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Automne – Pleins feux sur le PP

Hiver – Enseignement et apprentissage innovateurs dans nos écoles

Printemps – Élargir la perspective de la compétence transculturelle
Unique to the College is the offering of the Great Teacher Seminar which encourages faculty members to share their teaching experiences with other faculty members. Tony Dorrian has been involved with the Great Teacher Seminar both as a participant and a facilitator, and presently teaches at the NSCC Burridge Campus, as a Related Subjects faculty member. He explains how the Great Teacher Seminar enriched his and others teaching experiences at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC).

Q: What is the Great Teacher Seminar (GTS)?
A: GTS is a “movement” where faculty from diverse disciplines come together to share their ideas and best practices, and celebrate the craft of teaching. It is based on the premise that teachers learn best from other teachers. Participants come together to discuss each other's teaching challenges and innovations.

Q: Why is it called a “movement”?
A: GTS is unique in that it is very “grassroots”. There is no central office, administration, or authority of any kind. The seminar has spread throughout North America and other parts of the world through oral tradition since it was founded by David Gotchall, in 1967. While there are few basic ground rules to follow, there has never been an instruction manual of any kind. It’s amazing that NSCC is now a part of a movement that began as a single event held in Chicago almost 50 years ago!

Q: How long has the NSCC sponsored this learning? Why do you think the NSCC found it necessary to offer this type of professional development?
A: GTS began its history with NSCC back in 1999. Initially it was primarily a faculty event, but due to the positive response and “word of mouth” from the participants, this seminar has thrived and grown at NSCC. In addition to the original GTS, seminars have evolved over the years to include all employees. NSCC has held The Great Support Staff Seminar, The Great Leaders Seminar and The Great College Seminar. Participants are so fond of the experience that NSCC’s Organizational Learning has also introduced a Great Teacher Alumni event. Participants can return to reflect and share how the seminar has impacted their teaching. This seminar is the perfect complement to Community College Education Diploma program (CCEDP). It builds on the solid foundation that CCEDP provides. I personally feel that this is one of the most powerful professional development opportunities that NSCC offers.

Q: Tony, how long have you been involved with GTS and in what capacity?
A: My personal history with GTS began in 2000, when I went as a participant. It was early in my career and I was thirsty for anything that could improve my teaching. I was asked to become a facilitator the very next year. Since then, I have been honoured to return each year as a member of the facilitation team. Last year I was the lead facilitator to help launch the first GTS at Western University in London, Ontario.

Q: How do faculty members get chosen for this experience? And what does the training involve?
A: GTS is offered at the end of every spring semester. Interested faculty should watch for the application that is sent out from Organizational Learning. With approval from their Academic Chair, participants are then chosen. Once accepted, participants are asked to prepare a couple of discussion papers in advance that explain a classroom innovation and a challenge that they are having with their teaching.

Q: Please explain how the Great Teacher Seminar is run?
A: GTS is a very organic process and no two seminars are the same. As the participants meet and participate in small group discussions, the facilitators listen intently for hot topics and issues that come up. As a result of...
this approach, a conference agenda emerges that is customized to meet the needs of the participants. There is no need for expert panels or hired speakers. Instead, the expertise comes for the participants themselves. In addition, there is time built into the seminar to allow participants to talk to each other, process what they are learning, and reflect on their own teaching. Founder David Gotchall uses the analogy of a simple bowl to explain the GTS process. A bowl has a simple, yet rigid structure. A bowl has a purpose, but the most important part of a bowl, is what goes in it. Likewise, the GTS is organized with rigid minimal structure, and the program is designed so the participants can fill the bowl with their ideas and creativity. GTS recognizes that free time in between sessions is not idle time. It is a powerful time when participants can reinforce what they have learned, and to build on meaningful conversations with their colleagues.

Q: How many people are involved in the facilitation of this seminar?
A: The facilitation team is comprised of GTS founder, David Gotchall and Organizational Learning’s Sheila MacCrimmon, as well as a small group of facilitators. As a team, we assist the participants in the GTS process and act as hosts. NSCC is so fortunate to have David return as our lead facilitator each year. Even though he is now semi-retired, he always makes time to assist us.

Q: How has this learning benefited both the teachers and students?
A: GTS is such a rich and energizing experience. A faculty member can really benefit from being exposed to teachers from other disciplines in the college. While there is a diverse array of teaching disciplines at NSCC, it is sometimes difficult to access this diversity. At Great Teachers, a carpentry faculty could find a solution to a problem from a nursing faculty. Likewise, an innovation that is shared by a library technician could work great in a business program setting. Participants are exposed to dozens of practical ideas that they can use to improve their delivery in the classroom. In addition, many participants leave with solutions to the teaching challenges they may have arrived with. Students can only benefit from a faculty that has been exposed to the collective wisdom and creativity of other teachers!

Q: Can this learning be used towards the college’s educational development plan?
A: GTS can count as an open elective credit for CCEDP.

Q: When is the Great Teachers Seminar offered and where?
A: The faculty version of GTS is offered annually in late April, once classes are over for the semester. The Great College and Great Support Staff seminars are usually offered in the fall. The alumni events are offered every few years.

Deborah McVeigh is a Faculty member at NSCC, Marconi Campus

GTS Founder David Gotchall with the 2014 NSCC Facilitation Team
What was I thinking? I must admit that thought crossed my mind on more than one occasion during the past two and a half years. I can remember reading the email about a Certificate in Elementary Mathematics program being offered and thinking, “Hmmmm, I should look into that. Those courses sound really interesting and I am not as comfortable with math as I would like to be.” Now here I am just having completed my program. Again I have to wonder, “What was I thinking?”

I have learned many things over the past couple of years, not all of it having to do with math. Although I never considered myself a stellar student, I must enjoy being one as I also completed a Master’s of Education in 2009. I must back up and share some important details. I am a mother of a now seven year old daughter and a five year old son; I have a very supportive husband and a great network of family and friends. I also teach a Grade Three class with amazing students alongside a wonderful staff.

I am not under the illusion that I am a superwoman, my accomplishments are mine, however without the support and encouragement of so many others I would have struggled with more than just the math concepts I was trying to learn. As I write I am now thinking again, “What was I thinking?” to tackle this program with two small children, a full time job and other obligations? I was not the only one to make sacrifices during this program; my family, especially, had to do without me on Friday nights and all day Saturday. My children had babysitters so I could attend class during July (three summers in a row) and my husband had to pick up the slack when I couldn’t be there. I missed dance classes, soccer games, swimming and family time but thankfully my family was only proud of what I was doing and not bitter about my absence.

As I sit and reflect about not only my courses, but about myself I have come to many conclusions, some of which are surprising and some are ideals I have had and they have been confirmed. First and foremost, I had the opportunity to spend the entirety of my program working with four fabulous ladies from nearby schools. Some of us didn’t really know each other before starting, a couple of us knew each other well, but I do feel we have bonded and will be life-long friends. My “math ladies” were incredible. Many conversations revolved around ideas for teaching in our class, and how to address difficult issues. Most importantly, we shared the highlights of our week and told stories of our students whom often left us smiling and in awe. We had our own Professional Learning Community (PLC) group that allowed for a safe environment to express the joys and stresses of our jobs and our personal lives.

I remember the drive home that first day after being bombarded with the fact that Early Elementary Math was not about math in the elementary grades but in fact covered a continuum up to high school. Learning that I would be expected to know about such topics as Exponents and Radicals, Algebraic Expressions and Polynomials, Linear and Quadratic Equations, Systems of Linear Equations and Inequalities had me feeling a little sick to my stomach. Together the five of us decided we would stick together and we would make it through, even though the phrase, “What was I thinking?” echoed in my head constantly.

I realized upon reflection, I have learned a lot. I still
Reflections

can’t really solve Linear or Quadratic Equations on my own, but I had a chance to explore the continuum of our math curriculum. I could make connections about what I am teaching in my Grade Three classroom and how it will affect students in upper grades.

