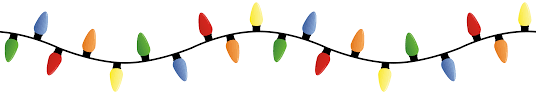
 December 2020

**The Cuffer**

 A newspaper for School Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador

Message from the NLFSC President



Hello Members!

It’s hard to believe the first term of school is just about over. Without a doubt, it has been one of the most unique and challenging times in the history of Education in NL and worldwide. It has been hard to watch the emotions that go with the uncertainty of a pandemic, but we are all united in wanting to ensure our

students are safe and healthy and are able to

remain in school.

I want to, once again, personally thank our

administrators, educators, and school staff for helping our children return to their school lives over the past few months. I know it has been extremely hard and many of you have been overwhelmed and under a great deal of stress. We will always be grateful for the

understanding, effort, and care you gave to our students during this pandemic.

As well, many thanks to our school council members and parents for your patience and support over the past few months. Instead of picking words apart and casting negativity, you remained positive and hopeful – and showed patience and understanding. If we

continue to support each other, I am

confident we will rise and triumph over this pandemic.

So far this year, the NLFSC executive has held one face-to-face meeting and several

teleconferences to discuss our goals and where we would like to focus our attention. Some of our primary concerns are class size,

administrator workload, student and teacher mental health supports, and absenteeism. We are also engaged in discussions and plans to deal with the second wave of COVID-19.

The NLFSC also had several meetings with the Minister of Education and English School District CEO Tony Stack. During this time of uncertainty, it is critical we support our decision-makers by keeping the lines of communication open and fostering mutual respect. The health of our students is of paramount importance, and

building solidarity is our best defense in

addressing the virus.

The Christmas season is approaching and

although the celebrations this year will be very different, it can still be merry. We can still have a full Christmas if we remember its true meaning. Christmas is about giving, and hope, and being thankful for what we have and those we love.

 If we’ve learned anything from this

pandemic, it’s about caring for one another. There is a great message of hope in that for all of us to celebrate.

Christmas may be different in the physical sense this year, but the true meaning of

Christmas will always be the same—sharing, loving, caring, and supporting each other.

May you cherish this festive season with loved ones who are in your bubble and close to you.

On behalf of the NLFSC Executive best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.

Don

Email: Don.Coombs@easternhealth.ca

**National Working Group**

Don has been invited to be a member of the national working group “Parents Engaged in Education” whose goal is to develop a Parent Engagement Awareness Strategy for Canada.

Congratulations Don!





**Public Exams Cancelled**

NLFSC is pleased to hear that Public Exams

for this coming June have been cancelled.

The cancellation means students, particularly those from semesterized schools, can now focus on learning - instead of worrying about being tested on information missed during the pandemic.

Congratulations to the school councils of Holy Spirit, Holy Heart of Mary, Prince of Wales Collegiate, and O'Donel High who spearheaded the campaign to have the public exams cancelled. As well thank you to the NLFSC membership for participating in our poll on public exams and directing us to issue a Media Release on August 7 calling for exams to be cancelled.

On November 17, NLFSC President Don Coombs and Executive Director Denise Pike attended a meeting with the Minister of Education and school council representatives (from 8 semesterized schools) to discuss the

need to cancel the exams as soon as possible.

The announcement by Minister Osborne, on November 27th, is a reminder that the voice of school councils is a powerful one and together we can evoke positive change for our students and schools.

**Recruiting Families for Ministry of Health Research on the Impact of Covid-19**

Dr. Marla Morden, a Developmental Evolutionary psychologist at the Morden Research Centre in British Columbia is conducting a longitudinal study to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on school experiences for caregivers and children from K to grade 4.

###### The Health and Home Covid Study aims to identify the foundational factors reflecting the shared home-life experiences of Canadian adults during the pandemic.

###### If you are interested in participating in the study, or would like more information, please visit their website at:

###### <https://wordpress.viu.ca/mordenlab/>

**Meetings and Representation**

November 17 - Meeting with Minister Osborne regarding Public Exams in June.

