

A newspaper for School Councils in Newfoundland and

Labrador

February 2015

**Message from the President**



Dear members:

The school year is just flying by. It is difficult to believe that we are nearly halfway through the school year. Let me take this opportunity to wish you a happy and prosperous New Year. 2015 promises to be one full of challenges for the NLFSC as we can continue to advocate for the best possible education for our students.

I see my role as President as being an advocate for the many issues that members of councils like yours bring forward on a daily basis.

Programs and projects, no matter how excellent, cannot be considered sustainable without an

advocacy plan. We need to continue to make your case to government, the NLTA and other organizations that share our passion for the

academic, mental and physical well being of our children.

Albeit, advocacy needs to be pragmatic.

Those of us who care about the well being of

education have learned to use whatever discourse

is helpful to promote our goals. United and

confident, our partners in education know what we want and why we want it. We have become a more responsive, pro-active and effective voice in education.

This issue of The Cuffer reflects the our

advocacy plan. I welcome any input from you on other areas of education policy, which you feel the federation should be focussing on.

Our voice is increasingly respected and

recognized as a crucial component of this

province's public education system. It is my hope that the school boards and government will

ensure that we have the resources at the

individual school council level to achieve the potential provided through the Education Act.

2015 promises to be a challenging year for

government as revenues from our non-renewable resource sector continue to dramatically shrink.

In these times of restraint, we must ensure that those crafting the provincial budget realize that funding for education is an investment that earns incredible social and economic dividends. Cuts must not impact the classroom! However, we must also be pragmatic, Education expenses make up a quarter of all government

expenditures.

Let us commit, one and all, to

ensure that maintaining educational resources is at the forefront of the political agenda.

A provincial election is due this fall. We have a responsibility to be engaged. Political action does not equate to partisan politics. We should be demanding that all candidates and all parties clearly articulate their positions on bussing,

inclusion, curriculum, safe & caring schools,

improved learning standards. new accountability systems, mental health services, extra-curricular opportunities, e-cigarettes, same day

Kindergarten, special services, ratios for

guidance councillors, classroom sizes and the no zero policy, to name a few.

February 8-14 is Teacher Appreciation week. Our teachers know that all students deserve to be successful. These teachers have the internal drive and the external skills to keep striving for

teaching excellence with every student, every day, year after year. They are our children's friends, mentors and guides rolled into one. They deserve our greatest esteem.

What is your school council doing to thank your teachers for their good work?

In closing, let me offer greetings from the

members of our executive. On behalf of our team, thank you for your shared commitment to our children's education.

Sincerely,

Peter L. Whittle

peterlwhittle@gmail.com

**Media Interviews**

Over the past few months President Whittle has been interviewed by the media on a number of issues affecting our schools, students and School Councils. Topics include:

(**Mental Health and Addictions among our Youth, Safe and Caring Schools Policy,**

**Student Achievement, Special Services**

**Teacher Allocation, School Transportation, Student Evaluation and Assessment Policy (Non-Zero) and Electronic Cigarettes and nicotine liquid refills (banning the sale to**

**minors)**

In addition to his radio and newspaper

interviews, on Jan. 14 President Whittle was a guest on CBC Radio Crosstalk talking about and

taking questions from callers on Full-Day

Kindergarten.

President Whittle has also been involved in

discussions, between government and the School Bus Operators, regarding school bus issues and contracts.

**Meeting with ACT (Alliance for the Control of Tobacco)**

On December 12, 2014 NLFSC President

Whittle, along with past president Ruby Hoskins and Executive Director Denise Pike, met with Kevin Coady, Executive Director of ACT to

discuss their joint concern on the health risks, particularly among youth, stemming from the the sale and use of e-cigarettes and flavoured

tobacco products in the province.

Both groups encourage government to follow the lead of Ontario and introduce legislation that subjectse-cigarettes to the same regulatory

controls that are in place for tobacco products.

Following the meeting both groups issued a joint Press Release (page 12) and requested a

meeting with Minister Clyde Jackman, Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development to discuss the importance of implementing these regulations as quickly as possible.

**Meeting with the Minister of Education**

On December 15, the President and Executive Director met with the Minister of Education,

Susan Sullivan.

Agenda items included:

School Council Training, Mental Health and Addictions (secure treatment and secure

withdrawal management legislation), regulations

regarding electronic cigarettes, nicotine liquid and vapours and cyberbullying.

**School Health Research Survey**

On December 21, 2015 the Executive Director participated in a discussion with a representative from the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact regarding their “Cancer Risk in Youth” survey which they hope to conduct with high school students from NL (pending approval by the School Districts). Students will be asked to provide information on a variety of health

behaviors such as tobacco use, nutrition and food purchasing, tanning bed use as well as questions on school connectedness, bullying, self-esteem and other topics that would be relevant for schools.

Once the information has been processed, each participating school would receive a customized report based on the results within their schools - compared to a national and provincial average.

**Meeting with the Minister for Seniors,**

**Wellness and Social Development**

On Jan 27th President Whittle and Executive

Director Pike met with Minister Clyde Jackman regarding NLFSC concerns on e-cigarettes,

flavoured tobacco and nicotine refills.

