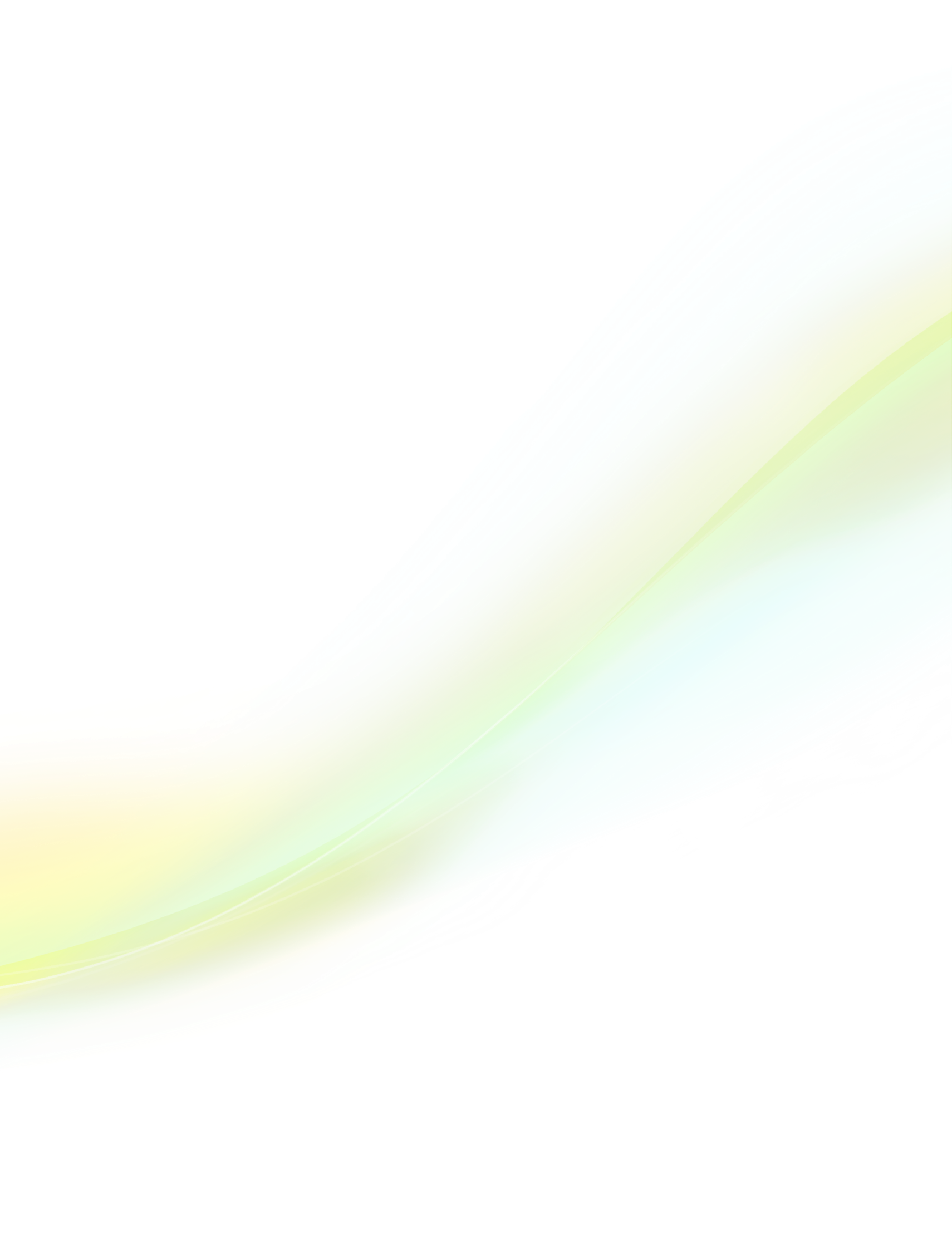
**2015 Annual Report**



**Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils**

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2013 – 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Whittle, President (2014 – 2015) | St. John’s, NL

Terry Green, 1st Vice-President (2014 – 2016) | Grand Falls - Windsor, NL

Paulette Fifield, 2nd Vice-President (2013 – 2015) | Grand Falls - Windsor, NL

Secretary (vacant)

Michele Peach, Treasurer | Mount Pearl, NL (Appointed)

Ruby Hoskins, Past President | Marystown, NL (Appointed)

**Introduction**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils (NLFSC) is the provincial umbrella group for parents, teachers, high school students (where applicable), and community supporters who are committed to enhancing the quality of school programs and improving the levels of student achievement in our schools. The Federation provides School Councils and parent groups with a voice on educational issues and encourages parental involvement at all levels of education.

NLFSC is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Membership consists of School Councils, school-based parent groups, Home and School Associations, Parent-Teacher Associations, and Parent Advisory Committees. Membership is optional and renewed annually.

As a major stakeholder in education, the NLFSC continues to work on issues affecting its membership and often seeks to provide input into policy and programs that have an impact on school communities. NLFSC is working to strengthen communication between the Department of Education, School Districts, the Federation, and School Councils. NLFSC works with these educational partners to bring areas of concern to the attention of many organizations, most frequently of which are Departments of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The founding meeting of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Home & School and Parent-Teacher Associations was held in Gander on Saturday, October 20, 1979. The Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation was incorporated on July 5, 1994, under the Corporations Act, Revised Statutes of Newfoundland, 1990, Chapter C-36, Section 420. On August 30, 1999, the Articles of Incorporation were amended and the name was changed to “The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, Inc.”

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils strives for excellence in education for all children in Newfoundland and Labrador and acts as a collective voice for School Councils and for all parents/guardians. The Federation provides leadership, representation, and services to all volunteers involved with School Councils and parent organizations. The Federation provides parents/guardians with a voice on educational issues and encourages parental/guardian involvement at all levels of education.

***Quote from Press Release July 21, 2014***

***“You’d have to be blind or really have an issue from a partisan perspective to not acknowledge the fact that with the newfound wealth the province is experiencing since 2003, there has been significant investments in infrastructure, in programming, in salaries, and at the school level books are free now. We used to have to pay for books. All of this has changed, and these are all positive initiatives. But there are still things that we believe are unfinished or incomplete.”***

**- Peter Whittle, President, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils**



PRESIDENT’S REPORT

It has been a busy year since our last gathering.

Nathan Whalen resigned his position as President in mid-August to accept a job opportunity in Toronto. The Executive chose me as his replacement.

It has been a real team effort and a pleasure to work, on your behalf, with dedicated parents, educators, children, school volunteers, health care professionals, civil servants, and politicians of all stripes who value what we do.

The role of a school council is really what you make it, as is the role of the NLFSC. Hundreds of people - family, teachers, community representatives - provide hundreds of hours volunteering their time, talent, and often their treasure, ensuring that our schools have adequate resources.

I feel confident we have effectively articulated our concerns with passion and integrity, raising the prominence of the NLFSC as a vital component of the Province’s education system.