November 19 - Meeting with Minister Osborne

Eldred Barnes (Acting Deputy Minister) and Brian Evans, Assistant Deputy Minister

Agenda Items:

* Return of School Sports
* Student Mental Health
* School Fundraising challenges
* Plans for Second Wave
* Changes to School’s Act
* School Council Concerns (administration workload, public exams, substitute teachers)

November 5 - Meeting with Ted Van Nostrand, Provincial Representative NL, Canadian

National Committee Parents engaged in Education.

November 25- Meeting with CEO Tony Stack, Ed Walsh, Associate Director of Education - Programs and Human Resources, and Terry Hall, Assistant Director of Corporate Services

Agenda Items:

* A Plan for Second Wave
* School Sports
* Masks in school
* Lack of Substitute Teachers
* School Council Concerns

*(administration workload, health, chrome books, accounting/financial system, fundraising concerns)*

**Prime Ministers Award Selection Committee**

NLFSC has been asked to evaluate the nominations for the 2021 Prime Ministers Award for Teaching Excellence selection process.

**Atlantic Caucus**

NLFSC maintains contact with the Provincial Home and School Associations/ School Council Federations from Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. The discussions allow the Atlantic Province associations to discuss commonalities in education, and share ideas.

**Membership Input**

Many thanks to our membership for participating in a poll on reinstating in-school sports, and another poll regarding public exams.

We also greatly appreciate your views on the importance of having first term report cards.

The advocacy goals of the NLFSC executive are determined by our membership.

Thank you so much!

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The Canadian Foundation for Economic Education (CFEE) is providing two exceptional programs. In our new world of home learning, online learning, online shopping, job restrictions and financial concerns, talking with our kids about financial matters has never been more important. The Canadian Foundation We would like to show you how to address some of these issues using their very popular resource of Talk With Our Kids About Money (shortened to TWOKAM) suitable for ages 5 to 18+. Free resources are available at talkwithourkidsaboutmoney.com

An extremely popular part of TWOKAM has been our Money Fairs for ages 11 - 14 - like a science fair only with projects dealing with financial matters. This year we are offering a new way of doing Money Fairs. We are

providing a showcase platform for individual Money Fair projects that will submitted online in a video format, in order to give parents, guardians and teachers the ability to offer an opportunity for their student or child to showcase what they have learned about a financial topic. In April, there will be a National Showcase of these submissions that will involve “financial celebrities.” CFEE is partnering with CIBC to give high school-aged youth (14-18) the opportunity to win $10,000! We are challenging Canada’s youth to apply their creativity and skills to create new tools and resources to help other young Canadians improve their financial knowledge. The **My Money, My Future Challenge** aims to apply a sense of fun and creativity to an important life skill – financial literacy.

* The Winner will receive $10,000 towards future education or training – either to the winning individual or shared equally among team members
* 2nd place will receive $5,000
* 3rd place will receive $2,500

Winning submissions will be showcased on a new VIRTUAL FINANCIAL LEARNING YOUTH CENTRE website for use by teachers, parents, and youth to learn about money, develop financial skills, and be better able to build a happy, healthy, financial future. For details on registering, please visit: mymoneymyfuturechallenge.ca.

If you would like further information on either of these projects, please contact **Ted van Nostrand** ([tvannostrand@cfee.org](mailto:tvannostrand@cfee.org), 709-725-3499), NL provincial representative.

**English School District Shares Google Resources for Families**

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District has released a resource for families to help support and assist students in the Google environment. The 5-page hand-out, is designed to provide parents and families with information to understand the tools used in the school environment and help support students to get the best possible results out of these interactive resources.

The resource can be accessed from your student's teacher or found on the English School District website.

**English School Board Election of Officers**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Board of Trustees for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District was held Saturday, November 21, at the District Conference Centre in St. John’s. As required by the bylaws, trustees voted for the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as the Executive Committee of the Board.

Chair – Goronwy Price

Vice-Chair – Wayne Lee

The Executive Committee of the Board includes the Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as one trustee from each of the regions.

