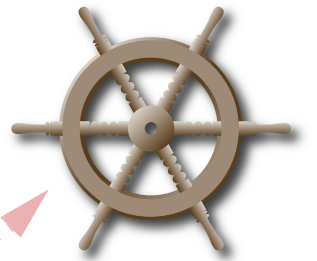


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



An engagement that leads to a happy partnership

by Gérard Cormier, NSTU Executive Staff Officer, Outreach Programs and Equity Services

The NSTU celebrated its first Member Engagement Day on Friday, October 3. NSTU Locals from across the province marked the occasion in their own unique way. Some Locals decided to combine Member Engagement Day activities with their annual 'Welcome Back Social' or 'New Teacher Night' events. Other Locals held events such as picnics or salmon dinners where friends and retired NSTU members were invited to share in the Member Engagement event. Larger Locals held simultaneous events so members would not have to travel great distances to attend. One Local mentioned that it was the most attended event ever held in that particular Local. The date was not problematic as some Locals held their event before or after October 3. What mattered was that events were being held and members were being engaged.

This year's theme was 'Getting to Know Your NSTU Rep'. It was meant to highlight the important role that NSTU Reps play in the life of the Union. They are the key link between the membership and Central Office. They are the lead communicators of information between these two bodies. They work daily on the front lines and have the 'pulse' of what is going on in schools and campuses. Some materials produced to be used as prizes such as baseball caps and golf shirts were branded with **NSTU REP** to emphasize the importance of NSTU Reps to the entire organization.

Engagement of any kind has seven absolute characteristics for it to be meaningful and beneficial. A close examination of these characteristics will allow each Local to self-reflect on this year's activities and perhaps provide food

for thought for next year's event.

The first characteristic is **safety**. Were the events safe and inclusive in nature? Did members feel welcomed and appreciated? Members will only become engaged with their Union if it is a safe and welcoming place which allows them to be who they are and make them feel comfortable enough to give their input.

The next characteristic is **WIIFM (What's in it for me?)**. Members will only become engaged when they know that their engagement is beneficial. Member Engagement Day events are a great occasion to underscore the many benefits that NSTU members enjoy due to their being members of the Union.

The third one is **connect**. Members need to feel a connection with their Union in order for them to get involved. Nothing replaces the human touch and events being held to celebrate member engagement are ideal times to forge connections in person with other members of the NSTU.

The next one is **engage and explore**. Allowing educators the opportunity to engage in dialogue with others as well as the chance to explore the many options for involvement in the Union are ways that foster member engagement.

The fifth characteristic is **feedback**. The NSTU is very interested in receiving reports on how the various Locals celebrated the event. This feedback will be shared with Local leaders from across the province. Allowing members at the Local level to do the same would certainly lend itself to making the membership feel that their opinions were valued.

Reflection is the next one. This ties in with welcoming feedback. Members should be given the time to reflect

Below are members of the Queens Local at its Member Engagement Planked Salmon Supper Family event which took place on October 5 at the Greenfield Fire Hall with an open house and some free play time before at the Greenfield Elementary School playground. The event was organized by Dawn Uhlman (Queens Local executive and Greenfield Elementary, teaching vice-principal). Dinner was prepared and served by the Greenfield Recreation Association and attended by over 40 members of the Queens Branch RTO. There was also entertainment provided by a local community group, Chicks from the Sticks. This is the Local's biggest member engagement event of the year.



From left to right: NSTU president Shelley Morse, NSTU staff officer Gérard Cormier, Dawn Uhlman (Queens Local executive, VP economic welfare), Sarah Tutty (Queens Local executive, treasurer), John Tutty (teacher, South Queens Middle School), Dave White (Liverpool Regional High, Queens Local rep), Marie MacLeod (Queens Branch RTO, Local liaison), Marsha Freeman (retired teacher, Greenfield Elementary), Ian Kent (Queens Local Executive, VP communications), Nathan Smart (Queens Local, president), Alex Doggett (Queens Branch RTO, President), Stacy Thourburn (provincial executive member). In the front row are children of the Queens Local executive who attended the event.

on their Member Engagement Day experience before having to put their thoughts down on paper and submitting them.

The final characteristic is **practice**. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. Since this event is an annual event, there will be lots of chances to

build on this year's experiences in order to make it one of the best events this Union celebrates.

Engagement can lead to a happy partnership. Looking forward to next year's theme and events that will continue to promote member engagement and happy partnerships.

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