President Whittle reiterated NLFSC’s position of banning the sale electronic cigarettes to

minors; banning the use of electronic cigarettes in areas where smoking is already off-limits; and the need for regulations around nicotine refills.

The President also stressed the importance of the NL government implementing similar

regulations recently established by the

Government of Ontario.

The Minister supported NLFSC's position that legislation - which subjects e-cigarettes to the same regulatory controls that are in place for tobacco products- is needed.It is anticipated that changes to legislation regarding the sale of

e- cigarettes, flavoured tobacco and nicotine

refills will take place in the spring.

**SOME OF OUR ONGOING ISSUES**

**School Board of Trustee Elections**

NLFSC has inquired about the date of the next School Board Election of Trustees. NLFSC

believes our students and schools deserve to be represented by Trustees who are elected, as

opposed to appointed.

Public education is the cornerstone of our

society. Children spend more time in school than anywhere else and teachers have a profound

impact on their lives. The mission of all those in leadership roles within the education system in NL - to cultivate potential - is not one to be taken lightly.

Every School Council member, parent and teacher deserve to know who is representing their educational concerns and advocating on their behalf. A board of Trustees is accountable to the people they serve and they should be

locally-elected representatives selected by the

public, not government. The role of a Trustee takes dedicated leadership, coupled with a

willingness to seek innovative ideas, and the courage to implement them. It really matters who your Trustees are!

The current Board of Trustees have finally

established the School District electoral zones and developed a new Constitution. The date of the next election will be set following the

approval of the Constitution by the Minister.

**Pre-Budget Consultation**

In a few months the government of NL will be holding pre-budget consultations - designed to provide key stakeholders, individuals and

interest groups an opportunity to identify budget

priorities for consideration during the upcoming provincial budget. As with other years NLFSC will submit a proposal on behalf of our

membership and students. Feel free to e-mail us your education priorities or suggestions to

include in our presentation.

**Cyberbullying**

**Results of NLFSC Listserv question on Cyberbullying (sent to membership on**

**November 12)**

**Questions:**

**1. Is Cyberbullying an issue at your school?**

**2. Does your school have any Cyberbullying preventions in place?**

**NLFSC received 59 responses from our**

**membership**

Of those 59 responses:

* 47 schools have encountered

Cyberbullying periodically –once a year on average

* 46 say Cyberbullying usually starts

outside school (social media), but is

carried into the school setting and

teachers and Administrators have to

address it

* All 59 schools have some form of

cyberbullying pervention in place

* 48 schools cite their Safe and Caring School Committee, whose mandate

includes, outlining positive behaviour supports to discourage cyberbullying, as an effective tool in addressing

Cyberbullying.

* 49 schools have implemented the

Provincial Safe and Caring School Policy and Digital Citizenship into their School development Plan and Classroom

* 38 schools regularly invite speakers from RNC, RCMP, Mental Health agencies and Communities Against Violence to talk to students about cyberbullying,

bullying and sexting.

* 32 schools use posters and various

programs such as *Beyond the Hurt, Stop a Bully, Crime Stoppers and the Focus On Bullies and Intimidation Handbook* (from the Department of Education) to promote safe internet use.

* 14 schools have provided Media Smarts training to all students
* Other initiatives include monitoring and limiting computer time, anti bullying

videos, guidance counsellor support,

positive behavior expectations, Pride Week/ Anti Violence Day

* 44 schools felt more supervision and

involvement of parents is needed to

address the issue of cyberbullying.

* 12 schools say that parents often

cyberbully teachers

Many thanks to the members that helped us gather this information. Names of responders and schools are kept in confidence.

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**Mental Health and Addictions**

The importance of healthy mental and physical development for children cannot be

overestimated. Many people recognize the

importance of a healthy childhood, but few

understand the impact of mental and emotional problems and the effect it can have on children and youth.

As many as one in four young Canadian adults between the ages of 15 and 25 suffer from some degree of depression, substance dependence or anxiety disorder.

Advocating for supports for Mental Health

Issues and Addictions among our youth has been one of the main goals of the NLFSC over the past few years.

We often hear from parents who are searching for Mental Health and Addictions Counselors for their children.

**Mental Health Update**

The NLFSC e-mailed and met with Department of Education officials during June 2012 and

requested that more information, education and awareness on mental health and addictions be incorporated into the school curriculum -

starting with the Primary and Elementary grades. NLFSC also stressed the need and benefit of

creating a new allocation for Youth, Mental Health and Addiction Counsellors, at a ratio of 1:500 students.

NLFSC has also been lobbying government to change the age of consent for treatment from 16 to 18 years of age to give parents the right to

ensure their child receives necessary care.

The NLFSC would like to see a similar model like the Alberta’s Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PCHAD) implemented in NL. Under this model, parents or guardians of children

under the age of 18 (with addictions) can apply for a protection order for treatment for their child. If the court agrees with the parents or

guardians that drug use is causing harm to their child, the court can send the child to a protective safe house for up to ten days.

