaia Project, partners such as Canaport, local MLA Glen Savoie, Brilliant Labs and The Port of Saint John have supported our initiatives. They have participated in discussions about the impacts of climate change while providing advice and financial support for the planning and implementation of our Aquaponics Greenhouse and Community Greenspace.

4. What is your favourite climate change activity to do with your students?

As a certified EcoSchool and member of UNESCO Associated Schools Network, we continually engage students in the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals while focusing on the positive impact they have on our planet. This includes engagement in sustainable farming practices through our Aquaponics unit we have established.

5. Have you noticed a shift in your students' concern for climate change? If so, how do you help them cope with eco-anxiety?

Our students are more aware than we give them credit for, and many became inspired by Greta Thunberg. When they witnessed someone from their generation fighting for their future, they were quite responsive. We help them cope with eco-anxiety by providing them with the tools they need to make an impact in their daily lives and by highlighting the global shift that is slowly happening to combat climate change.

Name: Laura Myers

School: Hampton High School

Grade and subject: 9 FI Math, 10 FI Math, 11 Pre-Calculus

Years teaching: 31 years

1. Why is teaching your students about climate change important to you?

Climate change is the biggest problem facing our society (although some would say that we already have the solutions), and I want my students to understand the causes and the effects of climate change and problem-solve ways that they can make a positive difference in the climate crisis.

2. Have you experienced any barriers or obstacles when trying to introduce climate change topics to your students, from students or administration? How did you overcome these?

Initially, students don't really understand climate change, or they think it doesn't affect them. When we talk about the Sustainable Development Goals and the fact that we are all neighbours on this big planet Earth, they seem to develop more empathy and understand that one person's problem is everybody's problem.

3. How have community partners helped you overcome these barriers?

When Gaia visits, they explained climate change in a way that was easy for students to understand, and they also showed them things they can do to reduce their carbon footprint. We have also had guest speakers like Carl Duivenvoorden from the Climate Reality Project and Steve Lee from the 3% Project who have had an impact on the way students see climate change.

4. What is your favourite climate change activity to do with your students?

I really enjoyed the Energy Detective project that The Gaia Project offers. Students were able to see which things in our school use the most energy and then try to reduce the amount of energy we use. I also love planting tomatoes, peppers, etc. with my students, so they learn how to grow their own food. When students calculated their ecological footprint, that was a real eye-opener for them as well. There are so many!

5. Have you noticed a shift in your students' concern for climate change? If so, how do you help them cope with eco-anxiety?

The more they learn, the more concerned they get. The best way to cope with eco-anxiety is to take action, and the more we do to help, the less anxious they are.

The Gaia Project commends these teacher climate warriors working to nurture the next generation of global citizens. By advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing the need to take action and addressing students' awareness and anxiety around climate change, they are making a difference. If you want to start the journey towards climate change education, visit www.thegaiaproject.ca and click on "Teachers" to access The Gaia Projects' free resources.

Write Yourself a Permission Slip

by Ronna Gauthier, Teacher Counsellor



As we are nearing our 8th month of living in a “COVID-world”, I have taken some significant time to reflect upon and process how this has impacted us as humans and, in particular, educators. There are many notable observations when looking through the lens of mental health and well-being. It’s true that some folks are doing rather well, and it’s also true that some are really struggling.

The human nervous system is a significant player in regards to our make-up and our state of being. If you think about our state of being on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being calm and 10 being fight/flight/freeze, most of us are used to going about life in the 0-2 range with the occasional spike at times of stress. Individuals with anxiety/prolonged stress may operate in the 3-5 range. Now if we factor in COVID and all things associated with living through a pandemic (e.g., signs, arrows, rules, masks, protocols, change, distance from other humans, loss of connection to those we care about, etc.), just sit with how that must have impacted our nervous systems over the past seven months. That’s a prolonged period of time where many have been living on a higher range of that scale.

A prolonged state of an activated nervous system comes at a cost to the human body. Do any of these sound familiar: low energy/motivation, increased irritability, lower stress-tolerance, brain-fog, increased fatigue, appetite changes or sleep disturbances? Educators are reporting many of these symptoms. Those who had pre-existing stress, anxiety, or challenging life circumstances prior to COVID are finding this particularly challenging. So, after living 7+ months in this heightened state of an activated nervous system, it only makes sense that we are experiencing some negative effects.

Add to the above the increased stresses on the teaching profession with all of the changes, loss of contact with students and colleagues, and increased use of technology. It is no wonder that educators were reporting feeling “November-tired” in September! Teachers, by nature, are planners, predictors and selfless caregivers. In this “new abnormal” world of COVID (like many others I refuse to accept this as the new-normal) we are unable to plan too far ahead because the future is not predictable as it once was. We perhaps worry more than usual about our vulnerable students, vulnerable colleagues, our families and ourselves. It’s increasingly difficult to care for others and ourselves. This can be rather dysregulating to educators.

If we are to be successful living and teaching in this COVID-world, planning, predicting and caring for ourselves needs to be more of a priority now than it ever has been.

Write yourself a permission slip:

- Permission to put yourself first
- Permission to let go of some of the extras you’d normally do at work
- Permission to leave each day at a reasonable hour
- Permission to have 1-2 days a week free from work
- Permission to shut off Microsoft Teams on Friday afternoon and not turn it back on until Monday morning
- Permission to be “tech free” for prolonged periods of time and get into nature
- Permission to gift yourself the time to meal-prep, drink water, move your body and establish a regular sleep routine
- Permission to nurture yourself and the relationships that matter to you
- Permission to schedule small breaks for yourself throughout the school day

Grant yourself permission to do the things that calm your nervous system and get you back to that relaxed state from 0-2 on the scale. Giving yourself permission to care for yourself will free you from any of the guilt that is often associated with doing this. There is no room for guilt right now, only room for self-compassion and caring.

You matter to those of us who work for you at the New Brunswick Teachers’ Association. You matter to your students and their parents. You matter to your loved ones. We would like to see that you matter to yourself. Please be kind to yourself and to one another in these abnormal times.



@wellteacher235



NB Teacher Wellness

Your Teacher Counsellors:

Ronna Gauthier

ASD-South
1-888-563-3938
(506) 634-2901

ronna.gauthier@teacherwellness.ca

Michael LeBlanc

ASD-West
1-800-561-1727
(506) 462-0208

michael.leblanc@teacherwellness.ca

Lisa Calhoun

ASD-North and ASD-East
1-888-763-5050
(506) 855-5243

lisa.calhoun@teacherwellness.ca

In Memoriam Shirley Downey (1936-2020)

It is with great sadness that we note the recent passing of Shirley Downey, recipient of the NBTA Special Recognition Award and founder of "Born to Read NB". This program had its beginnings in St. Stephen in 1991 in partnership with the Heritage Chapter IODE. Thanks to Shirley's belief that children should be read to at birth and her ability to forge strategic partnerships, the program grew into a bilingual provincial initiative that has been supported by various donors and stakeholders who are committed to literacy in the early years. Since 2010, the NBTA has contributed to this program to help sponsor an NB book in the "Born to Read" bags. The NBTA Special Recognition Award symbolizes the appreciation of the Association for specific service given by an individual who is not a statutory member of the NBTA to education provincially, to the objectives of the Association, and to the work of teachers. Shirley's work lives on every time a New Brunswick newborn receives a Born to Read/ Le goût de lire bag.



Educators,
thank you
for all you do.



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