We are not an isolated profession. We need to understand that we are part of the scaffolding necessary for our students to climb starting from their first year of school. When you miss a step it will cause problems later on. I realize how important using rich mathematical language is to student development, focusing on bringing that language into the classroom daily and throughout the day is vital to students’ development. I learned great techniques for using technology, revisited writing lesson plans, used the Frayer Model to help students explore examples of math terms. I was introduced to the Bansho Method as well as given the opportunity and reason to read more articles and texts about teaching math. Some were a review like classroom management ideas that I found refreshing, using manipulatives through to high school and fostering the idea of problem solving in our students’ everyday lives. We discussed importance of making math meaningful to students on every level so they can envision themselves as mathematicians.

Throughout this process I realized I am a lifelong learner. I have so much empathy for students who are made to sit in chairs for long periods of time. I recognize myself in many of my students. I need to interact; I need to move; I need to play; I need to vocalize my ideas and I need to be pushed to do my best. These are ideas I have re-evaluated in my own classroom to help it become a richer environment for all types of learners. Personally, I have realized that I am proud of the teacher and person I am. I have days that I ask myself, “What was I thinking?” about a lesson plan or an art activity, but each day is a new day. It is another chance to bring out the best in my students and myself. I am a life long learner and I learn from the best teachers ever, the students. I may not always be super organized, but I know my students and I learn with my students. I build an environment with them that allows them to explore and to be able to express themselves. Becoming a student again made me appreciate my family time more; it forced me to meet deadlines, I had to multi-task when projects were due the same day as my report cards and it gave me the chance to learn and see the world through the eyes of students.

Two weeks ago I opened my email. I looked at my husband and said, “Listen to this, there is a Masters being offered in technology that sounds really interesting. I would love to know more about using technology in my classroom.” With a look of stunned amusement he simply said, “What are you thinking?”

Jill Carter teaches at Cumberland North Academy in Chignecto
In My Classroom

The Restorative Teacher

Misty Ripley

From the time I was five years old, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I would spend hours on end playing school with anyone who would play with me and leading several student based groups throughout my school journey. In 2006 when I received my Nova Scotia teaching certification, I was beyond thrilled and couldn't wait to start my career. I had ambitions of being an innovative, creative and powerful teacher striving to make a difference in the lives of my students each and every day. However, the reality of my new career consisted of challenging job competitions in schools all across Cumberland County and inconsistent substitute days. After several positions, I finally started to gather term days and I thought I was starting to get settled in my role as an educator. In 2011, I came to the frightening conclusion that if I wanted to remain in a Resource position that I had no choice other than to enroll in a Masters of Education Program. The following Spring I started the Masters of Education Program with a major in Diverse Learners at Mount Saint Vincent University.

My final project for my Masters program is a professional development presentation entitled “The Restorative Teacher”. The same year I entered my Masters, I was selected as a member of our school lead team in the Restorative Approaches in Schools Project lead by Richard Derible. As I was beginning my masters and my role on this lead team I came to the realization that I possessed a very defeated and pessimistic attitude towards my career as an educator and education in general. I was trying to balance my career, my school work as a graduate student, in addition to being a mother, a wife, trying to maintain a home and having time for myself as an individual. I constantly felt overwhelmed with the number of meetings, new initiatives, challenging and severely disruptive students, my Resource caseload, the paperwork and that enthusiastic, vivacious young teacher I aspired to be had disappeared. Instead, I was looking at my pension statement wondering how I was going to possibly make it through the next thirty years. I was five years into my teaching career and wondering if I had made the wrong choice – should I stop now and find something else I could see myself doing for the rest of my working days?

As I progressed through my Masters courses and the professional development sessions in the Restorative Approaches in Schools project luckily my passion for education and serving my students was once again ignited. I was surrounded and engaged in dialogue by like-minded people who shared my concerns about the challenges we teachers face and for the first time I felt empowered to seek solutions through relationships, discussions, effective communication and problem solving. I slowly started to believe that I was once again a powerful entity in the classroom that could make a difference in the lives of my students despite budget barriers, large student numbers, mental health crisis and low staff morale. I developed this presentation to share with other educators in hopes of empowering them to know how extremely important they are in their classrooms each and every day and how to engage in restorative approaches in their schools to establish relationships with their colleagues and students for the benefit of our society.

In my presentation, I focus on the characteristics of the Restorative teacher which include using the principles of Restorative approaches (participatory, inclusive, forward focused, solution seeking), self assessment (how do you feel about your students, their families, your colleagues etc.) and strategies to implement classroom practices to establish a positive learning community such as check in and check out circles, using restorative questions when investigating an incident and thinking about classroom procedures, rules, and routines through a relational lens. A great deal of the research I use in my presentation is from a dissertation completed by Amy Boudreau at Mount Saint Vincent University which is located in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I have benefited from reading of the trials and tribulations of Ms. Boudreau’s research and have used it as the
foundation of my own practices as a teacher and new administrator. I have completed this presentation for the teaching staff of my own school, my colleagues in my Masters cohort and several other schools within the Chignecto Central Regional School Board.

In my presentation, I discuss my experiences with very challenging students and strategies to support these students and ourselves. I explain the value of self-reflection (both teacher and student) and its impact on student success. We discuss programs like the Mind Up Curriculum, strategies from The Behavior Code (which explores ways for teachers to collect data to uncover the root of an issue and then how to support the cause rather than simply the symptoms) and the importance of self-regulation. The reality of our classrooms is that we are receiving students who have had complex and unimaginable experiences at a very young age. We have students who don’t have their basic needs met at home, who experience extreme anxiety and in turn have very challenging behaviors to cope with these experiences. One of my favorite lines from the Behavior Code book is “If they could behave, they would…”, when I started focusing on what I had the power to do and how I could support my students to overcome these obstacles (rather than simply punish them for having these obstacles) I started to see growth within myself and my students and my classroom was a much happier and peaceful environment for everyone.

It is my hope that my presentation will offer educators a different way to view their role within our school system, empowering them to think of situations and their students through a relational lens offering them hope and positivity in a career and world that can feel paralyzing and inflexible. I certainly do not have all the answers. The most powerful and positive role I have as a teacher is to provide my students and colleagues with the opportunity to experience genuine relationships, which have importance and value. When we use restorative approaches in our classrooms and our schools we provide a foundation for our world to be a positive place where individuals seek understanding, take responsibility for their actions and strive to solve problems rather than blame and punish others for wrongdoing. If you watch the news these days, I think we can agree that the world could use individuals who think and empower themselves with their brains instead of weapons and feelings of hopelessness. When we use restorative approaches in our schools and our classrooms, we are building a stronger society. We are building a society where everyone has a voice, has value and feels a sense of belonging regardless of gender, social class, race, sexual orientation, religion or any other factor. We teach our children that what we do impacts others and that relationships are powerful, important and can be restored even when you make poor choices. As an educator using restorative approach as my foundation for everything else, I hope to teach someone that they are valuable, that they have a voice, that they deserve to be cared for and that it’s okay to ask for help. I will teach them skills to create and maintain positive relationships and how to restore a relationship when it has been harmed. I believe with these skills, our students will be happier, more confident, feel increased self worth and obviously experience an increased level of academic and lifetime success, which is our ultimate goal as educators.

Misty Ripley teaches at West Highlands School in Chignecto.
Tough Questions:
Gifted Students in Inclusive Schools

Janine MacAulay, M.Ed.

It was over ten years ago when I picked up Susan Winebrenner’s 2001 edition of Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom. I immediately knew that book with the orange cover would change everything. From the first page I was hooked; there was more insight and support for classroom teachers in gifted education in those 256 pages than I had ever learned about in university or during my career.

Since then, I have studied gifted education intensely, both formally and as an interest. Personally and professionally, I have talked to dozens of teachers, administrators, and parents who all have the same question: How do we help this gifted child? Like so many gifted individuals I have met and learned about, I now know that the possibilities are endless, but the reality can be stifling.

In Nova Scotia – as in most jurisdictions – giftedness falls under the special education umbrella. When inclusive education became policy across Canada in the 1990s, cutbacks led to the elimination of specialists in gifted education and reduced funding for gifted and talented students. Special programs were discontinued, and gifted students were placed in inclusive classrooms with all other students, regardless of ability or need.