This safe house will provide them with treatment and help them manage withdrawal

During December, 2013, NLFSC wrote a letter to met the Department of Health and Community Services requesting information on the status of the Mental Health and Addiction Treatment

Centres in CBS and Central NL. Once again the

executive expressed the need for more Mental Health Counsellors and Youth Outreach Mental Health Workers, as well as a need to change for secured treatment by changing the age of consent for treatment from 16 to 18 years of age.

On February 28, 2014 the executive met with the Department of Health and Community Services for an update.

According to representatives from Department of Health and Community Services much progress has been made on addressing mental health

issues including the establishment of an

E-Mental Health and Addiction Awareness

Program.

The E-Mental Health and Addiction Awareness program:

* aims to decrease stigma and

discrimination by challenging and

ultimately changing the way people think and act toward others with a mental

illness and addiction

.

* is grounded in strong partnerships and stakeholder engagement
* provides educational awareness and

provides access to effective, evidence-

based services

* includes Interactive web-based support services that creates greater access to new and existing mental illness and addiction services.

Government plans to incorporate the E-Mental Health and Awareness Program into the school curriculum and provide students and parents with support and information on where to obtain

resources and support.

The Department of Health Officials also

provided an update on the status of the two

Mental Health and AddictionTreatment Centres (CBS and Central NL) and said the province had hired 5 new Youth Addiction Counselors.

August 2014, NLFSC and the department met to discuss upcoming legislative changes regarding secured treatment for youth. It was anticipated that changing the age of consent from 16 to 18 years of age would be voted on during the fall sitting of the House of Assembly.

Despite numerous inquiries from NLFSC,

regarding the age of consent, no changes have taken place.

President Whittle and Past President Ruby Hoskins have also been interviewed numerous times (radio, TV and newspaper) on need for more Mental Health and Addiction

Counsellors in schools. The issue has also been included in a pre-budget submission to the

Minister of Finance.

NLFSC believes more Mental Health providers, who specialized in the treatment of children and

adolescents are needed in this province. The NLFSC executive will continue to lobby

government for these supports and will continue to inform our membership of any changes on the issue of Mental Health and Addictions.



**Student Assessment and Evaluation**

The following is an opinion piece by NLFSC President Peter Whittle, posted to his blog

“Polemic and Paradox” on January 14, 2015.

NLFSC receives many calls and e-mails from School Councils, parents and teachers regarding this issue.

[ZERO POLICY UNDER REVIEW](http://www.polemicandparadox.com/2015/01/zero-policy-under-review.html)

The so called "no-zero" policy is back in the

media

*The Telegram recently published a letter to the editor from a long time critic of the assessment and evaluation policy. Michael Zwaagstra is an educator, author and fellow with the Atlantic*

*Institute of Market Studies (AIMS).  He has been a vocal critic of no zero policies in Canadian*

*jurisdictions.*

*Zwaagstrais is not alone. There has been a lot of negative feedback from teachers, parents,*

*psychologists and school councils. In fact, I have often wondered if the policy was worth the grief it has generated.*

*The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils has not endorsed the policy. There are some mixed opinions but the vast*

*majority of conversations that I have had with parent, student, teacher and community reps has been bewilderment. They just do not like the idea that high school students appear to be able to set their own deadlines and not take*

*responsibility for their actions. I feel it*

*creates/leaves students ill-prepared to meet*

*expectations, meet deadlines, perform assigned tasks and deal with the real world consequences of coping with failure.*

*I feel there is a difference between assessment and punishment. Cheating, not finishing*

*assignments and other bad behavior must have consequences. In fact they do.*

*Students are punished for bad behavior but the academic penalty has certainly been adjusted since 2011 to reflect a no-zero approach.*

*Last Spring at the NLFSC AGM a resolution was passed calling on government and the board to provide us with qualitative and quantitative*

*evidence to support continuing on with the*

*maligned assessment and evaluation policy. We have raised the issue with both.*

*The current English board is in the process of holding public consultations to develop a unified policy to cover everything from evaluations to human resources. In short the misguided policy is under review.*

*We will be putting forward the position, unless the data accumulated from this experiment shows otherwise, that the unified policy abandon the no-zero approach.*

*I would encourage folks on both side of the*

*issues to get engaged in the process. Prepare your letters and presentation, be vocal and*

*influence the new unified assessment process, which is the cornerstone of how your child is evaluated.*

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[**NO-ZERO POLICIES JUST AS MISGUIDED AS EVER**](http://michaelzwaagstra.com/?p=488) **by** [***Michael Zwaagstra***](http://michaelzwaagstra.com/?author=1)

Published in The Telegram Jan. 14/15

Never underestimate the staying power of a bad idea, especially in education. The no-zero policy in Newfoundland and Labrador schools is a prime example.

It’s been almost four years since the former Eastern School District officially implemented a no-zero policy. Teachers were no longer

permitted to give zeros when work never came in, deduct marks for late assignments, or

penalize students caught cheating on tests or

assignments.

Despite widespread criticism from parents and teachers, school district administrators held firm to this bad idea. The neighbouring Western School District quickly followed with its own no-zero policy. Now, with the recent

amalgamation of all English language school

districts into a single province-wide school board, a de facto no-zero policy appears to be in effect across the province.

