

# The Educator

A Newspaper for School Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador

January/February 2024



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## Message from the President



Hello Members!

By the time this edition of The Educator reaches you our students will be almost halfway through their school year. It's hard to believe we have reached this milestone and before we know it, we will be celebrating graduations and looking forward to summer. Time is flying by. Speaking

of time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our school council members for the time and effort you give to improving the quality of education and learning atmosphere at your respective schools. Being a volunteer isn't always easy. Finding the time to attend and participate in meetings and school events takes great commitment. Over the past few months many of you have reached out to me and the NLFSC office for clarification regarding the function of a school council and your role.

Parents play the first and most important role in their children's education and are key partners in building a quality education system. I am pleased to know many school councils are promoting and

supporting the involvement of all parents in their children's learning. Thank you for helping to strengthen school, family, and community partnerships. Your involvement helps build better schools for children to grow and thrive.

Unfortunately, I am still waiting on definite information regarding the Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE) and the revised School Council Handbook. Earlier this fall we were informed the board of PACE would be made up of both elected and appointed representatives and there will still be a role for NLFSC once PACE has been established. I would like to see the updated School Council Handbook released as soon as possible because it is vital to the role and function of a council. Members, especially those new to a council, rely on the handbook to assist with understanding and fulfilling their duties.

In conclusion, please join NLFSC in celebrating Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week, Feb, 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. During this special week I encourage you to thank our teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians, student assistants, bus drivers, and all other school staff for the care they give our students on a daily basis.

I am sure many of our members will be planning events and activities to celebrate the week, however, showing appreciation doesn't have to be costly. Kind words and actions go a long way in making a teacher and school staff member feel valued. I urge school councils to inform parents about Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week well in

advance and encourage them to email and text messages of appreciation to teachers and staff. Thank you messages can also be posted on a school's Facebook page.

An email, note, or message is a great gift because it shows that you have taken the time to think about them and write down your thoughts. A face-to-face 'Thank you' will never be forgotten. Our teachers and school staff play a critical role in the lives of our children and deserve to know how much they are appreciated.

Thank you for your continued support. Together we can accomplish whatever it takes to make a difference in our children's lives.

Sincerely,

Don

[don.combs@easternhealth.ca](mailto:don.combs@easternhealth.ca)



## **NLFSC Membership Renewal**

Thank you to the school councils that have renewed their membership! We greatly appreciate your support.

To those who have not, please do so as soon as possible.

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

## **Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week**

### *It Takes a village, Thank You for Being Mine*

This year's annual National Teacher /Staff Appreciation Week (TSAW) takes place on February 11th-17th. 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.

Gift cards and mementos are welcome treats, but activities during TSAW do not have to be costly. We encourage parents and councils to email and text messages of appreciation to teachers and staff, and to post on the schools Facebook page and website.

As well, you are welcome to post pics of your TSAW celebrations on our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/nlfederationofschoolcouncils](http://www.facebook.com/nlfederationofschoolcouncils)).

We would love to showcase what is happening at your school during TSAW and

throughout the year. Please include the name of your school and any other information.

### **TSAW Week Ideas:**

Monday - Hang a "We Love Our Teachers/Staff" banner on the front of the school. Place a red apple with a note from the School Council in each mailbox or on each desk.

Don't forget the bus drivers and custodians.

Make a daily draw for a donated prize (depending on the number of donated items).

Tuesday - Hang a collage made of photos of teachers/staff and students at work and play and decorate the halls with balloons and paper apples on which the students have written stories, poems or drawn pictures. Serve coffee and treats in the staff room.

Wednesday - Place flowers in the staff room. Serve a buffet lunch. Be sure to arrange for supervision so all teachers and staff can attend.

Thursday - Have cheese platters and a fruit basket in the staff room. Give each staff member a bag filled with pens, notepaper, etc.

Friday - Hold a Teacher/Staff Appreciation Tea/lunch.



## **2024 Pink Shirt Day**

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

On **February 28th** we encourage 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 classmate 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.

Newfoundland and Labrador will use this day to raise awareness of the negative effects of

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

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.



## **2024 Freedom to Read Week**

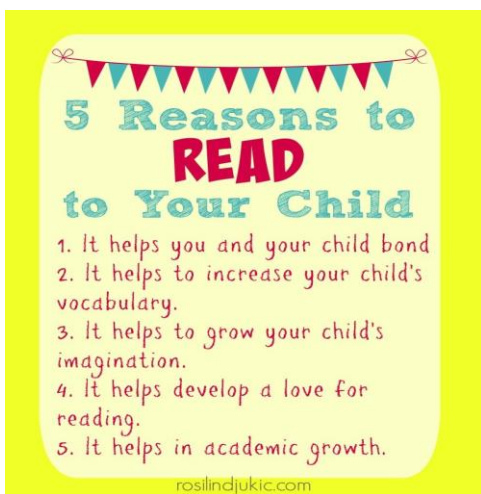
**Freedom to Read Week celebrates its 40th** anniversary this year. The annual event held on February 18th- 24th raises awareness about censorship. Access to books and magazines, has become a nationwide campaign uniting readers, writers, publishers, schools, libraries, bookstores, universities, colleges, and other organizations across Canada. Freedom to Read Week encourages Canadians to think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom, which is guaranteed them under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

**Information and or kits can be obtained at:**  
**<http://www.freedomtoread.ca/kits.index.htm>**

## Teachers Think Tank

The Provincial Government and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) will host a Teachers Think Tank in early 2024 to inform further initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of teachers in the province. The Teachers Think Tank will provide a dedicated forum to hear directly from teachers and determine opportunities to address those challenges head on.