Individual schools and school boards vary, but support for gifted students is not consistent across this province. If there are no gifted programs or gifted specialists at the school board level, it falls to each school to ensure that gifted students’ needs are being met in the regular classroom, via the program planning process. If we take a conservative estimate of 5% of the student population is gifted, there is a statistical likelihood that gifted students – diagnosed or otherwise – are present in every school and possibly every classroom. To me, that is reason enough to start asking tough questions about gifted students.

Are Gifted Students Really Exceptional?

Students in schools are organized by chronological age. In fact, age is the sole factor in determining when students enter school and how they are grouped. This practice assumes that all children follow a similar sequence and pace in development. However, gifted students are defined by their asynchronous development. According to Dr. Linda Silverman, “Asynchrony means being out-of-sync within oneself (uneven development), out-of-sync with agemates and the expectations of the classroom, and being vulnerable, due to all of these developmental and psychological differences from the norm.” Gifted children often exhibit highly developed intelligence that is inconsistent with their physical, social or emotional age. They are just as exceptional as other students who have uneven development in these areas – students who have cognitive delays, emotional disorders, or autism, for example.

Gifted individuals are some of the most misunderstood students in our schools. They have predictable learner characteristics, such as unusually high cognitive ability and curiosity, but they may also pose challenges in the classroom by being non-conforming, absent-minded or argumentative. Some students excel in particular subject areas, while others demonstrate gifts in leadership or creativity. Gifted students are vulnerable to particular social and emotional issues as well, including heightened sensitivity, perfectionism, anxiety, depression, and social awkwardness. Giftedness may also coexist with other learning differences, including attention disorders, specific learning disabilities, and behaviour disorders. Individuals who have gifts and other learning challenges are frequently referred to as twice-exceptional, and they are entitled to support for both exceptionalities. They are also present in every school – diagnosed, partially diagnosed, or completely unidentified.
**Why Isn't Inclusion Working?**

There is overwhelming evidence to show that gifted students do not thrive in inclusive classrooms alone. When policy and funding prioritize support for students who are not meeting the outcomes, students who regularly exceed the outcomes will be neglected. Gifted students who appear to be “doing alright on their own” may in fact never be identified. As their performance wanes, the likelihood of being recognized as gifted drops. Teachers may say “Oh, he has so much potential but he doesn’t apply himself,” or “She’s smart, but she’s not gifted.” Eventually they might lose their enthusiasm for learning, or hide their abilities, or drop out of school entirely.

Differentiated instruction is often cited as the solution to teaching in the inclusive classroom, even according to the *Gifted Education and Talent Development* document. However, there are several reasons why differentiation may not work for gifted students. For example, some teachers lack sufficient subject-area knowledge to teach gifted students, or cannot find suitable high-level materials for younger children. Sometimes the grade level curriculum is too far below the student’s needs to be differentiated. Or perhaps there are just too many students in the class with too many needs for one teacher to differentiate for them all. In a 2011 Canadian Teachers’ Federation study, teachers reported that “students who have exceptional educational requirements (including gifted students) are not being well served because teachers cannot meet their needs without significant supports, while those students who fall within the ‘normal’ range are not being well served because teachers must spend so much time with those students who fall outside the range.”

**What do Gifted Students Need?**

First, gifted students need knowledgeable educators. Teachers, administrators, and support personnel must understand the gifted students they serve. Program planning teams provide direction for classroom teachers, who then prepare, deliver, and evaluate the student’s program. Without fundamental knowledge of the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of gifted students, teachers cannot meet the needs of these students in ways that are appropriate and effective. The National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) has established minimum standards for teachers, stating that they should be able to:

1. recognize the learning differences, developmental milestones, and cognitive/affective characteristics of gifted and talented students, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and identify their related academic and social-emotional needs;
2. design appropriate learning and performance modifications for individuals with gifts and talents that enhance creativity, acceleration, depth and complexity in academic subject matter and specialized domains; and
3. select, adapt, and use a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to advance the learning of gifted and talented students.

Gifted students also need time to learn with other students like them. Gifted students may become impatient with slower learners or peers who do not see things their way; cooperative learning groups or “class tutor” arrangements where gifted students help low-ability learners are rarely successful and usually unfair to gifted students. In fact, Dr. Karen Rogers has found that mixed-ability grouping benefits all students except gifted students. She argues that gifted and talented students should spend the majority of their school day with others of similar abilities and interests. Gifted students working with their same ability peers have a better attitude toward the subject matter, positive social relationships, increased motivation, and broader career interests. Whether ability grouping is arranged as cluster groups in one class or a pull-out program, *there are no ill effects on other students when gifted students are permitted to learn together.*

Finally, gifted students need to be challenged through enrichment (depth of learning) and acceleration (increased pace of learning). Enrichment is endorsed as the preferred instructional strategy by most school boards. Strategies such as independent study, extension activities, and small-group enrichment clusters allow the gifted student to be self-directed and challenged while the teacher instructs other students. Yet, enrichment alone may not be enough: The student may learn more content through an independent study (for example, the role of the pharaoh in ancient Egypt), but may not gain any transferable skills (such as, how to write a biography). What's more, some teachers may use “enrichment” to enhance learning for all students, which appears to be equitable but does not actually qualify as differentiation for gifted students.
Several researchers recognize that acceleration has a greater impact on students’ academic achievement. They have found that gifted students’ performance and motivation often decrease when they are required to do routine work at a routine pace. Although some school boards discourage the practice of acceleration, the *Gifted Education and Talent Development* document supports several forms of acceleration for gifted students. Grade-based acceleration is often controversial, yet the research shows it to be a highly effective academic strategy that can also provide social benefits. Other acceleration options, which include curriculum compacting in math and science, academic pull-out programs, cluster grouping, subject-based acceleration, mentorships, and challenge for credit, can increase a student’s academic achievement by at least half a school year. Acceleration has been associated with a number of other benefits, including positive self-esteem, healthy social relationships, advanced social maturity and independence, and higher educational aspirations.

**What Can We Do?**

Can gifted students receive a quality, appropriate education in Nova Scotia’s inclusive schools? I believe the answer is a qualified “yes.” We have the potential to properly educate gifted students, but we are not yet achieving in this area. Educators at all levels should consider the following recommendations.

**Teachers:**
- Learn about gifted students in general as well as particular gifted students you may teach.
- Refer students who may be gifted to program planning if they need more support than you can provide.
- Be aware that giftedness may be present in students from all ability levels, cultural groups, gender and sexual identities, and socioeconomic circumstances.
- Consider becoming a lead teacher for gifted education in your school.

**Principals:**
- Recognize that gifted students may require a range of services.
- Be flexible when grouping students for learning.
- Consider cluster grouping gifted students in the same class to support their learning and their teacher.
- Arrange for professional development for school staff in gifted education.

**Program Planning Teams**
- Provide programming that encourages gifted students to develop their strengths.
- Monitor gifted students for continuous progress and engagement.
- Do not allow minor gaps in knowledge to hold back a student from accelerating.
- Value the insight that parents and guardians provide about their gifted children.

**School board administration:**
- Ensure that gifted students have access to a range of services and options.
- Establish a policy around acceleration that is equitable and accessible to all students.
- Consult research rather than anecdotal evidence when making decisions about acceleration. The *Iowa Acceleration Scale* is an excellent research-based resource for making decisions about grade-based acceleration.
- Consider how staffing, programming, and policy decisions impact gifted students.

For further reading:


National Association for Gifted Children. www.nagc.org


Janine MacAulay teaches at Robin Foote Elementary School in Cape Breton.
The term *professional* is applied widely and wildly in the 21st century. Traditionally the term was connected to very specific occupations that were founded in very explicit academic training, codes and social recognitions. There is no question teaching, a very demanding occupation, is a profession by the very precise denotation of the term. The entomology of profession is rooted in the middle ages in the expression of the word profess. When one professes, one expresses beliefs. As I examine teaching as very challenging profession, I have built my article regarding supporting professionalism in our schools around six “e” words: ethics, education, excellence, engagement, endeavour and experience. In any exercise aimed at support we must first start with ourselves and then interpret and apply to assist our fellow professionals. By helping ourselves we are able to help others.

