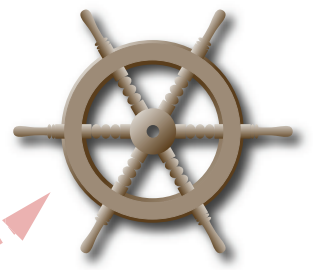


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Charting Your Course for Member Services

By Betty-Jean Aucoin, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development & Ron Brunton, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Initiatives & Technology

Here is the basic rule for winning success. Let's mark it in the mind and remember it. The rule is: Success depends on the support of other people. The only hurdle between you and what you want to be is the support of other people.

~ David Joseph Schwartz

As members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, we are supported by two branches of the organization: member services staff officers who are entrusted with the role and responsibility of assisting members with concerns that arise in relationship to the formal contractual agreements between the member or teachers generally and the employer (the regional school board, the Department of Education, or the Nova Scotia Community College); and professional development staff officers who have the role of advancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills. The professional development staff officers thought we would take time within our series of *Charting Your Course* articles to provide members with an overview of the services and support our member services division provides. To highlight the various areas covered under member services, we answer various questions that staff officers receive on a daily basis.

Who negotiates for me as a member of the NSTU?

The NSTU has member services staff officers who sit on both provincial and regional bargaining teams. They use Local, regional, and provincial structures to hear from members about the important and critical issues involving working conditions and professional issues. They then develop an asking package that sets the starting position in bargaining on behalf of teachers/faculty/professional support staff with the regional school boards/Community College management and the Department of Education. Within negotiations, they seek to gain rights and privileges for you to enhance the quality of work life and the quality of education.

Can member services help me when I have a medical condition?

Members who have been diagnosed with a medical condition that is impacting their quality of life in the classroom often seek help from member services staff. Member services staff officers review the member's needs and seek accommodations, such as moving classrooms to avoid stairs or modifying work conditions or other adjustments to support the member. They assist members in navigating the various systems in place to help them through their medical condition. To do this they work with School Boards, NSTU's Early Intervention Program staff, and others.

Can member services help me if I am being harassed or experiencing cyber bullying?

Unfortunately, sometimes our members face mistreatment from parents, students, or, in rare cases, colleagues and ask the question, "How do I respond to harassment or cyber bullying?" Staff is able to outline our policies that apply, applicable school board or College policy, your rights, and the procedures to respond to conflict or other mistreatment and ensure that you are provided a safe teaching and working environment. Member services staff and professional development staff offer workshops to schools, locals and boards on topics like cyber bullying. These sessions provide members with a background on policies, rights, and the actions that can be taken, not only after an incident has occurred, but also how to act proactively to avoid problems of this nature.

I need information on maternity/parental/adoptive leave? Who do I ask?

Becoming a parent brings with it many life changes. Members are often overwhelmed and ask, "What now?" Member services staff officers provide workshops on maternity, adoptive and parental leave. Individual members are provided information on what things they need to consider in planning for their leave and are given support in understanding the contract and financial implications of parental leave.

I am getting ready to retire. What should I know?

Retirement is another major life change. The issue of retirement has many of our veteran members concerned about financial consequences and adjusting to life outside the classroom. Member services staff officers provide all members within the last five years of their teaching career the opportunity to attend pre-retirement seminars that take place during the normal school day and for which they are released from their normal duties to attend. At these sessions a variety of speakers provide assistance and guidance related to pensions, benefits and transitioning to life beyond teaching.

I am in conflict with my employer/the law. Who can help me?

Occasionally, members find themselves in conflict with their employer or the law. Member services staff officers work with members to ensure their voice is heard and that a fair process is followed. Member services staff officers assist

members in navigating the grievance process ensuring that contractual rights are respected as they work towards a resolution. In the case of the law being involved, member services staff can offer advice on how you can navigate the legal system while at the same time protecting yourself and your individual rights.

What are the benefits of membership?

Member services staff officers provide critical support for the structures in place that are responsible for administering members' insurance benefits and pension; these include the Group Insurance Trustees and the Partners' Pension Board.

Member services staff officers assist by explaining the benefits, the nature of the coverage, and the process to follow when accessing benefits, insurance, pension, etc.

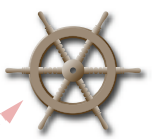
Although we have not covered every aspect of the support member services staff officers provide, we hope we have been able to showcase the supports you can receive as a member of the NSTU. The role of all NSTU staff is to ensure that you receive the support you need so that you continue to teach; through that support, we are able to support the advancement of public education.



Member services staff officer Janine Kerr gets ready for her Teachers and the Law: Case Law Update workshop at last year's Leadership Development Conference.



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Email your name, home address, and school or campus name with PD in the subject line to theteacher@nstu.ca by March 1 to be eligible for the draw.

This month's PD book giveaway is *You Have to Go to School-You're the Principal* by Paul G. Young. New and experienced principals will enjoy reading the common sense and heartfelt suggestions from Paul Young. This book is packed with great ideas and solid tips that remain constant over time.



The winner of the PD book *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration* is Frayne Kyte, Digby Neck Consolidated School.