Regional representatives:

Labrador – Guy Elliott

Western – Pamela Gill

Central – Winston Carter

Eastern – Kevin Ryan

Northeast Avalon – Peter Whittle

The Board also welcomed two new trustees: Guy Elliott represents Zone 3 in Labrador, and Jean Butt represents Zone 11 in the Central region.

**Administrative Workload**

The NLFSC executive is concerned about the workload and expectations placed on our school Administrators over the past few months. The issue was one of the topics on our meeting agenda with Minister Osbourne on Nov. 19th and again on November 25th with Tony Stack.

The scale of the extra tasks and challenges linked to the Covid-19 pandemic has meant extra work for administrators. Thanks to their leadership the reopening of school has been successful.

Social and emotional learning has been a

priority, and administrators continue to support and reassure students, teachers and the school community. Implementing the return to school plan, overseeing the everchanging guidelines, keeping our students safe, and creating a normal learning environment during a very abnormal time is all consuming. While many

administrators are putting in many extra hours trying to meet the unprecedented challenges

the pandemic has created in their schools, they are still expected to manage excess paperwork, meet deadlines, and carry out duties as they did in previous years. For the most part these

expectations are unfair, unattainable, and

emotionally and physically exhausting.

The NLFSC membership recognizes Principals have a huge responsibility in the educating of

our children. Principals are on the front-lines in the education system; they know the challenges and see the need. Their expertise and

knowledge should be valued, respected, welcomed and embraced to affect positive change.

NLFSC believes the administrative allocation should be reinstated to the level it was in 2012. We will continue to advocate for these changes.

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**Membership Renewal**

There are many changes and challenges taking place in the school system and NLFSC is busy advocating on your behalf.

If you have not renewed your membership and would like a renewal form, please email us at nlfsci@gmail.com

**Why should your school be a part of NLFSC?**

**Our commitment to education is the driving force behind everything we do.**

Your continued membership will help support our mission to advocate for excellence in

education for all students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Your membership allows NLFSC to continue to represent the concerns of School Councils.

The NL Federation of School Councils is the provincial umbrella group for School Councils, provides school councils and parent groups with a voice on education issues, and encourages

positive parental involvement at all levels of

education.

School Councils also offers information,

support, and guidance to parents and school councils to help them better understand the

policies and procedures of their local schools, school districts, and the Department of Education.

**School Councils**

School councils can have a positive impact on the learning success of children in schools across this province.

School Councils are the legislated platform for parent engagement in K-12 public education and a fundamental vehicle for communication. The school council’s role is to be the link between the school administration and the parents in the school community.

We receive many phone calls requesting a copy of the School Council Handbook. Unfortunately, the government stopped printing them a number of years ago, however, a copy can be found at:

[www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/publications/k12/Handbook2ndedition.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/publications/k12/Handbook2ndedition.pdf)

This document is an invaluable resource in

assisting school council members to understand their roles and responsibilities.

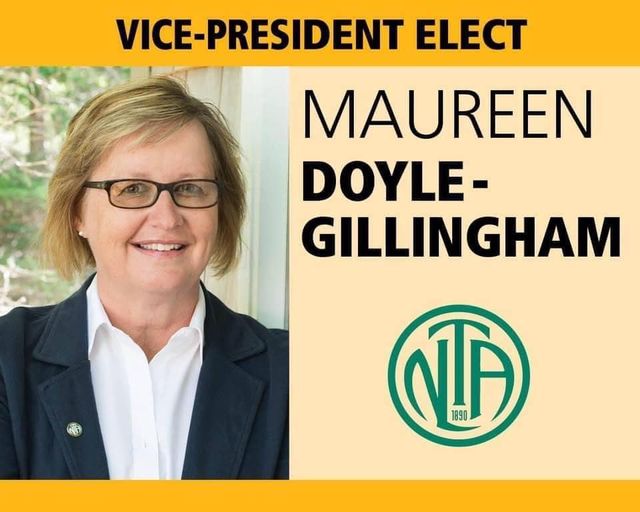


**NLTA President Trent Langdon**

Congratulations to Trent Langdon on being elected as President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher's Association.

