

Be Part of the Team..Happy Holiday Season!

by Gilles Arsenault



Gilles Arsenault

Remembrance day ceremonies are over and the Holiday season is quickly approaching. We know winter is just around the corner and we are getting ready to face the many challenges that our Island winters bring. On the flip side, we can embrace this season and enjoy all of its wonders. Snow days, winter sports, snuggling around the fireplace and appreciate all the beauty of our Island winters.

Teachers, students and Islanders have a choice to make. Look at winter as a positive experience or look at it as a negative one. It's like teaching, we can embrace this profession and make it all that it should be or we can do like the snowbirds and avoid all of our Island's wintery beauty.

We also experienced via the news the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. In a time of disaster like this one, we can thank the Power Above that we are in PEI where communities and families make a difference. Teachers and administrators in areas affected by Hurricane Sandy would certainly want to return to the joys of teaching. It's all a matter of perception and appreciation.

As I have stated many times this year, The PEITF team has never been so busy. Your Executive, myself and your PEITF Staff have been busy with a variety of issues: reports, teacher cuts, common assessments, pension issues, technology, media relations, communication strategies, Board amalgamation, substitute teachers, leave provisions and the list goes on. I can attest to the fact that this is NOT a boring year. What we face as an organization are simply challenges that allow us to grow as individuals, as professionals and as an Organization. Nobody every said that there weren't going to be growing pains right?

Teachers, this time of year goes by very fast as December is a short school month, but a very busy one. I truly hope that you will have a chance in the Holiday Season to renew old friendships and find time to do the things that you feel are important to you and your family. Make sure that your perception of life, work and family remains positive and be thankful for all that you have in life.

Let me now share a story for the season...

On Santa's Team (Author Unknown)

My grandma taught me everything about Christmas. I was just a kid. I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit her on the day my big sister dropped the bomb: "There is no Santa Claus," jeered my sister. "Even dummies know that!"

My grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her world-famous cinnamon buns.

Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me.

"No Santa Claus!" she snorted. "Ridiculous! Don't believe it. That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad. Now, put on your coat, and let's go."

"Go? Go where, Grandma?" I asked. I hadn't even finished my second cinnamon bun.

"Where" turned out to be Kerby's General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars. That was a bundle in those days.

"Take this money," she said, "and buy something for someone who needs it. I'll wait for you in the car." Then she turned and walked out of Kerby's.

I was only eight years old. I'd often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself. The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill,

wondering what to buy, and who on

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Federation Office Hours

Federation House

will close at

1:00 p.m. on

Friday,

December 21,

2012 for the

holiday break.

The office will

re-open on

Thursday,

January 3, 2013.

*Wishing you
and yours a very
happy holiday
season from the*



Lois Adams

You Did WHAT?!

Editorial by Lois Adams

Feedback. We hear a lot of talk about it in the professional literature lately. What is it? Does it matter when it is given? Does it matter what you say? Does it matter how you say it? Can you give feedback without even speaking? The answer to the last 3 questions, as anyone who has been a parent, a partner, or a child knows, is a definite YES! Ask any stand up

comic; ask any student who has just gotten the 'old hairy eyeball stare' from his/her teacher and they will strongly agree that the message was given and received without a word being uttered.

Ken Blanchard calls feedback the breakfast of champions. It builds character. It creates winners. The purpose of feedback based on this comment would seem to be to shape behavior for improvement, and make the person better at whatever they are doing.

Is telling someone 'great job' feedback? That's praise, and although, it too can be a powerful motivator, it is not feedback. Is telling someone 'you should have done it differently' feedback? That's advice, and is not helpful for someone who wants to do a better job.

So how then do you give feedback? It is the same regardless of whether you are giving it to a colleague or a student. I skimmed a number of articles and websites while drafting this piece, and all of them (University of Waterloo website, Giving Effective Feedback website, Holden Leadership website and the Ontario Ministry of Education website) say the same thing. Feedback must be timely, focused on the behavior or issue; specific to the person you are giving it to and balanced. They stress the need for good feedback to be a two-way conversation.

What does all this mean for a teacher giving feedback to a student or an administrator giving feedback to a colleague?

Timely feedback (and this is something I always wished I was better at as a teacher, and as an administrator) must happen soon after the event (be it an assignment, an 'issue' in a classroom, or a classroom visit for evaluation). With students we know that it is best to get to them relatively quickly while the behavior or assignment is fresh in their minds.

Feedback must focus on the behavior, issue or event. It is not about personalities or qualities. Telling a child or a teacher you really

like them, or that they are a good person is praise, and it is important to do this too, but it does not address why you are meeting with them. What is it that needs to change or improve? How can that be done? These questions have to be the focus of your discussion. If a child is being inappropriate in your classroom, then you must focus on why the behavior is not the best choice for that environment, how it impacts on you and the other students, what the expected behavior is, and what the student can do to meet that expectation.