The philosophy underlying no-zero policies is quite simple. Proponents believe teachers should always separate behaviour from achievement when grading students. Since cheating on tests, handing in late work, and refusing to submit

assignments are all examples of behaviour, they should not affect students’ academic grades.

Instead, they argue, teachers should correct poor behavior in other ways.

Like many other education fads, this one sounds great in theory but quickly falls apart when implemented with real high school students. Once students find out about their school’s no-zero policy, it doesn’t take them long to conclude that assignment due dates have become mere

Nonsuggestions. Without the ability to seriously penalize tardiness, teachers end up pleading with students to hand their assignments in.

No-zero policies became popular because they have been promoted by assessment consultants who lead professsional development workshops. Ontario-based assessment consultants Ken O’Connor andDamian Cooper are two of the best-known advocates of no-zero policies. It should come as little surprise that both men spoke at education workshops in Atlantic Canada shortly before Eastern School District’s no-zero policy was formally adopted.

No-zero policies have also appeared in other provinces. In 2012, Edmonton physics teacher [Lynden Dorval](http://www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2012-06-13/article-3007592/Alberta-teacher-suspended-for-giving-out-zeros-fears-colleague-will-be-punished/1) was fired by his school board for disobeying his principal’s no-zeros edict. Dorval went public with his concerns and steadfastly refused to budge from his position that the

no-zero policy was a very bad idea.

Things did not go well for no-zero supporters. Not only did Dorval receive overwhelming

public support for his stand, the Alberta Board of Reference recently ruled that his termination was unjust. In other words, Dorval had the

professional right to challenge his school’s

misguided policy.

Shortly after Dorval’s case became public, I

analyzed the arguments used to support no-zero policies. The case for no-zero policies turned out to be very weak.

For example, Ken O’Connor regularly argues that zeros cause students to withdraw from

learning and, to back up this claim, cites an

article written by Thomas Guskey, an American education professor. When I looked up Guskey’s article, I found that he uses only one research study to support this argument — a 1992 article in the British Columbia Journal of Special

Education by Deborah Selby and Sharon

Murphy.

In their article, Selby and Murphy describe the experiences of six learning-disabled students in a mainstreamed classroom.These students had negative experiences with letter grades and blamed themselves for their poor marks.

While this might be true for the

students in this study, it is patently absurd to

generalize the experiences of six learning-disabled students to the whole student

population.

Clearly, parents are right to be skeptical when assessment gurus claim that “decades of

educational research” support no-zero policies.

It should come as little surprise that regular classroom teachers are some of the strongest

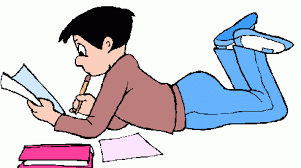
opponents of no-zero policies. They know what it is like to work with real students, and they are not beholden to theories concocted by ivory

tower academics.

Fortunately, there is a way for the English school board to extract itself from the no-zero quagmire. It should simply allow teachers to use their

professional discretion when dealing with late or incomplete assignments. Sometimes students deserve an extension and sometimes they don’t. Since teachers are trained professionals, they are capable of making these decisions themselves.

No-zero policies are just as misguided now as they were four years ago. It’s time to end this province’s failed experiment with them.







Healthy eating and physical activity help

children grow, learn and be strong. Helping children learn about healthy eating and healthy choices can lead to a lifetime of good nutrition habits.

At Kids Eat Smart Clubs, our Registered

Dietitian and Regional Coordinators assist KES Club Volunteers in preparing nutritious meals based on Canada’s Food Guide and the School Food Guidelines. We also provide great menu suggestions and recipes on our weekly blog,

Facebook and Twitter postings and most of these are geared to busy families and have plenty of suggestions for quick and nutritious food on the run. We also suggest recipes that are fun,

creative and appealing to children.

Almost 90 per cent of our Province’s schools operate a Kids Eat Smart Club. The majority are breakfast Clubs while some are snack and lunch. Every school day, with the help of community volunteers, we serve over 22,000 meals to boys and girls throughout Newfoundland and

Labrador.

To find out more, like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/kidseatsmartnl](http://www.facebook.com/kidseatsmartnl) or follow us on twitter [www.twitter.com/kidseatsmartnl](http://www.twitter.com/kidseatsmartnl) .

You will be delighted with the great suggestions and have confidence that you are giving your

children a variety of healthy food options.

Kids Eat Smart Foundation is a registered charity dedicated to providing nutritious school food programs at no cost to children or families. For more information visit our website at [www.kidseatsmart.ca](http://www.kidseatsmart.ca)

If your school does not have a Kids Eat Smart Club and you are interested in starting one please contact us at 722-1996, toll free 1-877-722-1996 or [info@kidseatsmart.ca](mailto:info@kidseatsmart.ca).

**Poverty, What is It?**

**by James Dinn, President of the NLTA**

A casual survey of our province and it is easy to see the signs of prosperity everywhere. It’s easy to forget that prosperity has not embraced

everyone and it is tempting to blame those who have not thrived for their own misfortune.