Mr. Langdon will begin a two-year term of office in August of 2021.

Mr. Langdon currently serves as Vice-President of the NLTA and works as a guidance counsellor at St. Peter’s Junior High in Mount Pearl.



**NLTA Vice-President**

Congratulations are also extended to Maureen Doyle-Gillingham who was elected as the NLTA Vice-President for 2021-23 by acclamation. She begins her two-year term of office on August 1, 2021. Ms. Doyle-Gillingham is currently an Instructional Resource and Career Development teacher at Baccalieu Collegiate in Old Perlican, Trinity Bay.

The NLTA plays a vital role in the health and well-being of our schools, the teachers who work in them and the children they serve.

Members of the NLFSC executive look forward to continuing to work with Mr. Langdon on shared education concerns.

**NLTA Education Week 2021**

**January 17th – 23rd**

*3Rs: Renew. Refresh. Reconnect.  
3R: Recommencer. Revivifier. Renouer.*

Education Week has always been about

celebrating education and the importance of learning. The theme for 2021 reflects the

current circumstances of all our students and educators and asks participants to focus on the **3Rs: Renew. Refresh. Reconnect.** This year’s theme is about renewing our focus on mental health, taking time to refresh after a very stressful year and reconnecting not only with yourself, but also finding new ways to connect with peers. This past year has been a

challenging one for everyone but we are finding new ways to learn, new ways to connect and new ways to ground ourselves and focus on what is important. Education Week can be an enriching experience for students, teachers and parents.

**The following statement was released by Tony Stack, CEO/ Director of Education of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District on November 18, 2020**

*There have been some recent public comments around substitute teacher shortages which have caused the District some concern, as it has been suggested that extreme measures may be taken - such as routinely doubling up classrooms, or sending students home - because of staff shortages.*

*The District wishes to reassure families and the public that these scenarios, as presented in the public arena, would be an absolute last resort, and could not be undertaken in a manner which would violate current health and safety protocols.*

*We acknowledge there are substitute teacher shortages, in both urban and rural areas. School administrators have options available to cover the unexpected absence of a teacher if they are unsuccessful in securing a substitute teacher for a day. Depending on the situation, they can reassign a teacher who is not assigned for that period; they can reassign a teaching and learning assistant (if they have a teaching certificate), or ask the assistance of a specialist teacher. Some administrators have covered classes themselves, or come up with any number of creative solutions to ensure teaching and learning continues in a safe learning*

*environment. Administrators throughout the province, in both rural and urban areas, have responded to day-to-day challenges around unexpected teacher absences long before the advent of Covid-19 and will continue to do so.*

*Meanwhile, the District continues to recruit regular and retired substitute teachers.*

*Over the past three years, through the Provincial Government’s Education Action Plan and, more recently, through special Covid-19 allocations, about 400 additional teaching resources have been deployed to schools in the District. This, in itself, has been very positive for the education system, but has impacted the pool of substitute teachers available. The Department of Education has also recently indicated it would allow additional substitutes to be hired on term contracts and a loosening of restrictions around the hiring of retired teachers. We believe this will help address our short-term needs.*

*Meanwhile, we will continue to work with the Department of Education, Memorial University, and the NLTA to develop both short-term and long-term strategies to address any substitute teacher shortages in our schools.*

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**Christmas Greetings from the NLFSC**

**Executive**

Christmas… that magic blanket that wraps itself about us, something so intangible that it is like a fragrance. It may weave a spell of nostalgia. Christmas may be a day of feasting, or of prayer, but always it will be a day of remembrance -- a day in which we think of everything we have ever loved.

The NLFSC Executive would like to take this opportunity to extend good tidings to you and your family as we celebrate this season of giving.

On behalf of the NLFSC Executive

(Don, Craig, Dave, Lori, Ruby, Denise and Ashley)

**Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year!**

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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 enrollment. Individual subscriptions are available at $15 per year.

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Editor: Denise Pike

Proof Reader Lori Barry

NLFSC Contact Information

P.O Box 23140

St. John’s NL

A1B 4J9

Tel: (709) 764-8993

Email: nlfsci@gmail.com