The feedback has to be specific to the person you are talking to – it is important to know their strengths, challenges, likes, and what it is they want to accomplish. Some of this you will know from observing them, and some of this you will learn by talking with the child or teacher. Most students are very aware of what they are good at, and what they are not good at. Some can tell you that they would do better if they could, but they don't know how, or the defensive/avoidance behavior has become so ingrained they don't know any other way of being. If you listen, most people will tell you what they want to accomplish or achieve, and what they feel is missing in their performance. Good feedback can help guide them in the right direction.

Where does 'balance' come into the equation? None of us like to hear only what we are doing wrong or what we cannot do; so all feedback must be balanced in that it includes what was good about the performance too. I have watched many fine teachers do this simply in their classrooms through the 3 stars and a wish approach. They tell the child 3 things they did well in their presentation, and one wish for what they would like to see the next time.

Good feedback helps us all perform better, but it takes time and commitment from both parties for it to be successful. ☺

Annual Convention

Awards Presented

Gilles Arsenault (middle) presents awards at the Annual Convention, 2012.



From left: Doug MacDougall, Special Recognition Award; Gloria Hayes, PEITF Award of Excellence in Teaching; Ricky Hood, Honorary Membership; Bob MacRae, Honorary Membership ☺



PEITF
Newsletter

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Island Educator Recognized Nationally

On October 2nd, students and staff of Bloomfield Elementary were thrilled as one of their teachers was recognized with an exciting award. Donna Wood, grade five/six and resource teacher, was recognized by the company Grand and Toy as being a recipient of an award known as, “A Day Made Better.” Grand and Toy created this award to recognize teachers who show a contagious enthusiasm for learning, who inspire students to reach their full potential, who create opportunities for student learning, who are committed to professional development and who are a role model for teachers and students.

Donna was nominated by a parent of a former student and was one of two Atlantic Canadians who received this award. As written by her nominator, “Donna is focused on creating a safe classroom where respect and acceptance are nurtured by all. In this environment students are eager to try new things and

express ideas freely without any fear of a negative reaction from others. She always has the time to connect with students on a personal basis, intuitively sensing when they need a little extra support or are facing challenges in their lives.”

As a recipient, Donna received a new chair for her classroom, approximately \$1500 of school supplies, a certificate of her dedication and national recognition. Bloomfield staff and students were overwhelmingly thrilled as they were brought together for a surprise assembly on the morning of October 2nd at which the award was presented by Grand and Toy officials. Excitement and emotion were very much in the air and all present were so pleased to see one of the many great teachers recognized. Congratulations Donna!

(Thanks to Andrew Stewart, principal of Bloomfield for providing the write-up.)

Anxiety

by Carolyn Thorne, Counselling Consultant, ELSB

In last month's newsletter, details were shared regarding the CTF national survey examining teacher's perspectives on student mental health and well being in Canadian schools. According to this survey, most teachers' reported that they had not received any professional development in children's mental health issues. Specifically, “73% of teachers agreed that anxiety disorders were a pressing concern...” (p. 11).

Given the fact that 1 in 5 children and youth have a mental health problem which includes anxiety and depression (Waddell & Sheppard, 2002), it is important for you as an educator to learn more about mental health issues, including some of the ways to identify characteristics of various mental health difficulties and disorders, and how you might support students dealing with such challenges.

Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of children and youth (NLSCY) has revealed that the prevalence of anxiety problems among children and youth ranges from 2% to 12%, with a lower prevalence among children aged 2 to 11 according to parents' assessments and a higher prevalence among adolescents aged 10 to 15 according to self assessment.

Anxiety

Anxiety is made up of three components: physiological symptoms (e.g., sweaty palms, racing heart, stomach aches or butterflies), behavioural symptoms (e.g., avoidance or refusal to participate in things) and cognitions or thoughts (e.g., “If I stay overnight I fear I'll wet the bed and everyone will laugh at me”). (Anxiety BC)

What to look for?

- Intense and prolonged feelings of fear and distress that occur out of proportion to the actual threat or danger
- Feelings of fear and distress that interfere with normal daily functioning

What can you do?

If you notice that a student is exhibiting signs of anxiety,

it is important to discuss your concerns with parent(s)/guardian(s). Professionals from your school-based student services team, school board based consultants and psychologists, and/or outside agencies are there to assist with these issues. Remember, mental health problems are treatable and early prevention is important. Also, treatment can assist in reducing symptoms but does not provide a cure – the child will still need understanding and support from you.

Information on anxiety from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) website contains a number of useful strategies for dealing with anxious children/students. A few of these include:

1. Remember that anxiety is not willful misbehavior, but reflects an inability to control it. Therefore, be patient and be prepared to listen. Being overly critical, disparaging, impatient, or cynical likely will only make the problem worse.
2. Maintain realistic, attainable goals and expectations for your student. Do not communicate that perfection is expected or acceptable. Often, anxious children try to please adults, and will try to be perfect if they believe it is expected of them.
3. If your student is worried about an upcoming event, such as giving a speech in class, practice it often so that confidence increases and discomfort decreases, or make accommodations such as having them videotape it or present it to you alone.
4. At times, children may realize that their anxiety does not make sense, but are unable to do anything about it without help.