This year the mental health of our school-aged children emerged as a significant public issue. For years, the NLFSC has advocated to government that we are falling short in providing the health resources too many students need.

We have lobbied for an increase in guidance councilors, mental health specialists, addictions specialists, and for changes to legislation to ensure students get the help they need. We have not met with success, but we have ensured the issue is at the forefront of public consciousness.

Over the year, we have met with the Ministers of Education, Health and Wellness on several occasions to discuss issues facing students. We have also met with the English District School Board, NL Teachers’ Association, ACT, Opposition M.H.A’s, mental health advocacy groups, and other school supporting organizations.

The issues addressed this year include: Inclusion, Addictions Supports, First-Year Kindergarten, Homework, Cyberbullying, E-Cigarettes, No Zero Policies, Supervision Policies , Safe and Caring Schools Policy, Student Achievement, Special Services, Teacher Allocation, School Transportation, Student Evaluation and Assessment Policy (Non-Zero) Electronic Cigarettes and Nicotine Liquid Refills (Banning The Sale To Minors) , Stressed Teachers, Stressed Administrators, and the need

for more: Instructional Resource Teachers (IRT), Specialist Teachers, Administrators, Guidance Counsellors, Mental Health and Addictions Supports, and Regular Classroom Teachers.

This year marks our 35th year of significant reform to the NLFSC Constitution. While constitutions are dry stuff for many, they set the rules for how an organization like ours operates. Special thanks to Dr. Glynn George, Tony Oxford, and our Executive Director, Denise Pike, for the untold hours of deliberation and re-writes. Thank you!

We have been successful in broadening our reach, in communicating our key messages and taking a coordinated approach to significant challenges facing education in our province.

Some of these communication initiatives include:

New website finalized (please visit us @ [www.schoolcouncilsnl.ca](http://www.schoolcouncilsnl.ca/))

Bi-monthly newsletter (*The Cuffer*)

Numerous news releases regarding education and media requests for interviews

Multiple appearances in print, on radio, and on television

Participation in a number of roundtable discussions regarding policy development

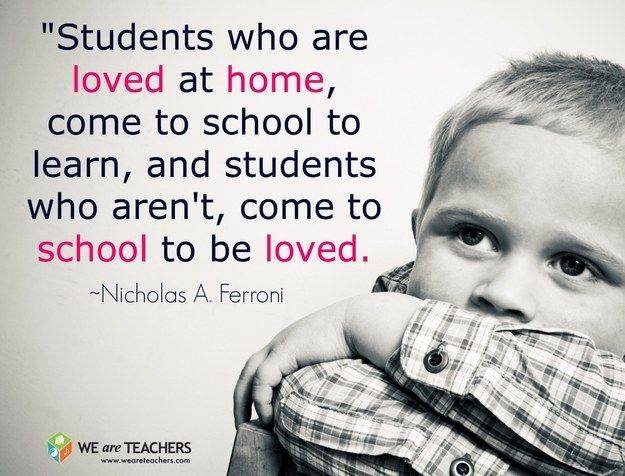
If there is one thing I have learned this year, it is that the NLFSC can get the ear of government. Also, school councils have a voice that is heard. We are in every town, region, and neighborhood throughout this province. We speak on behalf of a very influential demographic.

We must remain both diligent and vigilant to ensure the wide array of issues encountered in the delivery of primary, elementary, and secondary education is addressed. Education is a right, but more importantly, it is an investment in the future.

Thank you for your shared commitment to our children's education.

Sincerely,

Peter L. Whittle



**MEMBERSHIP**

Membership provides the opportunity for individual School Councils to raise their voices with others throughout the province on issues and concerns with our public education system. It is important to recognize that the success of all efforts in our organization must rely on the value that NLFSC can bring to members, whether the school community is an active participant in programming or not.

In order for NLFSC to continue to be an effective voice, it must maintain a high level of member participation and awareness. Membership ensures that your Council’s voice is heard on issues that affect our students. It also provides an opportunity to promote the importance of parent education, communication, and leadership development. Getting involved with School Councils and the Federation builds skills in leadership, communication, and advocacy.

Membership stability and growth is extremely important to the continued success of NLFSC and we are pleased to report that our membership has increased significantly over the past year. To ensure our success, please keep your membership up to date.

In 2010-11 our active membership was at 35 per cent of the total School Councils that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador. This year we are pleased to report that number has increased to surpass 90 per cent.

**COMMUNICATION**

The NLFSC office staff and Executive engage in daily communications and interactions with its member councils providing information and guidance on matters pertaining to membership, local school issues, and various other education topics.

The Executive communicated daily through e-mail and held three face-to-face meetings and three teleconferences during the past year. Some of the topics discussed include: Mental Health and Addiction Supports, Bullying and Drug use, Teacher, Administrative and Guidance Allocations, General Meeting Planning, Cost of Milk, Pre-Budget Submission, Student, Bus and School Safety, NFLSC Funding, School Council Training and Funding, Changes in the Curriculum, and numerous other concerns from individual School Councils.

The President is the official spokesperson for the Federation and often pursued by the media. Over the past year, NLFSC President Whittle conducted countless media interviews (newspaper, radio, and television), on topics current at that time.

Peter has been very vocal about issues affecting our membership, schools and students.

Some of the topics he championed include:

* Negative Impact of cuts to Teachers and Guidance Allocations
* School Board of Trustee Elections
* Regulations on electronic cigarettes and nicotine refills
* Importance of School Council Empowerment
* Inclusive Learning Model of Education
* School Bus Contracts/Operations
* Bullying & Violence Prevention
* Mental Health and Addictions Supports
* Background Checks on School Personnel
* Cyberbullying
* Full Day Kindergarten
* Safe and Caring Schools Policy
* Increase to Administrative Allocation
* School Transportation
* Special Services Teacher Allocation
* Student Assessment and Evaluation
* Cuts to Specialist Teacher Allocation
* Legislative Changes for Secured Treatment
* Literacy
* Provincial Prescription Monitoring Program
* Increase to the Educational Psychologist Allocation
* Numeracy and Literacy Specialists
* Increase in Operational Grant for School Councils and NLFSC
* Math and Numeracy Challenges

President Whittle also represented NLFSC numerous times on the CBC Radio Programs (CBC Crosstalk/Radio Noon and the CBC St. John’s, Central, Western, and Labrador Morning Shows). He was also a regular caller to the VOCM radio shows – Open Line, Back Talk, and Night Line, and was interviewed numerous times by NTV and CBC Television on issues relating to education advocacy.

President Whittle made headlines in numerous newspapers throughout NL and Canada and was invited to participate in several radio panel discussions on issues affecting youth.

Over the past year, President Whittle has promoted the mandate and goals of NLFSC in the media. He provided a voice for parents and School Councils on education issues and also stressed the need of adequate training and funding.