As teachers we operate under a precise and well-developed code of ethics which constructs a moral system which governs our appropriate behavior and conduct as teachers in every aspect of our actions and interactions with our students, fellow teachers and our communities. The seven sections and their twenty-three subsections are most worthy of review, reconsideration and conversation because they characterize our expected practice as teachers. I strongly recommend you review them upon completion of this article.

A professional must be competent. Teachers should be well educated in the disciplines they teach. The foundation is of course in their post-secondary education as a starting platform. Subsequent to this they should continue to educate themselves as knowledge advances. Upgrading should not be restricted to an increase in licence and salary. Every profession demands that its practitioners constantly be upgrading their qualification to ensure they stay current with the expanding knowledge base and practice. This should be a given for all teachers. Professional Development which has suffered some negative criticism from some outsiders is paramount if it focuses on the teaching rather than administration.

I believe when I went to school in the nineteen fifties the school years consisted of one hundred and sixty five days, which is still I believe the defined length of many private schools. In my career the year morphed to one hundred and ninety five days and I can recall the suggestion of an even more dramatic expansion to the length. Let us not, as professionals, be caught in the snare of being unprofessional baby sitters to an ever increasing number of two working parent homes. School is educationally based, not child minding based. I don’t believe students in the twenty first century are thirty five days slower or that the curriculum is that much more demanding.

As teachers there is no question we need continual professional development to maintain our control of teaching subjects and to improve our skills as teachers. First and foremost, there are many professional development opportunities within the profession. Augmenting
regular PD for teachers is a personal responsibility to constantly inform themselves on the developments in education, practice and brain theory, which given the internet, is ever increasingly easy to access. A great deal of this improvement is an out-of-school activity, but there are compulsory opportunities and necessities that should be provided to a whole staff for the benefit of the students and their successes. Knowledge is an elevator.

Engagement is an accelerator. As teachers our prime activity is teaching and teaching is a profession. There is no question that to successfully meet the very challenging expectations of planning, organizing and executing meaningful classroom experiences, teachers need to be engaged. The actual act of sharing this engagement is central to accomplishments throughout the school. These contributions are part of being an excellent professional. Finding the time and the energy to facilitate this is essential. However, professional enthusiasm is powered by engagement. It becomes a self-feeding cycle when properly managed. The best shared engagement becomes positively exploited throughout a school, a district, the province and hopefully across the profession. There are many opportunities for engaged teachers to share.

One obvious area of sharing is the amazing advances that are being made with the understanding of how the brain works and how teaching should be altered to match this understanding. Membership in the teaching profession obligates us to stay current. The opportunities to improve are massive but so are the investments in time to attain the huge amounts of expanding material. If you have ever worked in a good study group you know how well that strategy works if everyone is engaged and is willing to carry their individual responsibilities. Small teachers' study groups work. As a teacher of art and drama, the amazing opportunities to learn from peers was obvious with the leadership models that were promoted in the past by the Annapolis Valley Board. Such practices work.

There is sometimes a misrepresentation that it is only those new to the profession that have enthusiasm. In fact, teaching is a symbiotic arrangement where there is an interdependent relationship within the education system. In others words, we depend on each other for our success. We need to approach our tasks with controlled enthusiasm. One of the elements that destroy our keenness is negativity. The negative is a huge black hole that devours our positive inclinations. While there are definitely moments when negative criticism is appropriate, unfortunately and all too often, a great frequency and an overabundance of it produces a dark landslide that can quickly bury even the most optimistic. Pessimism is a very dark hallway; therefore, we all need to promote a constructive attitude.

If we do not it is too easy to be defeated by the all too often heavy burdens we encounter. The new, the middle careers and the vintage all have a real responsibility to promote the profession. Assisting each other and keeping the profession affirmative is everyone's duty. The experienced teachers need to share their wisdom with others in a comfortable non threatening manner. The new young teachers need to share with courage and fresh insights. The middle career teachers need to nudge, be diplomatic and practice humour. Everyone needs to listen. Everyone needs to be heard.

The management structure that I have found most
Supporting our Profession

supportive is the collegial one. All too often this is not well understood. In this model the structure is not a pyramid with authority and power being concentrated with an increasing degree in a hierarchical fashion but rather one where everyone is an equal. We often say we are equal but we rarely practice it. The schools that I experienced that were the most successful truly practiced equality amongst the staff. I can remember a very effective administrator saying that his principle principal function was to assist the teachers in their classrooms being great teachers, not to supervise, direct or correct them. He did not just say it he meant it and practiced it. By listening to others we all learn. Conversely the worst and most uncomfortable school was run in a decidedly hierarchical manner. That administrative style was a disaster because it did not value teachers as equals. Rather it relegated them to very inferior and subservient roles. There was a spoken pretense of professional equality but it was a total fraud. I am reminded of a comment that an older teacher made early in my career. She asked if it was not wiser to listen to forty well educated minds and decide on a future enterprise than to follow one. I would suggest the former collegial style is professional and the latter hierarchical one is unprofessional.

The practised caveat of respecting all is central to the effective existence of a profession. Just as collegiality, which is founded in respect for all, a profession must embrace it fully. Each member must be encouraged and be supported in providing the most professional of services. Just as the link is the weakest element in a chain the weakest teacher is the potential flaw in a profession's success. At every stage in a teacher's career there is a constant requirement to help, be helped and to celebrate accomplishments. Isolation is a cancer in a profession. Remember the teaching profession is like Nova Scotia: a peninsula, not an island.

Teachers should model and practice reliability, honesty and integrity. These are three very powerful qualities. The reliable teacher professional can be counted on to show up, complete and meet the very demanding requirements of fulfilling the role of the teacher. Honesty is the foundation of reliable performance. Integrity is the lubricant that permits reliability and honesty to elevate and promote the profession. Their antonyms: untrustworthiness and dishonesty, create fissures and fractures that quickly destroy public and participants faith in a profession. We have all watched the degradation that transpires when a profession ceases to be respected for its honesty, reliability and integrity. Once these are lost it is difficult to recover them.

For practical and historical reasons the Nova Scotia Teachers Union is the organization that represents and embraces professional teachers in this Province. While there sometimes is modest negative criticism of the nomenclature we can all appreciate it for its powerful effective functions. As a professional organization it provides amazing supports and opportunities at the school, local, provincial, national and international level. From a professional point of view involvement in the Union enhances every aspect of a teacher's professional life. Participation promotes growth, maintenance and security within the profession. Involve yourself as deeply in the Union as you can. Union involvement provides a rich opportunity for the individual teacher to become a competent professional in a respected profession.

The teaching profession is a lifetime undertaking. Focus on the challenging task, and reward yourself by enjoying it. The comfort and joy that comes from doing your job well is incredible. All too often we are not complimented and recognised so it is critical that we do not spare our words of praise for our fellow teachers. Celebrate individual success and group achievements. Just as students need to honestly know how they are doing it is vital that teachers have a realistic understanding of just how well they are teaching. Take the time to help each other to improve. Criticism is both positive and negative. We all need criticism. All eyes, young to the profession and experienced, see differently. Celebrate, integrate and adopt different views.

There is a real danger of isolation from the greater community when one is immersed in a demanding profession. Overcome the impediment of isolation by involvement and volunteering outside the school. It is remarkable how sojourning into recreational and philanthropic activities can enhance your personal and professional life. My involvement in outside activities have improved my success as a teacher and added remarkable colour to my life. A well developed sense of humour makes everything easier.

AVISO is our professional online magazine. Please read it, share it, discuss it, critique it and write for it. Its continued success depends on you. And take the time to let us know how we are doing.
Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics is a guide to members in maintaining at all times the high traditions of their profession.

