

Message from the President



Although the theme of this article is “New Beginnings”, it seems strange to use the term because it implies the work ended in June. Your NBTA staff has been providing feedback to and seeking clarifications from EECD throughout the summer months. Senior Leadership of the NBTA, AEF-NB, and NBTf met with the Department of Public Health and WorkSafeNB to get answers to numerous health and safety

questions. Further, your provincial Executive Committee has met throughout the summer in their role of supervising and advising on the affairs of the Association between board meetings, which added teacher voices from across this province to our work. School administrators, undoubtedly, may share this feeling of work continuity, as the work on operational planning and scheduling has likely consumed much of their summer break.

What will certainly feel new for all teachers and administrators will be the numerous changes to safety procedures, operational processes, curriculum and pedagogy, as well as how we will interact with our students, colleagues, and parents. This is the first time in our lives we have started instruction during a pandemic, working hard to prepare for changes that might arise if/when a second wave of the virus arrives.

At the time of writing, it is impossible to say how our “new beginning” will unfold, but it is sure to be a September like no other! However, there is one absolute certainty: the teachers of this province will continue to do everything in their power to assure the safety of their students and they will provide a high-quality education to all learners. Your dedication to the youth of New Brunswick is to be commended, and is certainly not new.

A number of your colleagues have families who will be experiencing some new beginnings as well. Some will have young children starting kindergarten, others may have children who are scared to return to school, or some may have older children moving on to post-secondary education and the uncertainty of what that transition will bring. More than a few will have family members who are part of the vulnerable population. Some of your colleagues, themselves, may be nervous about their return to school with students. In all of these scenarios, it is crucial that we are there to support each other, to lend an ear or a hand, as we all experience the beginning of this “new normal” together.

At the NBTA, we have a few new beginnings with the return of Deputy Executive Director, Ardith Shirley, from her Educational Leave, meaning that we have our full complement of permanent administrative staff in place, and on August 1st NBTA Vice President/President-Elect, Connie Keating (Branch 0216), assumed her seat at the Executive and Board tables.

Your Board of Directors started a new practice in June that will carry forward into this school year. The Board traditionally meets only 3 times per year in October, February and April, but we were able to utilize web-conferencing apps to hold informal meetings via teleconference. While these platforms have their limitations, they also provide an opportunity to further engage your elected leaders in the work of the Association.

Another new beginning to highlight is that initial phases of the process to modernize the NBTA website is underway. Staff are conducting an extensive audit on the current pages and this work will support the eventual redesign and reorganization of content.

As you look through this issue of the *NBTA News*, you might notice that some of our delivery models for member services are shifting in order to respect health and safety protocols as established by Public Health. For example, the annual face-to-face Compass conference for early career teachers will now be a virtual event that will be hosted between September 2020 and February 2021. This multi-platform conference, rebranded as “Uncharted”, will provide more flexibility for registered participants, as they can now attend during real-time or asynchronously. This is but one example of how the Association will adapt its service model as we continue to work together to stay safe. There most certainly will be other adjustments to services and NBTA events as the year unfolds, and I encourage you to stay tuned for details.

Lastly, despite the uncertainty of these times, I know for a fact that the important work we do as professionals must continue to shine brightly. The contributions that you make to public education in New Brunswick matter, especially given your role in supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our school communities who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The “Great News” Facebook initiative will continue this year, and the *NBTA News* will continue to publish teacher-written articles chronicling your experiences from your classrooms and schools. I invite you to share your stories of resilience, courage and “new beginnings” as we all embrace what’s yet to come.

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