President Whittle also praised educators and school staff for educating and nurturing our students during this years’ Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week, held February 9 -15, 2015.

Throughout the year NLFSC issued a number of Press Releases regarding:

* E-cigarettes and Flavored Tobacco Product
* The Impact of Cuts to Education in Budget 2014
* Back to School
* Education Week
* Guidance and Administration Allocations
* Background Checks for School Personnel
* Mental Health and Addictions
* School Council Day 2014
* The Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence
* Power of Play Initiative
* Full-Day Kindergarten

During Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week in February, the NL Federation of School Councils and Honourable Susan Sullivan, Minister of Education, issued a joint press release thanking our Teachers and School Staff for the care and guidance they give our children.

The NLFSC’s newsletter, *The Cuffer,* which is usually sent out five times per year, is a benefit of membership in the Federation. A special package containing the materials relating to the General Meeting was sent to all School Councils in March, followed by several reminders and an updated bulletin.

NLFSC has a toll-free telephone line for the convenience of members: 1-877-739-4830.

One of the key instruments of communication for the Federation is the membership listserv, which facilitates a quick information exchange. When Councils register as members of the Federation, they have the option of including their e-mail addresses for the listserv. The listserv is used on a regular basis to inform our membership of any changes relative to NLFSC or our schools. It is also a great medium to gather immediate feedback on issues of concern.

The NLFSC sets its agenda and initiates responses to media on the information sent through the listserv. The names of schools and School Councils members, who respond via the listserv, are always kept in the strictest of confidence.

**Listserv Poll**

NLFSC conducted several polls over the past year. The NLFSC Membership was asked to provide feedback on:

* Teacher Allocations
* Cyberbullying
* School Council Functions and Role
* Full-day Kindergarten

To strengthen communication with our membership, NLFSC has established a Facebook page and a website: www.schoolscouncilnl.ca

During the year, NLFSC corresponded via e-mail, telephone, mail, and attended in-person meetings, with the Department of Education, the English, and French School Districts as well as other government agencies and organizations on issues relating to education.

***Quote from Press Release, February 6, 2015***

***"Every bus driver, janitor, teacher, teaching assistant, SEO, secretary, maintenance person and volunteer that has contact with our children should have to provide an annual vulnerable sector check. I am sure there is a cost associated with this, but you know, I would have thought a common sense measure like this would have been standard operating procedure”***

**- Peter Whittle, President, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils**

**REPRESENTATION**

On a provincial level, NLFSC representatives regularly attend meetings, participate in discussions, and make recommendations on programs and policy. Some of the highlights of this year’s meetings and discussions are included here.

**Department of Education**

On July 23, 2014, the NLFSC Executive met with Darrin King, Education Minister; Janet-Vivian Walsh, Deputy Minister of Education; and Derrick Reid, Executive Assistant to the Minister.

The executive took the opportunity to talk about the resolutions passed at the 2014 AGM regarding the need for more financial support for School Councils; Student Transportation; Assessment and Evaluation Policy; and Mental Health and Addictions.

The discussion also included the Safe and Caring School Policy, Math and Science results, Teacher and Guidance Allocations and the impact of cuts to Anti-Bullying and Anti-Drug Campaigns in schools.

On August 27, 2014, President Peter Whittle met with Minister King and other Department of Education officials regarding the announcement of Full-Day Kindergarten scheduled to be available province-wide in 2016.

Class size and adequate infrastructure were among the concerns expressed by President Whittle.

Members of the NLFSC Executive met with representatives from the Department of Health and Community Services during January 2014, August 2014 and April 2015, regarding the need for more Treatment Centres and changes in legislation for secure treatment and withdrawal management for youth.

**Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association**

NLFSC continues to maintain a strong relationship with the NLTA. Some of our shared education concerns and advocacy goals include:

* A need for more resources to support the Inclusion Model in schools
* Teacher Allocations
* Special Services
* Guidance and Administrative Allocations
* Funding for Technology Maintenance in Schools
* An increase in the Educational Psychologist Allocation

The NLFSC newsletter, ***The Cuffer***, is printed free of charge by the NLTA, five times a year. Over the past year, we have moved from black and white to colour print. NLFSC is extremely grateful to the NLTA for this important in-kind donation, which allows us to connect with our membership and schools

**School Council Day**

On October 9, President Whittle participated in a Second Annual School Council Day. The event, hosted during Education Week, acknowledged the invaluable contribution made by School Council members and other volunteers within our school communities. NLFSC and the Minister of Education also issued a joint Press Release to recognize the day.

**Meetings with Political Representatives**

Over the past year, President Whittle and members of the NLFSC Executive met with provincial leaders to discuss concerns and changes within the education system.

Meetings were held with:

Hon. Susan Sullivan, Education Minister, MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans

Department of Health Officials

Alliance for the Control of Tobacco (ACT)

Dwight Ball and Dale Kirby, Official Opposition

NL Members of the New Democratic Party

English School District

**Pre-Budget Submission**

On March 6, NLFSC submitted a pre-budget report to the Department of Finance for consideration. Some of the recommendations put forth by NLFSC include:

* Funding for School Councils and NLFSC
* Increased teaching units (a needs based formula)
* Resources for the Inclusion Model
* Increased Administrative and Guidance Allocations
* Supports to assist youth suffering with mental illnesses and addictions

**Student Support Services**

On March 11, Executive Director Denise Pike represented NLFSC on the Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Services.

**Provincial Budget**

Each year the President is invited (by the Premier’s Office) to a Provincial Budget Lock-Down at the Department of Education for a briefing on the fiscal impact to education. The President is also invited to the House of Assembly for reading of Provincial Budget.

**Community Partnerships**

NLFSC has a long-time partnership with other provincial agencies connected to education including the: Alliance for the Control of Tobacco NL (ACT), Kids Eat Smart Foundation NL and The School Milk Foundation, School Administrator Council, and English and French School Districts.

As well, we partner with various government Departments, Memorial University, and numerous Community Agencies. NLFSC often supports the above mentioned by including information regarding various programs, new initiatives, and changes to policies through articles in *The Cuffer* and by e-mail to our members via the listserv.