I. MEMBER AND PUPIL
1. The member regards as confidential, and does not divulge other than through professional channels any information of a personal or domestic nature, concerning either pupils or home, obtained through the course of his/her professional duties.
2. The member should be just and impartial in all relationships with pupils.
3. The member should assume responsibility for the safety and welfare of his/her pupils, especially under conditions of emergency.
4. The member should avoid giving offence to the religious and political beliefs and moral scruples of his/her pupils and/or their parents.
5. The member should be as objective as possible in dealing with controversial matters arising out of the curriculum subjects, whether scientific or political, religious or racial.

II. MEMBER AND MEMBER
1. The member should not make defamatory, disparaging, condescending, embarrassing, or offensive comments concerning another member.
2. The member shall not make derogatory remarks about the professional competence of another member.
3. The member shall not accept a position arising out of the unsettled dispute between members, and their employers.
4. The member shall not sexually harass another member. Sexual harassment shall mean any unsolicited and unwanted sexual comments, suggestions or physical contact directed to a specific member which that member finds objectionable or offensive and which causes the member discomfort on the job. The accused member must be made aware of the nature of the objection prior to action being taken.

III. MEMBER AND INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION
1. The member should observe a reasonable, professional and proper loyalty to internal administration of the school.
2. The member responsible for internal administration should be professional, loyal, fair, and just to the members of the staff.
3. The member responsible for internal administration should not of his/her own initiative, make any detrimental report, oral or written, on a member's efficiency without first discussing the matter with the member.

IV. MEMBER AND EXTERNAL ADMINISTRATION
1. The member should adhere to a contract until the contract has been terminated by mutual consent, or the contract has otherwise been legally terminated. A verbal agreement is a contract.
2. The member should not accept a salary below that which he/she would receive according to the scale negotiated between the NSTU and the employer.
3. The member should not accept a salary above that which he/she would receive according to the scale negotiated between the NSTU and the employer, without notifying the NSTU.

V. MEMBER AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION
1. The member should be a member of and participate in the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.
2. The member who in his/her professional capacity is a member of a committee, board, or authority dealing with matters affecting the educational program of Nova Scotia as a whole should be elected, appointed, or approved by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.
3. The member, or group of members, should not take any individual action in matters which should be dealt with by his/her Local or by the NSTU.
4. The Local should not take any individual action in matters where the assistance of the NSTU has been sought, or in matters requiring the authorization of the NSTU.

VI. MEMBER AND PROFESSION
1. The member should maintain his/her efficiency by professional development, or study, by travel or by other means which will keep him/her abreast of the trends in education and the world in which we live.
2. The member should engage in no gainful employment, outside of his/her contract, where the employment affects adversely his/her professional status, or impairs his/her standing with students, associates, and the community.
3. The member should not accept remuneration for tutoring his/her pupils except under unusual circumstances and with the approval of his/her supervisor or principal.

VII. MEMBER AND COMMUNITY
1. The member should so conduct himself/herself in his/her private life that no dishonour may befall him/her or through him/her, his/her profession.
As professionals and educators in the Province of Nova Scotia, we are constantly faced with data driven statistics. Numbers and percentages are offered to us and we continue to take in all of this information while remaining an integral part of the teacher/student learning process. We are teaching, gathering evidence, evaluating, sharing and exchanging, and doing this during hectic daily schedules that are always changing and never ending. Being a professional is about remaining positive, practical, creative and allowing oneself time to adjust, reflect, and connect to meet challenges. These are our own challenges or ones that are requested of us by others. We can provide solutions to challenges presented when we participate in the process and value what we are absorbing while delivering to all parties involved.

In March 2014, I was presented with a Professional Development Education Research Award, from the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, for my research project entitled “Helping the Struggling Reader Develop Literacy Skills”. The following is a summary of the work completed, submitted and presented (original Research Report/Project 37 pages) – included are the excerpts from sections:

1. Summary – purpose, methodology, research results
2. Recommendations/Thesis Statement
3. Data
4. References

Excerpts from the book “How Rocket Learned to Read” by Tad Hills

“Rocket loved to play...But one day...a little yellow bird startled Rocket. “Aha! My first student!”...Rocket was confused. “I am not a student.” “But if I am your teacher, then you must be my student.”...Rocket said “But I don’t know how to read.” “Can’t read? Fantastic! Welcome to my classroom.” said the bird...Before long Rocket found himself captivated by the stories she shared and from the earthy smells of fall she read about in the books. Rocket learned words in the air, in the snow and in the soil...S-U-N...Then together they began to read and read and read some more!”

1. Summary: Early Literacy Support – English Language Arts encompasses all subject areas and is considered cross curricular – thinking, reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing and sharing. Students from Grade 1 were selected based on input from school staff and Team Meetings.

Methodology: Participants: (students/parents/school staff/researcher) Students selected due to discussion at Team Meetings. Assessments were completed with daily consistent support offered. Support was provided in addition to classroom English Language Arts time. Parents were encouraged to make every effort for students to attend school on a regular basis.

Procedure/Materials: Prior to sessions, initial assessments (Appendix Table 1) were administered, based on observations and a combination of information gained from the Observation Survey Tasks such as: Concepts of Print, Word Reading, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, Letter Identification, Vocabulary Writing. Other additional assessments were used daily in order to plan and implement lessons that would best fit the needs of
each student. The Record of Oral Reading was administered daily during the lesson and ongoing reading and writing vocabulary lists were monitored daily. The lesson structure followed the components of the Early Literacy Assessment Lesson plans with the focus on the strengths and needs of the student. All aspects of literacy where considered so that oral language, reading and writing development could be encouraged and monitored. Following each lesson, reflections were noted and based on observations and next lessons were prepared.

Research Results: Students, after receiving ongoing, consistent daily support that was based on assessment, daily observations and interactions made strong advancements in overall literacy skill development based on data collected during final assessments. Final assessments (Appendix A Table 2) consisted of the Observation Survey Tasks as well as Record of Oral Reading. The students were selected due to the fact that they were the lowest in reading and writing ability within their peer group. Student growth, ranged from 4 – 6 reading levels, with the most important aspect in their ability to firmly establish the necessary early reading and writing behaviours. These early behaviours have been gleaned as most important in the ongoing development and growth of oral language, reading and writing literacy skills (see attached reference list for research reference materials). The behaviours gained were as follows: a) Directionality in dealing with text/print. Moving left to right when dealing with running text; b) One to one match while dealing with running text/line changes; c) Developing a basic sight word vocabulary in reading and writing and making use of this now known list within oral conversations, in making connections between these words in conversation, in reading and writing; d) The ability to say what is known and was is unknown showing greater independence by the student in what has been learned and the confidence to know what is known and unknown therefore taking ownership; e) Using all 3 sources of information – meaning, syntax and visual sources of information as well as various reading strategies such as rereading, self-correction, decoding, and monitoring.

The students showed growth on all assessment tasks with the most improvements noted in vocabulary development – in reading and writing and on hearing and recording sounds in words therefore connecting the correct sounds with the correct letters – hearing these and being able to verbally name them and also being able to print the letter/letters/groups of letters correctly in sequence. Oral Reading Record evidence showed that the students made significant gains in reading fluency as groups of check marks for full lines of text reading were apparent. Students were able to answer comprehension questions, make personal connections when asked and seemed freer to answer questions as they were not struggling with decoding words when provided with appropriate levelled reading materials. Overall book handling, use of text features improved, ability to connect pictures with text and participation in the lessons improved immediately after the first four to six lessons and more confidence was noted by teachers.

2. Recommendations/Thesis Statement: Not all reading and writing strategies work with and for all students. As a result, professionals delivering support to students who are struggling need to be mindful of the following:
- Supports need to be delivered in a supportive and consistent manner based on ongoing observation that addresses the strengths and needs of the individual student;
- Doing the same thing in the same way over and over again does not work. Learning from experience and continuing to develop and increase a repertoire of effective strategies and selecting those that fit the needs of the student is important for learning;
- A comprehensive and balanced literacy support program is key to improvement;
- Assessments used to determine what is known, almost known and not yet learned are essential in order for planning programming/support. Assessments need to drive instruction; especially when it comes to planning for students who are struggling with developing literacy skills;
- Collaboration is key – collaboration with family members, school staff, administration and all involved;
- Time on tasks that are specifically based on ongoing assessment and observation will improve skill development with a focus on independence.