The Teachers Think Tank will include educators, as well as the Provincial Government, the NLTA and academia. The goal of the Think Tank is to have solutions-focused discussions that will help strategize innovative short- medium- and long-term measures to build on the recently ratified collective agreement and ultimately improve the retention and recruitment of teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador.



## Reading and math scores plummet across Canada after COVID school closures

*Written by The Frazer Institute and posted in the Ottawa Sun, December 20, 2023*



COVID school closures took a heavy toll on student learning. For parents in Canada, that's the main takeaway from the new Programme for International Student Assessment ([PISA](#)) test results, which show substantial declines from 2018 pre-pandemic results in reading and math among 15-year-olds (the only age that participates in PISA testing).

Among high-income OECD countries, average PISA scores dropped by an unprecedented 10 points in reading and 15 points in math.

Canada's losses were similar, with a drop of 13 points in reading and 15 points in math. For context, a 20-point decline in test scores equals roughly one year of learning loss.

How did the provinces do? This is an important question, as we don't have a national education system in Canada.

**Reading scores dropped in all provinces, with the worst decline in Newfoundland and Labrador (34 points)** followed by Nova Scotia (27 points), New Brunswick (20 points), Quebec (18 points), Saskatchewan (15 points), Ontario (12 points), British Columbia and Manitoba (8 points), and Prince Edward Island and Alberta (7 points).

**A similar pattern emerges in math, with Newfoundland and Labrador again suffering the greatest decline (29 points)** followed by Nova Scotia (24 points), New Brunswick (23 points), Quebec and Ontario (18 points), Saskatchewan (17 points), Manitoba (12 points), P.E.I. (9 points), B.C. (8 points) and Alberta (7 points).

**In science, the news was somewhat better, with some provinces modestly improving and only Nova Scotia (16 points) and Newfoundland and Labrador (15 points) dropping by more than 10 points.** Clearly, with the exception of P.E.I., the Atlantic provinces had the greatest losses between 2018 pre-pandemic and 2022 post-pandemic test scores.

Despite the broad harvest of decline across Canada, the distribution of provincial scores remains similar to earlier results. As in 2018 and earlier, the four largest provinces—Ontario, Quebec, B.C. and Alberta—have the highest scores in all three subjects. Quebec continues to be the highest-scoring province in math, with

overlapping margins of error for the other large provinces.

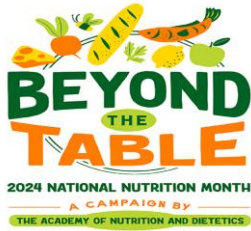
**Math scores for the remaining provinces cluster together at a significantly lower level, with P.E.I. in the middle and Newfoundland and Labrador replacing Manitoba in last place.**

Reading and science scores follow a similar pattern, but with Alberta in pole position with significantly higher scores in both subjects, the other larger provinces forming a second rank cluster, and the remaining provinces a third.

The new PISA results include a rich body of information on both the extent and nature of the pandemic disruptions, which casts revealing light on the unprecedented collapse in test scores. But crucially, the large differences in score declines between the provinces cannot be simply explained by how long schools were closed. The extent and quality of learning alternatives, teacher and parental support, and socio-economic status also played important roles.

While it will take time to better understand how some provinces and schools weathered the pandemic disruptions better than others, the drops in PISA test scores underscore the challenges students and teachers face today, especially in the hardest hit provinces.

## National Nutrition Month



March is Nutrition Month across Canada. A time for Canadians to focus on the importance of making informed food choices, developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

This year's theme is "**Beyond the Table**," which addresses the farm-to-fork aspect of nutrition, from food production and distribution to navigating grocery stores and farmers markets — and even home food safety and storage practices. It also describes the various ways we eat — not only around a dinner table, but also on the go, in schools and restaurants, at games and events. This theme also includes sustainability, for instance, decreasing food waste from school and work to home and beyond.

A registered dietitian nutritionist can help you create healthy habits that are sustainable and suit your unique needs!



NL Health Services is pleased to offer a provincial Depression Treatment Group for individuals 18 and older who are experiencing symptoms of depression. This group covers everything from understanding what is happening in the body and mind when depression is present to learning how to cope and recover from depression.

Ten weekly virtual sessions will take place on Wednesdays from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Island time)/1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (in Labrador) beginning on January 24, 2024.

For more information or to register, email [nlgroups@nlhealthservices.ca](mailto:nlgroups@nlhealthservices.ca).



## Education Accord NL

The provincial government has announced the creation of Education Accord NL. Co-chaired by Dr. Anne Burke and Dr. Karen Goodnough, the initiative will develop a targeted approach to transforming and modernizing Newfoundland and Labrador's education system.

The Education Accord NL will reimagine the education system to ensure students and learners at all levels receive the educational services they need in the classroom, are prepared for the modern global economy, and develop strong decision-making skills to foster positive health and well-being.

The Accord aims to create better outcomes for students and learners while also supporting the Provincial Government's goal of becoming one of Canada's healthiest provinces by 2031.

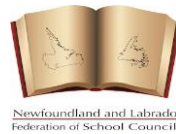
Education Accord NL will focus on four pillars:

- Early learning and childhood development;
- Education engagement and transformation;
- Health and well-being in education environments; and,
- Post-secondary education and learning across the life span.

The Accord will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and will incorporate research garnered through the extensive engagement and consultation process of Health Accord NL.

Education Accord NL will focus on delivering a

10-Year Education Accord with short, medium, and long-term goals for an education system that better meets the needs of students and learners in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Accord will be delivered to government by December 31, 2024.



The Educator 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. The views expressed or implied in this publication are not necessarily official positions of the Federation.

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