**Tutoring For Tuition**

Executive Director Denise Pike represents NLFSC on a Tutoring for Tuition Steering Committee



The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils also works with other stakeholders in education and organizations that impact youth, including but not limited to:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Education | Community and Youth Serving Organizations | |
| **Department of Education** | **Dept. of Health & Community Services** | **Dept. of Child, Youth, Family Services** |
| **NL English School District** | **Partners for Mental Health** | **Royal Newfoundland Constabulary** |
| **Conseil Scolare Francophone TN-L** | **Canadian Cancer Society** | **Royal Canadian Mounted Police** |
| **Atlantic Home & School Association** | **School Milk Foundation** | **Duke of Edinburgh Program** |
| **Memorial University of Newfoundland** | **Egale Canada Human Rights Trust** | **School Milk Foundation** |
| **PEI Home & School Federation** | **Autism Society of NL** | **Department of Justice** |
| **New Brunswick Home & School Fed.** | **NL Learning Disabilities Association** | **Members of the House of Assembly** |
| **Nova Scotia Home & School Fed.** | **Coalition for People with Disabilities** | **Partners for Mental Health** |
| **School Administrators Council** | **Alliance for the Control of Tobacco** | **Canadian Home & School Federation** |
| **NL School Boards Association** | **School Councils across all English and Francophone schools within Newfoundland and Labrador** | |
| **NL Teachers’ Association** |

***Quote from Press Release, April 27, 2015***

***"160 teaching units were cut out from the system in 2013. Schools are struggling now to meet the needs of children and the impact of further cuts on public education will have a ripple effect on our province for generations to come. I understand that during tough economic times everyone needs to make sacrifices, but for many years public schools and our children have taken the brunt of this province’s debt. Yet, the policymakers are choosing, once again, to balance the budget on the backs of our students. If we continue to cut our way out of declining revenues by slashing funding in education, students will suffer and all of Newfoundland and Labrador will have a high price to pay down the road.”***

* **Peter Whittle, President, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Council**

**TEACHER/STAFF APPRECIATION WEEK**

School Councils and Home and School Associations across Canada celebrated National Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week from February 9 to 15, 2015. During the week hundreds of teachers and other school staff members such as secretaries, teacher assistants, nurses, bus drivers, and custodians (across the province) were recognized for their contribution to the education system.

The popularity and celebration of Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week is growing each year. The Federation encourages parents and the wider community to thank teachers and school staff for educating and caring for our students and provides our membership with a list of ideas to incorporate into the celebration.

NLFSC received a number of e-mails and phone calls from Administrators and Teachers stating that year’s TSAW was an extremely successful event in their school.

**Quote from Press Release on Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week February 9 -15, 2015**

***“Teachers and staff go the extra mile on a regular basis to help our students be the best they can be. There are great things happening in classrooms throughout this province and many impressive stories about teachers and school staff that are really making a difference in the lives of children. Their dedication and hard work is vital to ensuring students have the skills necessary to one day be leaders in our community. I encourage school councils, parents and students to express their appreciation to all teachers and school staff for their daily personal and professional contributions, not only this week, but throughout the entire year.”***

**- Peter Whittle, President, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils**

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**REPORT ON THE 34th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & CONFERENCE**

**April 4 – 6, 2014, Mount Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls-Windsor**

Friday, April 4, 2014

Theme “Today’s Vision – Tomorrow’s Reality”

*Entertainment*

The AGM began with entertainment provided by *The Voices of Woodland Choir* under the direction of Director/Music Teacher, Julia Rideout. The students delighted the audience during their singing of a number of heartfelt songs. The *Voices of Woodland Choir* gave an outstanding performance and was a great kick-off to the conference.

*Conference Greetings and Keynote Address*

Following the entertainment, NLFSC Executive, Director Denise Pike, welcomed delegates and invited guests to the conference. NLFSC President, Nathan Whalen, introduced the representatives who extended greeting on behalf of their organizations.

Speakers included:

**Clayton Forsey,** Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Exploits

**John George,** Trustee for the English Schools District

**Charla (Cambee) Dorrington,** President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Association

**Amy Coady-Davis,** Councilor representing the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor

**Keynote Speaker: Mr. Jim Dinn, President of the NLTA**

**Mr. Dinn’s Keynote Address:**

*"I am honoured to be the keynote speaker at the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils AGM.*

*A partnership, according to one definition, is a cooperative relationship between people or groups who agree to share responsibility for achieving some common specific goal.*

*I like to think of the relationship between the NLTA and the Federation of School Councils as a partnership.*

*Government will tell us the same thing - education is a priority. Government will even agree we must provide the best education possible for our children and so we should. The question though is - are we?*

*Now my job as President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is to represent the province's 6,000 teachers. Their job, in turn, is to maximize the resources provided by government to ensure, as best they can, that our children go out into the world armed with the best education possible.*

*The best education...possible and let me add...under the circumstances. However, what if the best education possible...under the circumstances, is just not good enough?*

*What do teachers, and the NLTA representing them, do then? We believe our responsibility then extends beyond the classroom. We must become advocates for what we believe our children, your children, deserve. Not the best education possible under the circumstances, but the best possible education. Period!*

*Isn't that what we all want?  Do you think we're getting it? I hate to be the bearer of bad news, particularly in this regard, but we are not. We're doing the best we can...under the circumstances, but it's not good enough and that has to change, which means the circumstances have to change - a lot. If education is as important as we say it is, as government says it is, why then, year after year after year do we have to fight against cuts - teacher cuts, resource cuts. Cuts, cuts, cuts all the way across the K through 12 system. Every one of those cuts diminishes our ability to deliver the quality of education we want to deliver. The quality of education our children, your children deserve.*

*So what do we do about it?  First, we need to recognize the problem. All of us, including – no, especially - government.*

*And the problem is this: government sees the cost of education as an expense, not an investment. And there is a world of difference between the two. Now, of course, government uses the word investment all the time to describe education spending. Check out any throne speech. It will talk about government's "investment" in education. But in reality, it treats it as an expense - as a cost to be controlled. So every year as budget time rolls around, education is reduced to a line item, an overhead, a cost. The objective then becomes - get that cost down - no matter what. And it is always under the assumption that we can maintain the status quo with less money. That assumption is dead wrong. And our children are suffering the consequences of that failed assumption.........Education as an expense sees it treated as a cost to be reduced. So the annual question is - how can we cut costs?*

*Education as an investment generates an entirely different set of questions: What's our return on investment? Are we maximizing our ROI? If not, what can we do to maximize it?*

*The decision - expense or investment - will carve out two very different futures for our entire society.*

*Research is clear on this. Education as an expense generates an increase in the cost of health care, social services, and crime and incarceration. Education as an investment would see a reverse of this trend. Education as an investment would save the province, indeed, save the country, enormously in these areas. And that's our return on investment. That's our ROI, not to mention a quality education for our children. So let's look at the evidence of that assertion and there's plenty of it.*

*And here is where it gets tricky, because as you will see, education as an investment requires government to take a long-term view, have a long-term plan. And that's not how government likes to operate. And that's what has to change. But I will say this: The long-term benefits of education as an investment are so profoundly beneficial to our society as a whole, we absolutely must change our approach. It would be irresponsible, if not negligent, to do otherwise.*

*Let me set it up by saying this - education as an investment would obviously require us to increase the investment in the short term. But the results will be lower costs for educating the next generation, lower health care costs, less use of foster care and juvenile diversion, lower crime, and lower costs of incarceration, lower costs to social services, which would mean a reduction in the dependence on welfare transfers like income support (often called social assistance), drug cards, child benefits, employment insurance, old age security, and so on.*

*Education as an investment would compel us not only to identify this as a problem that can be solved through education, but create an action plan to deal with it. That's what it means to maximize our ROI.*