However, increasing property values and rent, the

difficulty of finding decent and affordable

accommodations, combined with rising utility rates and food prices have intensified the

financial challenges facing many of us and pushed more people to the margins of society.

In my other life I sit on the board of directors for the Gathering Place. I also serve as president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We help those in need through distribution of monthly food hampers, financial assistance and advocacy.

Recently we distributed 350 Christmas Hampers to those in need. Many of those we help are

people new to our country, seniors using a food bank for the first time and families with children. The problem is more widespread than we might think.

According to the 2014 Hunger Count (conducted by Food Banks Canada), 841,191 Canadians use food banks monthly – up 1% from 2013 and 25% higher than in 2008. One out of every six households who use food banks have employment income. Seventy percent of

households that receive social assistance are food insecure; 30% are severely food insecure. The Hunger Count estimates that another 4,308,140 meals and snacks are served monthly by soup kitchens, shelters and school breakfast programs.

The *2013 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty* in Canada states that 1,168,000 of the nearly 7 million children in Canada live in

poverty.

The 2014 Hunger Count report estimates that 37% (1/3) of people helped by food banks are \children. Almost half (45%) of the households helped are families of children, and 1/2 of these are two parent families

Childhood poverty, according to the 2014

Hunger Count report, particularly in the early years has a profound effect on the physical,

mental and economic outcomes of those who experience it once they reach adulthood. There is a significant amount of research to corroborate the far-reaching negative effects of childhood poverty.

But I don’t need to tell you this. As teachers, we are already quite familiar with the consequences of poverty. We see its effects on children daily in our classrooms and schools. We understand how it impacts their ability to pay attention,

attendance, participation in extra curricular

activities, academic performance and success in school.

We know the importance of stimulating learning environments and parental involvement to a

student’s success in school. But how do parents (or a parent) do this when it is a struggle just to pay rent or put food on the table?

Being teachers, we do what teachers do best. We act.

We initiate school breakfast programs and lunch programs so our students will not have to go hungry. I had the opportunity to attend the

inauguration of one such program at a local school this past November.

Some high schools recognising the prohibitive cost of hosting graduation ceremonies at local hotels and convention centres have taken steps to make graduations more affordable – and more inclusive.

For many teachers, helping students who

experience poverty is personal and they often use their own money to do so. In some cases,

teachers have taken the step of being a foster parent for children who live in precarious

situations.

However, real change for children experiencing poverty requires commitment at the political

level. As teachers, we have an opportunity to

improve the lives of families and children within our province and across our country. More

importantly, we have a number of avenues in which to make our voice heard.

The provincial government, to its credit, is

reaffirming its commitment to reducing poverty in our province and is currently seeking public input on the development of a new Poverty

Reduction Strategy Action Plan. We have an

opportunity as teachers to add our voice in

shaping this new action plan. While the deadline for this feedback was January 19, it is still

possible to send in your feedback before

February 6. Send it as a staff or individually. You can submit your thoughts using the online feedback form: http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/ruralinfo/prs-online-feedback-form or by email: povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca.

Your Association feels this issue is significant enough to teachers that our submission to the

Provincial Government’s pre-budget hearings calls for an end to child poverty so that all children have what they need to thrive. The future of this province and this country depends on the well-being of our children.

The CTF through its Hear My Voice:VOX

campaign in partnership with its provincial

member organisations such as the NLTA will be making child poverty as one of the key issues in the next federal election which will occur on or before October 2015. As a participant in the VOX campaign the NLTA will, through the

Communications and Political Action Committee, develop and coordinate activities and strategies that teachers can use to engage federal parties and influence the federal government to address child poverty.

If you are interested in getting your students to engage other students on this issue and think

critically about solutions, check out

Imagineaction at www.imagine-action.ca

It’s the CTF’s social justice program and

provides resources teachers can use in the classroom. One of the resources is Poverty, What is it?, a discussion booklet containing a selection of personal responses of over 200 Grade 5 - 8

students on poverty. When used with the three-part lesson plan developed for use with the

booklet it can be a powerful tool in encouraging students to engage in social action projects. You will, of course, have to log on to the Imagineaction site to access these resources.

When you log on to Imagineaction, you’ll find a link to the Keep the Promise campaign (www.keepthepromise.ca) mentioned in my Up Front article in this issue of The Bulletin. Over 25 years ago in 1989 the Canadian Parliament unanimously committed to ending child poverty by the year 2000. Keep the Promise is a two-year campaign to reignite the commitment of

Canadians and Government to end child poverty for good. Keep the Promise seeks to engage

students and develop their leadership abilities to tackle the issue of child poverty. The site offers ideas you can use with your own students.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “The test of our

progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much. It is

whether we provide enough for those who have little.” I like to think that as teachers we have a strong sense of social justice, and that true

progress is grounded in creating a just society. While we do our best to equip our students with the skills to succeed in life, we also try to instill in them the belief that the welfare of those less fortunate is just as important as their own

success. They look to us for guidance.

Take the time to explore some of the ideas

mentioned above to get your students involved so they can help create a world where we won’t need a hunger count.