Knowing what a student knows, almost knows and still needs to learn is the key.

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Telling a student leads to short term success. Assisting a student on how to develop skills leads to long term success over time;

- Teachers need to provide by scaffolding instruction in ways that support content literacy, skill development and learning with the focus on explicit instruction. Being economical with words so that directions and supports do not confuse and add to the burden already present with students who struggle with literacy;
- Knowing what a student knows, almost knows and still needs to learn is the key. Remember it is not what they have not yet learned, it is what still needs to be taught;
- Continuing opportunities for professional growth in the effective delivery of supports – time, practice, experience and ongoing employment of “priority practices” will benefit all involved.

3. Data: Appendix A
Growth in reading levels – ranging from 4-6 levels over lesson timeframe based on initial and final assessments using levelled books. Initial assessments – all students were at Dictated Text; therefore unable to get reading levels within levelled book assessments. Final Assessments – all students within levelled reading books – levels E – G texts. Growth for each student noted in all areas assessed using the Observation Survey Tasks as listed.

4. References


Research-Based Content Area Reading Instruction. (2002). Texas Reading Initiative. Austin, Texas.

Elementary school student reading and writing samples

Nova Scotia Curriculum English Language Arts P-6 Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation Document/ccrsbonline.ca

Kits–Levelled Reading Materials; Core Curriculum Vocabulary Research-Based Cards for Collaboration in the Classroom. (Webber) and Five Ways of Looking: Vocabulary Building Cards, Web Boards and Activities (SuperDuper).

Holly MacDonald teaches at Cumberland North Academy in Chignecto
Every day that I wake up it is such a fabulous sentiment to feel the way I do about the profession I am in. This job is no 9-5 job and you spend more days sick than you do in good health, but the extra hours you put in to teach the children in front of you and the more cold & flu medication you purchase (I honestly think I keep most drug stores in business) the better it feels inside. Knowing that you are making a difference and trying to meet the needs of the children in front of you. I am currently in my fifth year teaching and I wouldn’t change a thing. Well, that isn’t entirely true. There is a lot that I would change, but unfortunately it is totally out of my control. Teaching is nothing like it used to be – at least that is what I keep hearing. Nowadays everybody in your classroom learns differently, no two people are the same type of learner and teachers are being pulled in 75 different directions at once. This is what I love because after endless hours of teaching, professional development, correcting, lesson planning and preparing, a light bulb in little Jonny’s head finally goes off and all of the hours and hours of hard work has finally paid off. It’s these little moments that make up for all of the moments you wish you could do over.

My five years of experience so far have taught me a lot. I have learned that although preparation, time management, professional development and lesson planning are all important aspects of my chosen profession, none of these will ever come close to the importance of building relationships with your students, for without trust one cannot learn. I make sure I always build a trusting relationship with my students before I ever attempt to teach them. It was during my international placement that I truly understood the importance of relationships and teaching. I entered a world completely different from my own, different values, different morals and a different educational culture. I knew in order for me to be able to teach those children I had to be willing to step out of my comfort zone and explore their culture before I was ever going to be able to talk about mine.

I spent two months teaching and exploring a small band of Islands in the Caribbean known as St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It is through this experience that my love for teaching truly began. It is true what they say – teaching involves way more than just simply “teaching”. There is so much more to it and some days you may not even get to the “teaching” part. This international experience opened my eyes to a whole different world and how education can be so very different depending on where you are. The students I was teaching were engaged and motivated to learn. As the teacher, had the power to make the learning fun and memorable for my students.

Those two months were some of the best months of my life. The relationships I built with my students were memories that were extremely difficult to leave behind. This is how I came to know the importance of relationships in education and the impact you can have on someone’s life. After being back now and teaching near my hometown I have finally put the pieces to the puzzle together. Our teachers are fantastic teachers – they are all just bombarded with so many outcomes to cover that more often than not they are forgetting the importance of building relationships in fear that they will not finish a unit they had planned or an assignment that is due. I am as guilty as the next teacher for doing this – but reflecting back on my time in St. Vincent and the Grenadines has really put my professional life into perspective. When students move on year after year it is the relationships they remember, not the activities or assignments that they completed for you. I encourage every teacher there to remember the importance of relationships because that is more worthwhile than any curriculum you will ever teach.

Alyson Hurley teaches at the River Hebert Schools in Chignecto.
It had only been six months since retiring and find myself wide awake and it is well into the middle of the night. To put it simply, I can’t sleep. What is the problem? What is this about? Why can’t I go to sleep? Well, in a few short hours, I will be doing my very first day ever as a substitute teacher! You see, I knew when I retired that I would go back to teaching a few days a month if I was needed. So after I submitted all the paper work, completed all the record and abuse checks, I got a call from AESOP and I was declared competent to substitute. Keep in mind, I had been a full time permanent teacher for over 32 years at this point in time but, had never been a substitute teacher up until this day.

I am not sure if competent is a good word to describe me. I have been a teacher all my life, never missing an opportunity to teach a lesson; be it a life lesson, a knitting lesson, a science lesson, painting lesson or whatever, I jumped at the chance. This is all in spite of my husband and son’s requests to “please, don’t say anything!” I have of course never listened and carried on with the lesson in the mall, at the grocery store, at the supper table, and while visiting friends. I am a teacher at heart. Anyone who knows me knows I love to teach and I love to take advantage of any teaching moment that may come my way. It is just a part of my personality. I thrive on teaching! I think you get the idea. In spite of my 32 years teaching in a classroom, on my first day as a substitute teacher, I was as nervous as if I was starting my first day of teaching all over again without any real experience!

Believe me when I say, I was indeed up for the challenge and in fact looking forward to what I knew best – teaching children. I am a parent, aunt, friend, wife, mother, daughter, sister, niece, cousin and have taught many students over the years. I had been an Elementary school classroom teacher, Vice Principal, and Program Support Teacher for over these 32 years. I should have known what to expect. However, I was a nervous wreck! What did I discover?

First, I discovered that children are children! They will push the boundaries because that is what they do. They need boundaries and consistency so I needed to develop this with the students. I found it hard at first because I did not want to be hated on my first day but I also did not want the children taking advantage of me. You see I am all about the Golden Rule which is “Treat others the way you want to be treated”. I also believe in fair consequences for your actions. I hope I established a respectful learning environment immediately in each new classroom I visited. Wow, imagine the relief I felt after I had the first day “under my belt”. I had an awesome day and continue to be active on our Substitute Teacher List. This has been a very positive experience for me. I get hugs arriving at a school, I get asked by many students – “Are you my teacher today?” and “Why can’t you come in for my teacher?” And of course I get tons of notes and drawings.
When I do not, however, get these wonderful questions and memorabilia, I guess it will be time to throw in the towel and the whiteboard markers!

Another point I would like to share with you, is that I found that I had a very different feeling working through the lesson plan that has been prepared for me to teach to the students. I looked through what needed to be completed and went about my job very diligently. I wanted the “real” teacher to know that I fulfilled my obligation. The students learned the outcomes to the best of my ability and to the best of their ability. I worked hard at getting everything completed, corrected, re-checked and I left notes about who needed extra support noting areas of need on particular students.

As a substitute teacher, with many years of experience, I was and still am a teacher who supports the profession of teaching! I have taught all over Cumberland County and in all different grade levels teaching a variety of subjects. I always say “be a learner who is respectful first. Listen and hear what the students are trying to say. Value what they all have to offer”.

Now, since retiring, I am still a learner myself. I learn new things about myself every day. I now am painting and showing my paintings to others. I have given some of them away, made donations and also sold several. I am taking courses and do a great deal of travelling to many different areas within my own country and also to other warmer places. I love Florida, camping and spending time at my summer place. But, I can honestly say, I still love substituting and I love the feeling of walking into a school.