*Education as an investment will see our kids of today become the "better educated parents" of tomorrow. And set aside, if you want, our moral obligation to ensure this happens.*

*But you can't ignore it as an economic imperative. So, what do we do? Where do we start?  Remember I mentioned that teachers are doing the best we can...under the circumstances. Our best is not good enough and I don't know of a single teacher who is happy about that? They feel snowed under by the incessant avalanche of cuts. And our children are the worse for it. That goes against what every decent teacher stands for. They live to see their kids achieve and they agonize over the circumstances that deny them - our children - the best chance to achieve.*

*Change our funding approach to education from a budget line item to be cut and cut again, to education as an investment. The failure to do this in the past comes with staggering costs today. And those costs will not go anywhere but up. And as the costs of a failure to change go up, the more cuts we can expect to education. And you know what that means. The quality of education for our children will continue to go down. If we make the right decision today, two things will happen. In the short-term, you'll see a dramatic uptick in the performance of our children that will continue to improve over time, in all areas of scholastic performance, health, and social well-being. This in turn will drive down the costs of health care, social services, crime and prevention far beyond the investment in education.*

*Wouldn't you say that's a pretty good return?*

*Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Considering the challenges she faced, Helen understood working together, that partnerships are essential if we are to achieve that which we value.*

*If we are to ensure that schools are safe and caring environments, are fully resourced, offer the best possible curriculum and extra-curricular activities, are staffed with adequate number of trained teachers and support staff so that all children have the opportunity to succeed, so that all children can realize their full potential, and so that all children have the potential to become contributing members of society then we are going to need each other”.*

A Meet and Greet Reception followed Mr. Dinn’s keynote address.

**Saturday, April 5, 2015 – Topics and Presenters**

**Breaking the code of Silence**

***Presenter: Nathan Whalen, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils***

During his presentation, Nathan talked about the need to build a case for education and open the dialogue on what is needed to best serve our children and our province’s future. His interactive workshop included conversations surrounding education advocacy, school council roles and responsibilities, parent and community engagement in learning and school activities, and the School Development Plan. Nathan stressed the idea that School Councils play a pivotal role in the discussion of education and the success of children. Nathan also emphasized the importance of School Council members recognizing their roles and the roles of the school board and school district officials as members of their school community. His presentation also included discussions on: tips on monitoring and approving fundraising activities, the basics of school council engagement, and school council concerns and political action.

School Council Fundamentals:

The Make Up

School Councils must have between 8 and 15 members, consisting of:

School Principal

Parent Representatives

Teacher Representatives

Community Representatives

Student Representatives (in schools that teach senior high courses)

The Role

Represent the educational interests of the school

Advise on the quality of teaching and learning in the school

Facilitate parent and community involvement in teaching and learning in the school

Advise the board on matters of concern to the school and the community

Approving, for recommendation to the board, the School Development Plan and ensure that report is available to the public

Approve and monitor fundraising activities

Consider information respecting performance standards in the school

Monitor the implementation of recommendations in reports on the performance of the school

Conduct meetings with parents and members of the community on matters within its responsibility

Enter into a protocol agreement with the board, which shall serve as a guide and reference for School Council operations

The School Council Also May:

Recommend that the Principal provide for a religious observance in the school

Approve a voluntary school levy (payable once in a school year) in lieu of fundraising activities for the school, subject to the by-laws of the board

A School Council must be in place by the 15th of October.

Supporting the School Development Plan

Add “School Development Plan” to each School Council meeting.

Ask one Department Head to present at each School Council meeting their plan to improve teaching, learning, and student achievement within their Department. Ask each Department Head to provide School Council with a progress report periodically

Review midterm results, final exam results, CRT results, and the School Climate Survey.

For the purposes of future planning, consider the results of CRTs for incoming grade levels to determine a course of action to support their achievement

Tips for Approving and Monitoring Fundraising Activities

Plan ahead! Ensure that your School Council determines priority items of which funds must be raised. This will help with determining which fundraisers to approve when various groups may have conflicting fundraisers. These priorities should stem from the School Development Plan.

Ensure the school is not asking for money from the school community too often. School Council is accountable to both parents and the school community. It is important that fundraising activities do not place a significant or perceived burden on families.

Add fundraising to each School Council meeting agenda and ask groups that complete fundraising to submit a report on the success of the fundraiser and how the money was spent

The Basics of School Council Engagement

Ensure all School Council agendas are posted on the school website in advance of your meeting

Plan in advance! All School Council meeting dates should be included in school newsletters, on the school website, and in the school calendar. Many School Councils find regular days of the month work best.

The week after School Council meeting minutes are approved, be sure to post them on your school website

Be present! School Council members should offer to volunteer at school events and the School Council Chair may bring greetings at Curriculum Night or a school fundraising event

Try to plan one to three parent and community engagement activities per year. For example, host a session and invite an expert to speak about cyber-bullying, scholarships, or mental health!

School Council Concerns & Political Action

When presented with a concern, the School Council should first consult the Principal. If the matter is not resolved, it should be brought forth to the District’s Senior Education Officer. If the matter cannot be resolved within the District, please get in touch with the NL Federation of School Councils Office to discuss next steps and to consult on a course of action.

**Partners in Mental Health**

***Presenters: Brenda Stamp, President of the Schizophrenia Society NL***

***Dave Banko, Executive Director for the Schizophrenia Society NL***

Brenda and Dave began their presentation by providing a summary of the Mental Health Strategy for Canada *Changing Direction, Changing Lives.*

Released in May, 2012, the strategy aims to help improve the mental health and well-being of all people living in Canada and to create a mental health system that can truly meet the needs of people and families impacted by mental health illnesses.

Aims include:

Promoting mental health across the lifespan in homes, schools, and workplaces, and prevent mental illness and suicide wherever possible.

Fostering recovery and well-being for people of all ages living with mental health problems and illnesses, and uphold their rights.

Providing access to the right combination of services, treatments and supports - when and where needed.

Dave and Brenda also shared information on the national organization *Partners for Mental Health.* This organization is supercharging a groundbreaking social movement that will transform the way we think about and support mental health in Canada.

The mission of Partners for Mental Health is to generate systemic and social changes that will result in:

Increased access to services, treatment, and support

Better workplace policies

More funding for programs and services

Increased awareness and attention towards one’s own mental health

Better treatment toward those living with a mental health problem or illness

Through partnership and public engagement, we will redefine the current norms, so people living with mental health problems or illnesses can receive the services, treatment and support they need, when they need it.

Brenda and Dave encouraged delegates to take action to ensure mental health-related services, treatment, and support are available to all children and youth.