**Sprucewood Academy School Council**



Members of Sprucewood Academy School Council in Grand Falls-Windsor donned brightly decorated sweaters during their School Council Meeting/Social in December.

Seated : Regina Mercer, Principal of

Sprucewood Academy and Barry Elliott,

Back: Terry Green, School Council Chairperson (and NLFSC 1st Vice-President);Tonia Dyke

Karen Healey; and Helen Grouchy

Missing from photo:

Lisa Barry, Jim Barry, April Stone and Melissa Benson.

**Joint Press Release by NLFSC and ACT**

**December 17, 2015**

At a recent meeting between the NL Federation of School Councils (NLFSC) and the NL

Alliance for the Control of Tobacco (ACT) there was clear agreement that electronic cigarettes are a major threat to tobacco control initiatives in the Province. Both groups agree that regulation is needed to control their use and eliminate the

attraction they pose, especially to young people.

“E-cigarettes pose a risk to public health

because they have the potential to undermine tobacco control measures currently in place.” says Scott Antle, Chair of ACT’s Board of

Directors, “ACT, like the NL Federation of School Councils, believes thatthis product is a possible gateway to cigarette smoking for youth and has the potential to leave youth and others with the impression that smoking is the norm.”

“We agree that there are many known health risksstemming from using e-cigarettes and that nicotine is dangerous and very addictive,” says Peter Whittle, NLFSC President.

“Research also shows that mimicking cigarette smoking usually leads to the real thing. We

encourage government to implement

regulations now before *this gateway to nicotine addiction gets a hold on our youth.”*

Neither organization is recommending banning e-cigarettes at this time because of the lack of research available as to their effectiveness in helping people quit smoking and the possible hazards that may be associated with their use. Instead, they recommend that Newfoundland and Labrador introduce legislation that subjects

e-cigarettes to the same regulatory controls that are in place for tobacco products. These include but are not limited to:

All current and future smoke-free legislation and policies should include a statement that

e-cigarettes are also prohibited under the policy.

No sales of e-cigarettes to those under 19 years of age

No sale of flavoured e-cigarettes

No display of e-cigarettes in retail establishments

No promotion/advertising of e-cigarettes

Both NLFSC and ACT are hoping to meet with the Minister responsible for Health and

Wellness in the Province to discuss the need for regulation of this product which has the potential to addict more of our youth to tobacco and

increase the smoking rate in our province.

**Membership**

If you have not yet sent us your membership

renewal, we would like to extend to you a

friendly reminder to do so.

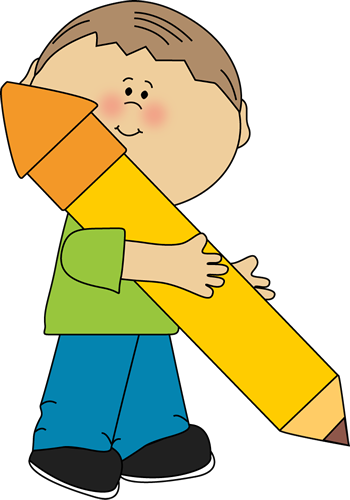
We don’t want you to miss out on your ability to participate fully in the upcoming General

Meeting May 2, 2015 in ST. John’s. If you have any questions about renewing your membership, or about NLFSC, please don’t hesitate to contact us at our email address, by telephone, or regular mail. We look forward to receiving your

renewal.

**Thank you to those who have**

**already paid their membership fees!**

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**NLFSC Meeting Information**

Our General Meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn in St. John’s on Saturday, May 2, 2015.

**If you need to book a room, please contact the hotel at (709) 722-0506**

With political parties gearing up for a Provincial Election, it is critical we ensure funding for

Education sits at the very top of the campaign agenda. Our meeting will also provide the

opportunity for us to begin drafting our concerns on education into election priorities and

questions to put forth to each political party.

NLFSC encourages all School Council Members (parents, teachers, community representatives, administrators and students) to attend our

General Meeting.

As in the past, please discuss the cost of

attending the AGM (Travel, Meals, and

Accommodations) with your School Councils and School Administrators. The cost incurred by

almost all of our participants is usually included in the schools budget.

**(Please note: NLFSC continues to advocate for operational funding for each School Council, so our membership do not have “to take” from school funds in order to attend our**

**meeting)**

We must continue to be vigilant in our attempts to keep issues that are crucial to education at the fore-front of the provincial agenda. We must continue, in union, to advocate for what we

believe our students need to achieve the

education that they are entitled to and

deserve. To do otherwise would be a discredit to our students.

**NLFSC Election of Officers**

This year’s General meeting will include an

election of officer’s for the positions of

**President (2 year term)**, **2nd Vice-President (2 years)** and **Secretary (one year)**.

If you decide to offer yourself for a position on the executive, please contact the NLFSC office as soon as possible so your information can be

included in the AGM material kit.

Nominations can also be made from the floor during the meeting.

Any member may nominate another member for a position on the provincial board.

Only members of school councils in good

standing (paid membership) may be elected as officers.

To date one person has been nominated for the position of President, one for 2nd Vice-President and 4 for Secretary.

**Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week**

This year’s annual national **Teacher/Staff**

**Appreciation Week will be held Feb. 8-14**. NLFSC encourages our membership to acknowledge and celebrate the hard work and care our teachers and support staff give to our children on a daily basis.

**What Teachers and School Staff Do**

Teachers and our school staff have some of the toughest jobs. They are there for our children day in and day out, often under trying

circumstances and with less than adequate

resources and support. Their professionalism, dedication, and expertise form the cornerstone of our nation's public education system. Without the hard work of teachers, Canadian scientists, artists, and political and business leaders would not be among the best in the world.

Many education leaders suggest that the most effective way to improve education in this

country is to give teachers the status, support, and recognition they genuinely deserve. To help focus provincial and national attention on the outstanding contributions our teachers and school staff give to us individually and

collectively

**Showing Appreciation Year Round**

Recognizing our teachers and school staff, for all they do, does not need to be time-consuming, expensive, or reserved for one special week

during the year. One of the greatest ways parents can show their appreciation, to those who work in our schools, is by being actively involved in their child's education all year long.

Parents should establish a good working

relationship with teachers/school staff early in the school year.

Talk to your children's teachers on a regular

basis, not just at scheduled parent-teacher

conferences. Find out how you can help with homework assignments and reinforce at home what is being taught in the classroom. By being an involved parent, you are showing your respect and appreciation for your child's teachers and the school. When parents and teachers establish open communication and good working

relations, great things get accomplished for

students.

**Thank Them for Being Teachers**

Teachers play a critical role in the lives of our children. It takes a lot to give a lot. Patience,

understanding and kindness are constantly

required to nurture a class full of young minds and personalities.

Teachers also play a very important role in

promoting self-discipline in our children and in establishing guidelines and rules for participating in a classroom or group. Their guidance helps our children develop social skills and become competent in group situations. That's why it's important for parents to remember those little, often overlooked qualities that make teachers such special people in our children's lives.

Be sure to tell teachers and our school staff how much you appreciate who they are and what they do.

**Give Teachers/School Staff More Quality Time**

One thing that parents probably don't think about is that the "quality time" teachers and school staff spend spent with our children is just as

important to them as it is for parents. Quality time for teachers means teaching.

Often teachers are asked to assume a range of clerical and other school duties that take time away from teaching our children. When you

advocate for teachers, advocate for giving

teachers the time they need to teach. Let your teachers know you value their profession and support their needs. Be their advocate and you will find them advocating for you and your

children!

A little gesture can make a huge difference. When parents take time to thank teachers, it makes both the parents and teachers feel good about working together. And when parents and teachers work together, student achievement soars!

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**Thank you to the Newfoundland and**

**Labrador Teachers’ Association for printing this Newsletter!**

**Prime Ministers Award**

Congratulations to teachers Mr. Wilson Warren,

Ms. Della Healy and Ms. Elizabeth Churchill on receiving the Prime Ministers Award for

Teaching Excellence.

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching

Excellence honour outstanding and innovative elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines who instill in their students a love of learning and who utilize information and

communication technologies to better equip their students with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in a 21st century society and economy.

This award appropriately reflects the endless hours Mr. Warren, Ms. Healy and Ms. Churchill have spent ensuring that each individual student obtains every opportunity to fully realize his or her talents and gifts.

On behalf of NLFSC executive and membership, thank you for your commitment to students and learning. Please accept our sincerest

congratulations on this great achievement.



**Wilson Warren**

All Saints All Grade School, Grey River

Warren has worked in three provinces as well as South Korea. In Warren’s schools, academics come before school events. Warren is data-driven. He monitors and preserves ‘instructional time’ to optimize learning opportunities.

Technology is another area of focus for Warren. Access and use begins in the primary grades and

is woven through the older grades.

Grade 3 students make webpages and present PowerPoint presentations.

Senior students are involved in the ‘Center for Distance Learning and Innovation’ and engaged in environmental stewardship projects such as marine coastline cleanup and recycling.

Warren establishes a collaborative culture “for improving teaching and learning” using evidence of student work. The school’s results are at or above the district and province and the school’s graduates go on to post-secondary studies.

Students respond to his innovative programming and staff to his instructional leadership.

Every day, Warren and his staff make a positive difference to students, parents and their

community.



**Della Healey**

Mount Pearl Intermediate, Mount Pearl

Della began her teaching career in a remote community in Labrador, where she designed and delivered a unique course on Newfoundland-Labrador culture. Committed to developing

inviting learning environments, Della builds connections and maintains trusting relationships with students and their parents. Della also uses technology in conjunction with the Accelerated Reader Program to boost literacy skills. The school’s Learning Resource Centre is stellar, thanks to her efforts. In addition, Della pays as much attention to staff learning as student

learning.

Della encourages her teachers to explore learning activities from the Banff Centre to the Geneva Autism programs.

Della shares her professional reading and attends professional conferences and workshops as part of knowledge mobilization among her staff. With her guidance and staff’s hard work, Mount Pearl’s academic results are consistently at or above the district and province.



**Elizabeth Churchill**

Elizabeth Park Elementary, Paradise

Elizabeth Churchill has been a stand-out leader in various roles, both in classrooms and

throughout the school system.