Melanie Wolfe is a retired Teacher from Cumberland North Academy
Supporting our Profession

Slow down the exodus:
Support needed for beginning teachers!

Stephanie Stewart

Attracting good teachers to the profession is important, but it is just as important to keep those high-quality teachers in the profession. There is some turnover among new teachers, mainly because of the lack of job security among junior teachers (service Canada, 2013). According to a study conducted by Richard M. Ingersoll in 2012, approximately 15.7 percent of teachers leave their posts every year, and 40 percent of teachers, who pursue undergraduate degrees in teaching, never even enter the classroom at all. This data not only gives me an unsettling feeling of fear, it has me asking the question: Why are all these teachers leaving—or not even entering the classroom in the first place?

Although teaching has always been a profession that I saw myself doing, I have to admit that when I got the university acceptance letter, my nerves wrapped in a ball. I thought to myself, “What have I got myself into?” I love the idea of being a role model and an educator for children, but I knew it was not always fun and games.

Unlike the majority of my classmates, I chose not to apply for the Bachelor of Education program right after I completed my undergrad. At the time, I was not sure it was right for me. I wanted to make sure I took that step for the right reasons, not just to follow the status-quo of my peers. Unfortunately, some of my fellow classmates, who went on to the B. Ed program, were not there for the right reasons. In their eyes, teaching was just something you studied after receiving an undergrad degree. After all, the short classroom hours (start at 8 am and go home at 3 pm), and of course the Summer season and storm-days off was a huge selling point for a lot of people. But, many young teachers soon realize they must do overwhelming amounts of after-hours work. According to Statistics Canada, in 2005, elementary and secondary school teachers, who worked overtime, put in about 7.6 unpaid hours each week. New teachers will eventually pour out emotional energy into their work, and will inevitably experience mental exhaustion, possibly leading to failure to get the job done. Other studies have found that teachers of younger students usually have less allotted time for in-class preparation and more supervisory duties than secondary school teachers. Many teachers are expected to do the kinds of things that someone can only tolerate for two or three years. How could we sustain the level of intensity throughout a career, without having a total mental breakdown?

Extensive research, in 2012, by Richard M. Ingersoll shows that new teachers who have even just two small initiatives in place (working with a mentor and having regular supportive communication with an administrator) are more likely to stay in the classroom. The following suggestions may support beginning teachers:

1. Preparation for stressful events: New teachers may not be aware of logistical issues related to field trips, assemblies, classroom observations, fire drills, and other
events such as standardized tests. It would be appreciated if, before any such event, beginning teachers know what to expect and have the opportunity to ask questions.

2. **Humanity promoted:** Share your tactics about work-life balance. It is so easy to fall into the trap of struggling to get our work done and have time for ourselves in the evenings and on weekends. Many of us feel like we are crashing and burning, and some of us really are. If you see this happening, help new teachers find ways to work more efficiently and support them as they attempt to do so. After all, teachers whose personal/human needs are met will most likely be calmer, happier, and more productive. These attributes will positively affect the climate of their classrooms and the whole school!

3. **A Buddy system:** It is really important for beginners to have an intense mentoring system in the first year. Having weekly support and in-classroom coaching for fine-tuning skills, planning lessons, and for problem solving about things that come up in the classroom ensures that someone experienced is there during the critical moments of the beginning teacher's first year. Making sure that beginning teachers don't just survive, but also become competent and effective, will give them enough confidence to stay in the profession.

4. **Opportunities for leadership:** I have met a few teachers who say they feel powerless to lead and make change happen. In order to have them stay within the profession, we must give them professional growth opportunities. Perhaps administration could seek teacher feedback on some proposals, changes, and major decisions in school policy. Instead of hiring an outside consultant, use in-service days to give teachers a special time to offer their thoughts on new initiatives and share what is working in their classrooms.

Regardless of why new teachers stay or leave, the revolving door of teacher turnover is a problem that affects students and entire schools. It does not have to be a problem that continues to spiral out of control; with a little support, from everyone around, the revolving door *can* be stopped.

Stephanie Stewart is an Elementary Substitute Teacher in Chignecto
A balanced literacy program helps to bring accountability to our Literacy programs. It helps to meet all students where they are with a blend of modelled, shared, guided and independent reading and writing experiences with an opportunity for oral language development throughout. The task was set by our boards and then the question soon came to be: “How do I do it all?” Management and accountability of these levels of instruction and learning can be overwhelming for the most experienced of teachers.

In my first teaching experiences, I started with a multi-age P-1-2 classroom and survival was key. The key to survival at the Primary levels was with the use of centers. Centers provided practice time and authentic opportunities to use learned skills, but also allowed me to pull aside students for small group instruction, support and assessment. I was fortunate enough to have a great teacher at that school who taught the 3-4-5 multi age class. With her guidance, I was able to use these centers to teach the various abilities and still provide time for each of the types of instruction.

Being a new teacher, I floated into many different positions P-12. All were valuable learning experiences and gave me the opportunity to see the growth and development of learners in a literacy setting. I saw the connect and disconnect. When I was given an upper elementary assignment, I went back to what I knew about centers and did some research into how they could be used for upper elementary students. I did not want to be a pioneer and I also did not want to reinvent the wheel.

One of the first readings I did was by Debbie Diller, “Literacy Workstations: Making Centers Work.” I was interested in making good workstations that were not just busy work, but practiced skills older students could do independently that also included some problem solving and accountability. To me, especially with older students, accountability is key. They need to be able to work and practice a skill.

Often the question I get is about the marking. Students can create and learn in workstations while doing tasks that do not always have to be marked. Perseverance is just as important a task for some students as creating a polished product. Being able to read and/or follow instructions and follow through with a task with minimal support is a life skill we want all students to be able to attain. We are not looking to create products, but self-motivated learners and problem solvers.

Being organized is an important component to running effective workstations. You need to know what your students are capable of and how they work together. Assessment is ongoing. Working in small groups helps with this. I often vary my grouping. More often than not, they are grouped by ability. However, especially when you have very strong readers and very weak readers, groups can be organized so leadership can be encouraged and success in a task is needed. Your strong readers can practice using personal strategies that have helped them be successful and assist in developing strategies of their peers that may need extra help.

What kinds of centers do I do? I break my block into two 15 minute sections so I can meet with two groups in a day in hopes that I am meeting with each group twice depending on need for Guided Reading. In keeping with a balanced focus in mind and also noting that these are times of practice I tend to do the following workstations:

- Technology – you can use the iPad to do everything from Sock Puppets, iMovie, brainstorming of ideas using Inspiration, recording oral language opportunities, Mimio games focused on a specific target.
• Poetry – chant it using different voices, speed, add actions; create poetry; search for specific elements of poetry, share their favorites with their peers; discuss the author’s intended meaning, etc.
• Word Work – Xray vision game (choose a word from the word wall, give a clue and have peers guess); create a word search; scrabble/Banagrams, etc; letter scramble, word sorts, Nelson Word work box activities based on mini-lesson
• Non-fiction/Media Literacy – advertisements; newspaper using kid-friendly sites such as www.youngzine.org or www.ourlittleearth.com, National Geographic Kids; integrate non-fiction text features; use graphic organizers
• Cartooning – provide cartoon and complete the dialogue; provide the prompt, create their own illustrations; great way to tie in content areas.
• Independent Reading – read for pleasure; ‘Just Right’ book choices; respond to the book using prompts; literature circles; sharing of favorite book
• Writing – journals, diaries, maps, procedures, timelines, stories, post cards, brochures, etc
• Other – Reader’s Theatre, Oral Language, etc.

Probably the most important component to this set up is routine, routine, routine. Students have to have expectations set. Using an anchor chart to talk about what is expected of them, model for them what it looks like and how to practice are all very important. This does not happen in a day nor does it happen in a week. This is a process just like any other that requires a gradual release of responsibility. There will be good days and there will be not so good days but with continued practice and reflection on the process, it is an effective way of managing the daunting task of a Literacy block—fitting it all in.

You do not have to do it all on your own. As in my own experience, I had a fellow teacher help me get started. Peers are a valuable resource. Literacy mentors are a great resource as well. They are there to support you to develop best practices in your teaching.