Mental Health statistics on young Canadian youth:

* 762 young people commit suicide
* Suicide is the #1 cause of non-accidental death among youth
* Almost 90% of people who die by suicide have a mental illness
* 23% of all deaths for youth aged 15 to 19 can be accounted for by suicide

Brenda and Dave summed up the importance of advocating for more mental health supports, particularly for youth, with this quote by Margaret Mead,

*“Never Doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world,* *indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

**Teaching Digital Citizenship: Respect, Educate, and Protect**

**Presenter: *Michael Walsh, Department of Education***

Digital citizenship is the norms of safe, respectful, and responsible behaviour with regard to the use of technology.

In his power-point presentation, Mr. Walsh provided guidelines and tips to assist School Council members (parents, students, and teachers) in determining what they should be teaching youth concerning digital wellness, ethics, and online behaviour.

With the tsunami-like nature of new digital technologies, children are learning to use technology at the same time as the adults. This leads to misunderstandings and uncertainties of how technologies can or should be used.

Mr. Walsh described the 9 elements or themes of Digital Citizenship as:

1. Digital Access: *Full electronic participation in society.*

Technology users need to be aware that not everyone has the same opportunities when it comes to technology. Working toward equal digital rights and supporting electronic access is the starting point of Digital Citizenship. Digital exclusion makes it difficult to grow as a society that is increasingly using these tools. Helping to provide and expand access to technology should be the goal of all digital citizens.

How do schools embrace BYOD (bring your own devices)?

Do children with diagnosed exceptionalities have access?

Are there issues around equality? Is there a digital divide?

Do all people have High Speed Access?

2. Digital Commerce: *Buying and selling of goods online*

Are students knowledgeable in the risks and opportunities associated with purchasing or commercial transactions across the Internet?

Do they know how to monitor their online spending habits?

3. Digital Communication: *Electronic exchange of information*

Are students and educators participating in educational conversation regarding privacy and public sharing?

Do students know the school rules related to cell phones, instant messaging, and other communications?

What is the understanding of appropriate vs. inappropriate communication online?

4. Digital Literacy: *Process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.*

What technologies must be taught and how will technologies be used?

* Access and use
* Understand digital media content and applications
* Problem solving
* Critical thinking
* Create with digital technology
* Multi‐literacies

While schools have made great progress in the area of technology infusion, much remains to be done. A renewed focus must be made on which technologies must be taught as well as how each should be used.

5. Digital Etiquette: *Appropriate and inappropriate use of technology*

How do we teach students appropriate behaviours online?

How do we teach students appropriate use of technology?

Technology users often see this area as one of the most pressing problems when dealing with Digital Citizenship. We recognize inappropriate behavior when we see it, but before people use technology they do not learn digital etiquette (i.e., appropriate conduct).  Many people feel uncomfortable talking to others about their digital etiquette.  Often rules and regulations are

created or the technology is simply banned to stop inappropriate use. It is not enough to create rules and policy, we must teach everyone to become responsible digital citizens in this new society.

6. Digital Law: *Legal rights and restrictions governing technology use*

Do students understand the legal implications for unethical and illegal behaviours online?

* Harassment
* Defamatory libel
* Copyright Violations

Digital law deals with the ethics of technology within a society. Unethical use manifests itself in form of theft and/or crime. Students need to understand that stealing or causing damage to other people’s work, identity, or property online is a crime. These laws apply to anyone who works or plays online. Hacking into others information, downloading illegal music, plagiarizing, creating destructive worms, viruses or creating Trojan Horses, sending spam, or stealing anyone’s identify or property is unethical.

7. Digital Rights & Responsibilities: *Those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world*

Digital citizens have the right to privacy, free speech, etc. Basic digital rights must be addressed, discussed, and understood in the digital world.  With these rights also come responsibilities as well. Users must help define how the technology is to be used in an appropriate manner. In a digital society these two areas must work together for everyone to be productive.

8. Digital Health & Wellness: *Physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world*

How do we address the physical and psychosocial wellbeing for students to support their increasing use of technologies?

* Ergonomics
* Addiction
* The on-off switch

Eye safety, repetitive stress syndrome, and sound ergonomic practices are issues that need to be addressed in a new technological world. Beyond the physical issues are those of the psychological issues that are becoming more prevalent such as Internet addiction.  Users need to be taught there are inherent dangers of technology. Digital Citizenship includes a culture where technology users are taught how to protect themselves through education and training.

9. Digital Security (self-protection*): Electronic precaution to guarantee safety and security*

How do we protect private and confidential digital information?

What should students know about protecting their personal security online?

In any society, there are individuals who steal, deface, or disrupt other people. The same is true for the digital community. It is not enough to trust other members in the community for the responsibility of our own safety. We need to have virus protection, backups of data, and surge control of our equipment. As responsible citizens, we must protect our information from outside forces that might cause disruption or harm.

Mr. Walsh pointed out that the best way to explain and teach Digital Citizenship to all students (Kindergarten to Level 3) is through the concept of REP - Respect, Educate, and Protect. Digital Citizenship in NL is part of the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, which directs all schools to develop and implement a plan to teach Digital Citizenship.

**Business Meeting Summary (Official Minutes in the 2015 General Meeting Information Kit)**

The Chair for the Business Meeting was President Nathan Whalen, while Secretary, Peter Whittle, served as the Parliamentarian.

There were 14 voting delegates in attendance, 8 non-voting and 12 Proxy’s to establish the quorum.  Business included the presentation of the Annual Report, President’s Report, Financial Report, as well as the 2014-2015 Budget.

There were a total of 14 resolutions discussed and adopted. Of those resolutions, 8 were rescinded from the NLFSC Policy Document, amended and adopted, while 6 were new.

Resolutions

1. School Council Operations

Original Resolution:

5.5 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils supports the provision of workshops for parents involved in home and school associations and school councils. (2002)

Rescind Article 5.5 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas School Councils feel more supports are required to assist them to fulfill their role and to support their respective school development plans;*

*Be it therefore resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils supports the provision of workshops for parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and students involved in School Councils and home and school associations.*

 2. RCMP Anti-Bullying and Anti-Drug Programs

Original Resolution:

19.4 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils supports a lobby of Government to have financial resources to the RCMP reinstated.

