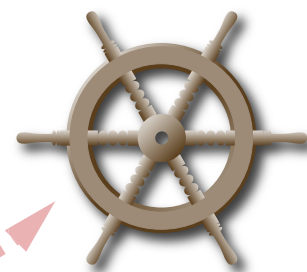


# Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## 2009 Assessment Summit will provide a unique learning experience for all educators. Come be a part of the dialogue.

Assessment has been transformed from just determining what a student knows about content to being an integral part of the learning process. Assessment enables students to understand their own learning, their accomplishments, what has yet to be learned and how to meet those challenges. This approach to assessment—assessment *for* learning—serves students well for future success.

On August 20 and 21, 2009, Nova Scotia welcomes five of today's foremost authorities on classroom assessment to the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax. This unique learning experience is offered by the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSEL), of which the NSTU is a member, in partnership with Solution Tree Education Canada Inc.

During the two days, educators will learn about the importance of descriptive feedback, clearly defined goals, grading practices, student engagement, and moment-by-moment adjustment of instruction to meet student needs. "Powerful student learning and increased achievement take place as a result of effective, student-centred assessment practices," says Sue Taylor-Foley, co-chair of the 2009 Assessment Summit and South Shore Regional School Board's (SSRSB) Coordinator of Assessment & Technology. "Here is the opportunity to strengthen your knowledge and expertise on this important aspect of classroom work."

Educators will experience workshops by each of the five speakers, who are also writers and researchers on the topic of assessment. Each day, three presenters will participate in a moderated, unscripted discussion of practical assessment realities using questions from participants as stepping-stones. "This is certain to be a highlight of the Summit," adds Taylor-Foley. Participants will also be entered into a draw for the opportunity to win dinner with the keynote speakers. "This is a real chance to speak with the experts about practical assessment *for* learning applications in real contexts and it will be fun too," she continues.

The five well-known distinguished presenters are sought after worldwide for their message to educators. "It is a rare opportunity for them to be together in one place in our own province," remarks Taylor-Foley. The speakers are: Damian Cooper (balanced classroom assessment practices), Anne Davies (student involvement in assessment), Cassandra Erkens (assessment design and common assessments), Ken O'Connor (grading practices), and Rick Stiggins (implementing the strategies of assessment *for* learning).

Damian Cooper is an independent education consultant who specializes in helping schools and school districts improve their instructional and assessment skills. He has specialized in student assessment for more than 20 years and his expertise in assessment is recognized across Canada and internationally.

"Summit participants will gain many practical insights from Damian. His talks really meet the Monday morning test as you can apply information he shares right away," says Taylor-Foley.

Well-known as a Canadian leader in the field of classroom assessment, Anne Davies has worked with educators at every level and parents. "Anne will share examples that truly show what assessment *for* learning really looks like in classrooms. She has living examples at every level,"

Cassandra Erkens, an independent consultant and a recognized leader in education, provides dynamic presentations that address hot-button topics, including how to create meaningful, quality assessment and lay the foundation for high-functioning teacher teams. "I know that Cassandra will focus on how to improve consistency in assessment and in what common assessments can mean for classroom teachers during her presentation. I have found her incredibly insightful," says Ann Moore, SSRSB Coordinator of Support and Evaluation and co-chair of the Assessment Summit.

Assessment, grading, and reporting consultant Ken O'Connor has been a staff-development presenter and facilitator throughout the US and Canada, and around the world. "He contends that traditional grading promotes a culture of point accumulation instead of learning, encourages competition rather than collaboration and often focuses on activities instead of results," says Taylor-Foley. "He will specifically address grading practices."

Rick Stiggins, founder and executive director of the ETS Assessment Training Institute in Portland, Oregon, has helped teachers and school leaders understand how to use the assessment process and its results to benefit (not merely monitor) student learning. He is considered to be a true international leader in assessment and focuses on the big picture.

In their roles with the South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB) Taylor-Foley and Moore have been facilitating teams of teachers in assessment *for* learning practices for a number of years. Most recently a team of teachers interested in assessment *for* learning have been visiting P to 12 classrooms and gathering illustrative examples to share with colleagues.



*Sue Taylor-Foley (standing) with teachers from the South Shore Regional School Board, Melissa Willman (left) and Sandra Bowers-Richardson. Brian Cooper (left), and Alex Oickle are in the background.*

Sandra Bowers-Richardson, a language arts teacher and literacy mentor at Bridgewater Junior-Senior High School, Brian Cooper, a Grade 5 teacher at Chester District School, Alex Oickle, a Grade 5 teacher at Lunenburg Academy and Melissa Willman a teaching vice-principal at New Ross Consolidated School comprise this team. The samples they collect will be posted to the Board's assessment website to help showcase how teachers are using assessment to improve student achievement.

Throughout this process these teachers have been amazed at the quality of assessment and instruction they've experienced in their colleagues.

"I was impressed with seeing the teaching at the beginning of the lessons, and how the expectations are clearly defined in student-friendly language, it really focused the learning," says Brian Cooper.

The teacher leaders received many comments from their colleagues that focused on their reflections on assessment *for* learning. "It's evident that this approach to assessment is a really easy way to get students involved and have teachers learn more about their students," continues Cooper.

Melissa Willman, who looked at portfolios of Grade 7 and 9 students, was surprised at how much the students knew about their own learning: "They knew how to reflect on their learning, and what they needed to do to improve and why it was important to do so."

Sandra Bowers-Richardson also sees that "Assessment *for* learning can be used in any subject area at any level." Both Willman and Bowers-Richardson were impressed with an IB Math teacher's use of it in her classroom and how showing samples of work in various stages

of development helped students learn and grow.

"I don't think you can see it (assessment *for* learning) happening any other way, once you see it in practice," says Alex Oickle. "I saw it as part of everything that was happening in the classroom, and it was so well integrated and entrenched in teaching practice—in some schools it's their working norm."

"I saw it working in a classroom with two grades, and with eight or nine different lessons—clearly differentiated instruction was taking place," adds Cooper.

The teachers, who started on this phase of the project in January will continue throughout the school year. The Board will re-launch the website with illustrative examples by the end of the school year. The teachers involved with this project are looking forward to their continued visits to schools and the rest of this exciting process. "The professional conversation has been wonderful," concludes Bowers-Richardson.

Just as these teachers found out, refining our assessment practices are important for teaching and learning and it is helpful to have the opportunity to dialogue with your colleagues. All teachers in Nova Scotia are invited to continue the dialogue by attending the NSEL Assessment Summit on August 20 and 21 at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax. Interact with teachers from around the province and with some internationally recognized experts in this field too. Don't miss this opportunity!

For more information and registration, contact NSEL at [www.nselc.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.nselc.ednet.ns.ca) or at 902-422-3270. Registration deadline is May 1, 2009.