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*Dear Colleague:*

*Welcome back! The beginning of the school year leaves us buzzing with hope and anticipation.*

*I wonder if it's possible to bottle this energy to keep it alive throughout the year. That's why I am sharing this reflection on how we can approach our work to help sustain what we're feeling at this time of year.*

*Three years ago, I started playing goalie for a learn-to-play adult female hockey group. I'd never played the position in my life, but agreed to give it a try knowing these athletes needed a regular goaltender.*

*That began my journey of becoming a goalie. Once a week, I strapped on the gear to learn how to stop pucks for my teammates. The teammates in front of me were learning the game too, and were consistently positive and encouraging. They picked me up when I let in goals that cost the team, and always thanked me before I left the rink.*

*I went from being a 20-year hockey player who had coached minor hockey to becoming a complete neophyte—and I got to do it in a safe, supportive space with others sharing the journey of learning the game.*

*This summer, I attended a hockey camp in Montreal. I learned about goaltending from Olympic Gold Medalist Charline Labonté and played my heart out. I came home understanding what I was doing for the first time, surrounded by passionate athletes whose contagious energy fuels my own drive to improve.*

*I share this to inspire you to consider two habits in your teaching that will sustain the motivation, energy and positivity that surrounds us early in the year.*

*Firstly, find your team. Seek out those who share your passion to grow and thrive in the classroom. Connect with them regularly. Learn from them. Embrace their support and reciprocate heartily.*

*Secondly, identify a mentor/leader that feeds your teaching fire. Attend their workshops if you can. Follow them on social media, soak in their written work, podcasts and videos. Build a voice worth hearing and emulating into your teaching practice that will sustain you in the dry times.*

*Many of you are teaching new courses or grade levels. Some are in new roles. Still others are continuing in previous assignments yet searching to enrich your practice.*

*My hope is that each of you can cultivate habits that will sustain the energy and hope we find as we begin a school year. This not only feeds our own fire, but builds up our colleagues and our profession. We rival any teaching population on earth in education, training and experience. We know that finding the way towards public education the whole world envies starts with passionate, innovative teachers who feel valued.*

*While we're working hard to get the province and our respective RCEs/CSAP to embrace this mindset, being an NSTU member should mean none of us fights alone to sustain the hope and energy we all feel this time of year.*

*Remember that your union is here to support you in your teaching journey.*



*Paul Wozney*