Rescind Article 19.4 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas new information from efforts to advocate for RCMP drug awareness and anti-bullying programs has arisen;*

*Be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils campaign government and the RCMP to have financial resources to the RCMP reinstated.*

3. Student Transportation

Original Resolution:

2.4 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils supports the requirement by government that transportation companies provide training for all school bus drivers on managing life-threatening allergies. (2006)

2.5 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils supports more thorough and advanced first aid training so that school bus drivers have safety, first aid, and EpiPen training before they drive a school bus with children on board. (2006)

Rescind Articles 2.4 and 2.5 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

2.4 *Whereas student safety is of paramount importance to parents, teachers, and school communities;*

*Whereas school bus drivers should be properly trained to respond in emergency situations;*

*Be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils commend the Department of Education on working to include first aid, epinephrine administration training, and other training that will ensure the safety of children in the new contract template with independent school bus operators.*

*Be it further resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils commend the Department of Education on following through on providing first aid training so that school bus drivers have safety, first aid, and EpiPen training before they drive a school bus with children on board for board owned buses.*

Renumber existing Articles 2.6 – 2.9 to 2.5 – 2.8 from NLFSC Policy Document

4. Student Transportation

Original Resolution:

2.3 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils seeks a change in legislation regarding the maximum age of school buses in operation on our roads. (2005)

Rescind Article 2.3 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas student safety is of paramount importance to parents, teachers, and school communities;*

*Be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils commend the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for the implementation of the CSA D250-07 School Bus Safety Standards that provide for a maximum age of school buses in operation.*

5. Healthy Living

Original Resolutions:

11.2 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils encourages school councils to work in a co-operative manner with their respective School Boards to move forward with implementation of initiatives supporting healthy eating and active living for students in schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. (2005)

13.1 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils recognizes that lack of exercise during the school day poses a serious health risk to our children. (2004)

13.2 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils endorses and promotes regular physical activity for all children during recess and lunch breaks. (2004)

Rescind Article 11.2 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas a recent study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal shows more people in Canada, and particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, are becoming obese;*

*Whereas this same study reports that approximately 71 per cent of people in Newfoundland and Labrador will be considered obese or overweight by 2019;*

*Whereas our children and families must learn how to lead healthy lives and school communities have a strong role to play in fostering healthy living practices and combatting the global obesity epidemic;*

*Be it therefore resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils renew its commitment to healthy living by working with School Districts, the Department of Education, and community organizations to support healthy living in schools;*

*Be it further resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils work with partner organizations to provide resources and supports for School Councils and parents to assist families in living healthy lifestyles;*

*Be it further resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils commend the School Boards and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for its work on Healthy Living and reiterate the importance of resolutions 13.1, and 13.2.*

6. School Infrastructure

Original Resolution:

8.1 As most government buildings are maintained at a cost of $2.50 per square foot, and schools are maintained at a cost of $0.55 per square foot, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils recommends that funding for schools’ maintenance be increased to a standard more in keeping with that spent on other publicly maintained buildings. (2000)

Rescind Article 8.1 and 19.2 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas students require well-designed and well-maintained schools in order to learn in a safe and healthy school climate;*

*Be it therefore resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils commend the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for its commitment to school maintenance and infrastructure spending.*

*Be it further resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils recommend that the Department of Education and School Districts work closely with School Councils in the concept, design, and development of all new school construction and renovation projects to ensure adequate feedback is sought from the school community.*

7. School Fees

Original Resolution:

9.2 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils requests that the Department of Education state publicly that Government does not fund 100% of the cost of textbooks and field trips up to Grade 8 and that such costs must be covered by parents.  (2001)

Rescind Article 9.2 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas School Councils are pleased with the amount of necessary curriculum and material resources available to schools;*

*Be it therefore resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils commend the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for the elimination of school fees for students in grades K-12 and for providing textbooks for students in grades K-12.*

8. Guidance Allocation

Original Resolution:

12.7 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils encourages the Department of Education to immediately implement a change in the allocation formula for Guidance Counsellors to one per 333 students for Kindergarten to Level III, beginning in September 2009.

Rescind Article 12.7 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas modern schools are confronted with diverse and intense demands by students of a personal nature, which include career planning; comprehensive student assessments; scholarship and postsecondary application procedures and information; drug and alcohol awareness; personal counselling; anti-bullying programs; and mediation;*

*Whereas the Guidance Counsellor is often the professional educator charged with these responsibilities;*

*Whereas the current Guidance Counsellor allocation of one per 500 students does not meet the needs of students and is particularly challenging in rural schools;*

*Be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils urges the Department of Education to implement a change in the allocation formula for Guidance Counsellors to one per 333 students for Kindergarten to Level III as per Recommendation #20 from the final report of the 2007 Teacher Allocation Commission.*

9A. Administrative Allocation

Original Resolution:

19.3 The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils supports a lobby of Government to ensure cuts to aforementioned educational staffing allocations be reconsidered and reinstated.

Rescind Article 19.3 from NLFSC Policy Document and replace with:

*Whereas the amalgamation of four English School Districts into one has downloaded an increased administrative burden on Principals and Assistant Principals;*

*Whereas Budget 2013 reduced administrative allocations for schools;*

*Whereas Principals and Assistant Principals play a vital role in teaching and learning and are the instructional leaders in the school;*

*Be it therefore resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils*

*reiterate to lobby Government to ensure cuts to administrative allocations be reconsidered and reinstated.*

9B. Educational Allocation

Introduce Article 19.3(a) to NLFSC Policy document to read as follows:

*Whereas Budget 2013 reduced the number of teaching units available to support schools and student achievement;*

*Be it therefore resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils reiterate to lobby Government to increase the amount of teaching units provided for the Needs Based Resource Allocations – such as Regular Teachers, IRT’s, Student Assistants, etc. – as requested by the district, for individual schools needs.*

*Be it therefore further resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils reiterate to lobby Government to reinstate teaching units that were cut in Budget 2013.*

10. School Board Governance - Introduce New Resolution

*20.1 Whereas research on school board effectiveness shows that Trustees are a crucial piece in supporting student achievement if they are able to adequately hear and respond to the concerns of parents and the school community;*

*Whereas the current system of 15 appointed trustees for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District does not appropriately meet this objective;*

*Be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils recommends that school district governance should be derived from already elected School Councils in place of the existing appointed Board of Trustees.*

*Be it further resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils urge the Department of Education that a change in legislation occur to this effect before any further school closure consultations or major policy decisions occur where the spirit of Schools Act, 1997, indicates accountability for parents and school communities in education.*

11. Assessment and Evaluation Policy – New Resolution

*Whereas parents, former students, and current students are concerned with the effects of the “No-Zero Policy” in relation to preparedness for post-secondary;*

*Be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils petition the Minister of Education to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence to determine whether the implementation of the Assessment and Evaluation Policy is having a measurable positive effect on student aptitude (e.g., work habits, citizenship, and preparation for post- secondary study), and student achievement.*

12. Safe and Caring Schools Teaching and Learning Resources

*Whereas most, if not all, schools face issues of social justice, bullying, and acceptance;*

*Whereas there are currently some awareness raising programs in existence around these issues; however, more programs are needed for the varying age groups and learning levels for our children to deal with the increasing number of children feeling unsafe in the school environment.*

*Therefore, be it resolved that the Department of Education and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District work together to develop more teaching and learning resources to assist in educating children about social justice, anti-bullying, and respecting each other and the importance of acceptance of each and everyone.*

13. Funding for Technology Maintenance in Schools

*Whereas all schools are expected to provide and utilize the latest in technology including smart boards/team boards, Wi-Fi, iPads, and associated devices and subscriptions;*

*Whereas we want our children to be able to avail of the latest learning technologies and devices, both to assist in learning and to be able to utilize the technology productively;*