As a final note, let’s be clear. This does not take the place of good instruction. The purpose of workstations is to allow for Guided Reading and independent practice. Mini-lessons still happen in Reading and Writing workshop. There is still opportunity for those tasks where they can work independently and creatively. I feel it is a creative solution to the increasingly diverse abilities we are so often finding in our classrooms today.

Denise Dickinson teaches at River Hebert Elementary School in Chignecto
So there I was, on deferred salary leave, living large in tiny moments. Doesn’t that sound amazing? I am often asked what it is that I do on a deferred salary leave. Here is what I like to do: go “professional adventuring.” Adventuring on my deferred leaves has meant expanding my professional experience by working for universities, being a senior author for educational publishing companies, working with educators in developing countries, and offering consulting services close to home, and far, far away. I hereby name this “professional adventuring.”

My students as well as school board benefit when I take a deferred leave. I use my deferred leaves to extend my professional knowledge and experience. During my deferred leaves, I teach graduate courses in education, allowing me to sustain a life as an academic. For example, during my current deferred leave, I am teaching five graduate courses in four Canadian provinces. My graduate teaching keeps me current about recent research, best classroom practices, and connects me with other educators’ experiences in a wider context than the day-to-day work in my own teaching.

Also during my current deferred leave, I am collaborating with a team of other education professors and offering professional training projects in two developing countries, as well as meeting with faculties and ministries of education. This involves extensive travel to work with these educators. Locally, I have spent time visiting colleagues who are working in different schools and universities in Quebec, and Ontario. I am able to visit classrooms, attend lectures, chat in staff rooms, and in some instances partake in teacher supervision sessions. Such experiences—both within Canada and beyond—are invaluable to my professional growth; by nature, they require me to reflect upon my own teaching practices and how I support student learning.

In addition, during this current leave, I am the senior author of a student text intended for high school English students. This text book is informed by my teaching experiences at Avon View High School and responds to the writing needs of my students. My role as senior author is to guide a writing team of authors from across Canada thereby expanding my knowledge about the needs of high school English instruction in Canada. During my deferred leave, I am also able to take-on contract work for a publishing company that includes a review of roughly 100 recent Atlantic Canadian resources available to high school English classrooms and match these resources with curricular expectations in Nova Scotia and elsewhere.

My six month deferred leave allows me to partake in this wide range of professional experiences that would otherwise be
When I return from a deferred leave, I bring a wealth of professional experiences to my teaching. My students benefit not only from a rejuvenated teacher, but also from the pedagogical ideas, resources, and ways of thinking about learning that I am exposed to during my deferred leave. I take great pride in my teaching and I want to bring the best of me to my students, colleagues, and school community.

unavailable to me when I am working full-time in my classroom. I have considered other ways of organizing my professional life to continue my lifelong learning and development (such as job sharing) and in my situation I conclude that frequent six month deferred leaves provides me with the greatest opportunity to do other professional work.

When I take a six-month deferred leave, my school has the opportunity to get to know a new teacher and learn about his or her potential as an employee. Because of our semestering system, this teacher works almost completely with different students than I would be teaching, allowing him or her to establish their own classroom dynamics and expectations.

In addition to professional adventuring, I would be remiss not to mention that I also use time during my deferred leave for travel adventures. This has meant meeting family and friends in various places to travel, or it has meant visiting them at their homes to get to know their day-to-day routines better. Travel adventuring has meant cage diving with great white sharks in South Africa; dancing at Carnival in Rio de Janeiro; kayaking in New Zealand; hiking in Peru; safaring in Zimbabwe. When you are on a deferred leave, you can use the time as you like and take advantage of travel deals!

It’s true—I collect airline points of all kinds. I use them on my deferred leave. I have to find ways to economize due the decrease in my income as I participate in the deferred salary plan. I love to travel, find new ways of seeing the world, and enchant my everyday world with these travel learnings.

I should point-out that one of my favourite ways to see the world is “through the eyes” of local educators. Recently, I toured a remote village in the jungles of a developing country. This involved having access to a car, driver, guide, and security detail—all organized by my teaching contacts in that country. My guide was a teacher-instructor at the teacher college who grew up in this small village. One of her childhood friends—a teacher as well as a leader in the community—joined our tour when we arrived to the village. Besides visiting schools and the teacher college, we also visited family members of my guide and went to one of her friend’s for a beautiful homemade lunch with cassava, duff, breadfruit, and plantain. I’m still trying to master how to make her delicious fruit juice from star fruit, mango, and ginger! After lunch, a boatman took us across the river where we continued our dialogue about teaching and learning. I was living large in these tiny moments and big conversations about the future of schooling, about today’s youth, and about the profession of teaching.

When I return from a deferred leave, I bring a wealth of professional experiences to my teaching. My students benefit not only from a rejuvenated teacher, but also from the pedagogical ideas, resources, and ways of thinking about learning that I am exposed to during my deferred leave. I take great pride in my teaching and I want to bring the best of me to my students, colleagues, and school community. The deferred salary leaves allow me to do this in a way that is a financial savings (rather than a cost) to my school board. The deferred salary plan benefits not only my wider professional work, but also my students, school, and employer.

Dr. Steven Van Zoost teaches for Avon View High School and Nova Scotia Virtual School in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.
Egerton Ryerson, the true father of public education in Canada, was appointed Chief Superintendent of Education for Canada West in 1844. For years he had been a staunch advocate of free and compulsory education for all children. A taxpayer critical of the idea wrote that he did not “wish to be compelled to educate all the brats in the neighbourhood”. Ryerson responded, “To educate all the brats in the neighbourhood is just the very object.” His goal was achieved with the passage of the Common Schools Acts of 1846 and 1850.

Similar legislation established public education, free and compulsory for all, in Nova Scotia in 1864-65. However Nova Scotia educators realized universal education meant more than “brats in seats”. They recognized the need for better qualified teachers, improved textbooks and enhanced curriculum. At the same time teachers experienced ridiculously poor compensation, heavy work loads, low levels of esteem from school trustees, oppressive restrictions and interferences in their private lives, and often abysmal working and living conditions.

Enter Margaret Graham. At a meeting of The Provincial Education Association in Truro in 1895 she boldly stood up to propose a “Teachers Protective Union”. I know of no more succinct expression of the nexus between the economic welfare of teachers and professional development than her statement that such a union “would exert an influence in gaining better salaries and aid teachers in securing better results in their school work.” That dual mandate was entrenched in the first (1896) constitution of the newly formed Nova Scotia Teachers Union. Among the objects of the union were “(3) To watch the educational outlook and trend of thought in other parts of the world with a view to keeping the profession in Nova Scotia abreast of the times” and “(4) To endeavour to advance salaries by increasing the capability of the teacher and improving the quality of the work; by educating the public to a proper appreciation of the value of skilled teaching, and by developing among the members of the profession such a degree of esprit de corps and such a high sense of professional honor [sic]as will effectually put an end to the practice of underbidding.” (Underbidding each other in the competition for scarce jobs was a serious problem, contributing to poor pay levels for all teachers.)

I am convinced that Margaret Graham and the original NSTU founders would be very proud of the way the Union has, for more than a century, adhered steadfastly to that original vision. I would further argue that the NSTU has been the driving force behind educational improvement in this province throughout that time and into the present. As evidence for that claim I would adduce the accounts of Dr. Norman Ferguson and Paul McCormick in their complementary histories of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. And still today the activities, budget and staffing of the Union reflect a careful balance between the two realms of economic welfare and professional development.

One of the most rewarding aspects of serving as NSTU president was the opportunity to visit schools and community college campuses across the province, and to witness the accomplishments, dedication and pride of professionals to be found at every single site. If commitment to doing a job well, and a healthy appetite for improved skills, knowledge and tools to do it even better, are among the marks of a professional, I can testify that professionalism is alive and well among Nova Scotia educators today. And the Nova Scotia Teachers Union continues to be the indispensable support for its flourishing.

Brian Forbes is a retired teacher and former president of the NSTU.
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