Elizabeth has created a strong foundation for Elizabeth Park Elementary with a positive

learning culture that is based on the vision that “Each Person Excels.”

Elizabeth is recognized as an exceptional leader who works hard to keep this vision at the

forefront. From an Environmental Garden that is cared for by students and their families, to

building a school-wide literacy program and

targeted instructional practices – all through open and honest relationships with teachers and parents – Elizabeth’s leadership has made a

positive impact on student achievement.

In two years, Grades 3 and 6 English Language Arts results have been above the district and

provincial levels.

Elizabeth’s expertise is evident more than ever in the grassroots development of this new school community, where students feel safe and proud to come to school every day.

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**Pink Shirt Day**

Bullying is often a problem in our schools, workplaces, homes, and over the Internet.

On **Wednesday February 25th** the NLFSC

executive encourages School Councils across the province to wear something pink to symbolize that we as a society will not tolerate bullying

anywhere.

Pink Shirt Day began in Nova Scotia in 2007, when two Grade 12 students - David Shepherd and Travis Price - stood up to defend a young male person who was bullied because he was wearing a pink shirt during the first week of school. The students took a stand by wearing pink shirts to show solidarity, and handing out pink shirts to their classmates.

Pink Shirt Day has since become a national

campaign aimed to raise awareness about the power to prevent bullying.

Pink Shirt Day aims to reduce bullying by

celebrating diversity and promoting the

development of positive social relationships.The annual event helps to create a province and

nation where all people feel safe, valued and

respected

Pink Shirt Day unites people in a movement to change people’s attitudes towards bullying. It teaches young people that we need to be more accepting of differences and that we cannot stand by and watch as bullying occurs around us. Schools, police departments, businesses,

politicians and youth groups across

Newfoundland and Labrador are using this day to raise awareness of the negative effects of

bullying and show that any form of bullying will not be tolerated in their organization.

You too can join the sea of pink! NLFSC invites you to take the opportunity to address the issue of bullying with your children or teens, by

wearing pink, planning an event or activity or

just having an intentional conversation.

**Resolutions**

**(**There were 15 resolutions passed during the 2015 AGM – below are 10 identified as priorities by the NLFSC membership)

**1. RCMP Anti-Bullying and Anti-Drug**

**Programs**

*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.*

**2. Student Transportation**

*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.*

**3. Healthy Living**

*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 combating 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.*

**4. School Infrastructure**

*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.*

**5. Guidance Allocation**

*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 post secondary 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.*

**6. A Administrative Allocation**

*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*

**6.B Educational Allocation**

*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.*

**7. Assessment and Evaluation Policy**

*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.*

**8. 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 that 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.*

**9. 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 counseling; anti-bullying programs; and mediation;*

*Whereas the guidance counsellor 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 counsellor*

*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.*

**10. Annual to Biennial Meeting**

*Whereas the number the attendance by School Council representatives at the Annual General meeting has been consistently low;*

*Whereas the NLFSC has been cut $5,000 in their Operational Budget and cost of hosting an*

*Annual General Meeting is very expensive;*

*Therefore, be it resolved that the NLFSC host a Biennial General Meeting instead of an Annual General Meeting and that the meeting time be moved from the spring**to the fall.*



**Freedom to Read Week**

**February 22–28, 2015**

Freedom to Read Week is an annual event that encourages Canadians to think about and

reaffirm their commitment to intellectual

freedom, which is guaranteed them under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Freedom to Read kit is suitable for librarians and educators. It includes a poster, extensive background material on freedom to read and some classroom exercises. For more information visit their website at http:/.www.freedomtoread.ca/kits.index.htm

**National Nutrition Month**

March is Nutrition month across Canada. This year’s theme, "Eating 9 to 5," encourages

personalized healthy eating styles and recognizes that food preferences, lifestyle, cultural and

ethnic traditions and health concerns all impact individual food choices. Registered dietitians play a critical role in helping people eat right, their way, every day.

National Nutrition Month is a nutrition education and information campaign created annually in March by the Academy of Nutrition and

Dietetics. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

**National Heritage Day**

Heritage Day was established in 1973 by the Heritage Canada Foundation, and is celebrated

the **3rd Monday of February**, to encourage the preservation and promotion of Canada's

nationally significant historic, architectural,

natural and scenic heritage.

**Heart Month**

Heart Month, a national campaign that runs for the entire Month of February, mobilizes

Canadians to rally together in an effort to raise awareness and funds that have an enormous

impact on the lives of all Canadians. Through the generosity and compassion of volunteers, the Heart and Stroke Foundation is able to help

Canadians 2prevent heart disease and stroke, save lives by enabling faster and better

emergency medical response and treatment, and enhance support for survivors, families and

caregivers.

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***The Cuffer*** is a benefit of membership in the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils.

Annual membership dues are based on school enrolment. Individual subscriptions are available at $15 per year.

The views expressed or implied in this

publication are not necessarily official positions of the Federation.

The mention of any program, organization,

resource, product, person, place, or school does not constitute an endorsement by NLFSC.

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