*Whereas all technologies, services, and subscriptions require financial resources to maintain, repair, and replace as needed and there is currently no financial resources provided in the budgets to the school boards for these resources, and therefore no financial resources allocated to individual schools;*

*Therefore, be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils request the Minister of Education make a provision in the budgeting process for our schools to have the necessary additional budget allocation to properly maintain the current technology devices, services, and subscriptions to ensure our children are able to take advantage of these learning devices now and in the future.*

14. Educational Psychologist Allocation

*Whereas modern schools are confronted with diverse and intense demands by students of a personal nature, which include comprehensive student assessments; drug and alcohol awareness; personal counselling; anti-bullying programs; and mediation;*

*Whereas the guidance counselor is often the professional educator charged with these responsibilities;*

*Whereas comprehensive student assessments take upwards of 20 hours each to complete and is a significant burden on schools;*

*Whereas the current guidance counselor allocation of one per 500 students does not meet the needs of students and is particularly challenging in rural schools;*

*Therefore, be it resolved that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils urge the Department of Education to increase the supportive resources such as educational psychologists, counselors, and other support staff necessary to augment the intervention and assistance necessary to address the needs of students from Kindergarten to Level III.*

A discussion also took place regarding the low turnout at the Annual General Meetings over the past few years and whether it would be best to move the Annual General Meeting from Spring to Fall. Instead, a motion to host a Biennial General Meeting (once every two years) was put forth and unanimously supported. Delegates also encouraged the Federation’s Board of Directors to host regional events throughout the year to bring together local School Councils.

**Election of Officers**

An Election for the positions of 1st Vice-President and

Secretary was held with the following results:

***President for the term of 2013 - 2015 - Nathan Whalen (Bishops College School, St. John’s)***

***1st Vice President for the term of 2014 - 2016 - Terry Green (Sprucewood Academy, Grand Falls - Windsor)***

***2nd Vice-President for the term of 2013 - 2015 - Paulette Grimes (Woodland Primary, Grand Falls - Windsor)***

***Secretary for the term of 2014 - 2016 - Peter Whittle (St Paul’s Jr. High, Virginia Park, St. John’s)***

Other executive members include: Ruby Hoskins, Past President (Marystown); and Michele Peach, Treasurer (Mount Pearl).

The Business Meeting also included discussions on:

Membership Fees

New School Construction

Administration and Teacher Allocations

Review of Health and Curriculum/Focus on Mental Health and Addictions

Funding for School Council and NLFSC

Cuts to the RCMP community and school programs

Guidance Allocations

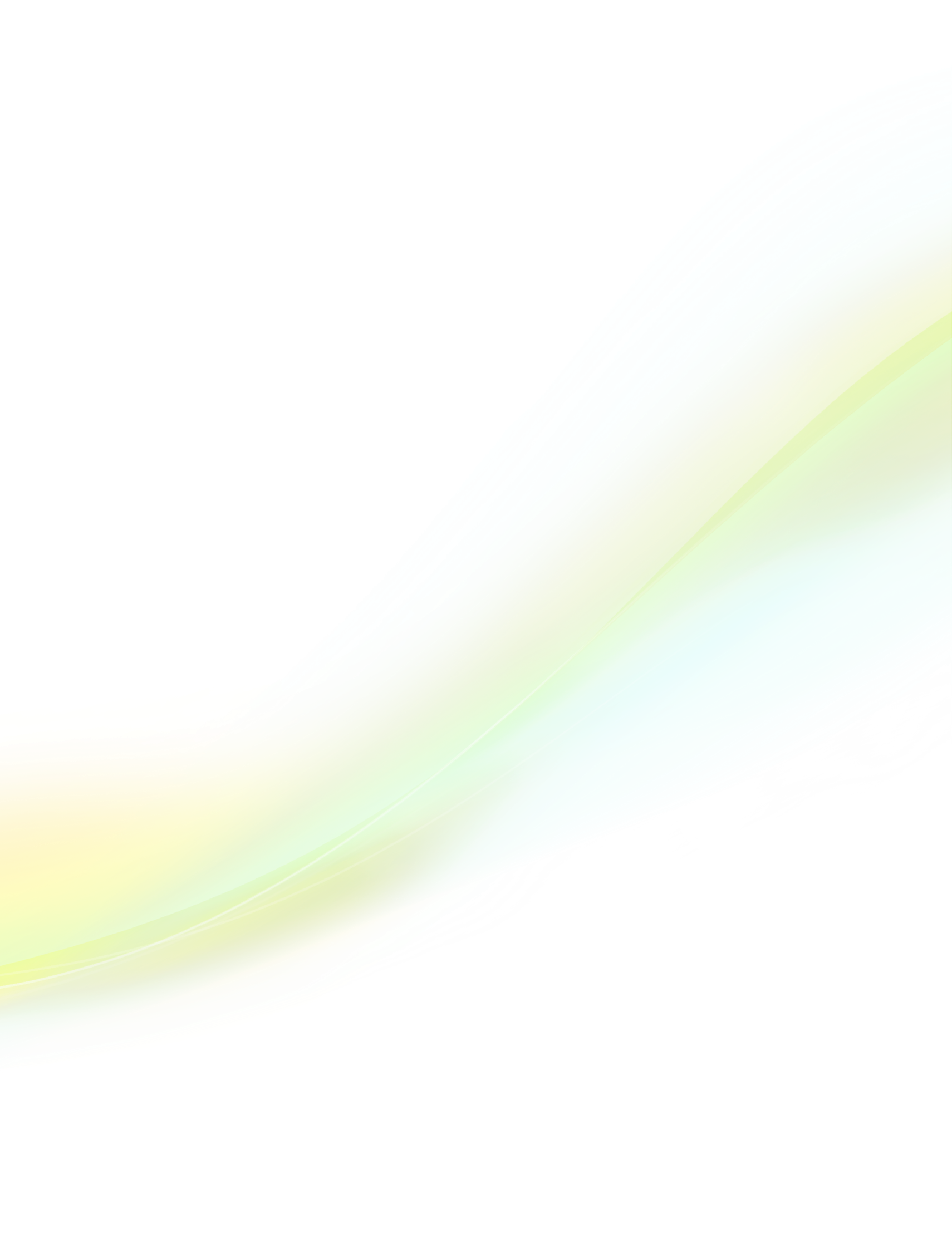
Student Assessment and Evaluation

**School Council Person of the Year Award**

The 2013 - 2014 School Council Person of the Year Award was presented to Terry-Lee Roberts from Dorset Collegiate, Pilley’s Island. Ms. Roberts was nominated for the School Council Person of the Year Award by Mark Warren (Principal of Dorset Collegiate) and members of her School Council.

The award was presented at the closing banquet of the 34th School Councils Annual General Meeting and Conference, which coincided with the beginning of National Volunteer Week, April 6 - 12, 2014.

The location and date of the 2016 AGM was deferred to the executive.



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