For more information on anxiety check out these websites
<http://anxietybc.com>
<http://www.cmha.ca/mental-health/your-mental-health/children/>
<http://www.anxietycanada.ca/english/youth/index.htm>

Being Part of CTF is Being Part of the World of Teaching

by Calvin Fraser

It is natural for teachers to question the value of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) since the Federation is one step removed from direct service to teachers. So, what does CTF do for you as a teacher? Let's try to answer with reference to a few of the work areas of CTF and then a few of the tools used.

1. **Coordination of knowledge and activities:** CTF acts not only as a clearinghouse to share material among Member organizations (MO) but also provides both analysis and impact to MO work. Our research analysts draw out interactions that benefit all and through contacts with many, many national organizations spread teacher values and teacher based information in ways that will garner support and value for teachers.
2. **Influence directions in education:** Many bad ideas that originate outside of Canada or in powerful national organizations (e.g. Fraser Institute) affect education in every province and territory. CTF monitors and influences the impact of these ideas through its involvement with other groups (e.g. Conference Board of Canada). CTF also is pro-active in working with national groups around the world to head off or divert bad ideas. We currently are working directly with the National Education Association (3.2 million members) and the American Federation of Teachers (1.7 million members) to reverse the information flow from the United States to Canada by sharing the many strong positive practices of Canadian teachers. This work is beginning to show success.
 - **Advocacy:** CTF lobbies the federal government on matters of direct interest to teachers that are governed by federal influence, such as taxes, copyright and criminal allegations. One long-standing campaign has been to protect educational access to published information (especially from the Internet) for classroom use. Despite strong lobbying from the corporate sector to cut free educational access off, every version of the Act to date has maintained the special status for education. Another success has been maintenance of the Section 43 protection for teachers in the Criminal Code of Canada. Other campaigns continue. We have been working this year to protect teachers from several current injustices in the criminal record Check procedures.
3. **Solidarity is priceless:** There are many societal interest groups who choose to subvert public education to private interests; insert corporatism into pedagogy; restrict pensions, unemployment insurance and health benefits; control or profit from assessment; press for unfair evaluation practices, and a host of other goals contrary to teacher interests and values. Through CTF, Canadian teachers maintain common vocabulary, shared

views and a joint focus to protect us all.

4. **International representation:** CTF gives Canadian teachers a strong voice on the world stage in opposing the spread of such things as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), the creep of institutional assessment, and the influence of OECD, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Canadian teachers are active and forceful in this forum. Canadian teachers outside CTF have no voice on the world stage and no ability to participate. In a global economy, the international voice is increasingly important.
5. **International service:** CTF Project Overseas is one of several international programs CTF does either jointly with a Member organization (Alberta has several) or directly. They create rewarding and life changing experiences both for the Canadian teachers involved and for the overseas partners. By working through CTF the impact of Member organization funds is maximized, redundancy is eliminated and value is enhanced.

CTF is a small organization. Direct service to members is provided by the provincial and territorial teacher organizations. CTF provides support and service to the Member organization based on priorities set by the CTF Board of Directors on a three-year basis. Key tools include:

1. **Networking at the political and staff levels:** Bringing the Presidents and General Secretaries from 16 Member teacher organizations together three times each year permits opportunities for planning, discussion, and coordination of action that benefits every teacher in Canada – yes, even the non-members. Bringing the staff from across Canada together permits operationalizing the shared goals. We are all familiar with the “tyranny of the immediate” and the intense work required within the province which makes these national meetings so important as a way to see how each situation is part of the larger picture and how actions in one province/territory can and do affect others. These meetings are supplemented with national seminars on pensions, employment insurance and other critical topics. This summer will see the fourth annual CTF President's Forum which will explore the different perspectives on Quality Education.
2. **CTF Research** creates powerful national statements for MO use: Recent examples include a national teacher survey report on student mental health, class size and student diversity, the identification of teacher contributions to their classrooms (average \$453 per teacher per year) and how teachers use their summers for professional growth. This information is arrived at through polling, focus groups and other research tools. CTF also works with MOs to share their research and

pulls together common threads and analysis that avoids duplication and redundancy. A “private members only” part of the CTF Web site provides every MO with instantaneous access to vast amounts of information from collective agreements, pension agreements, private research and countless professional interest topics as well as the ability to compare and contrast information locally, between provinces and/or nationally.

3. **Lobbying:** CTF provides briefs and makes appearances before numerous committees from such entities as the federal Justice Department, Heritage Canada, HRSDC, the House of Commons, and the Senate. Our direct contact with MPs provides opportunity for all of our provincial and territorial teacher organization members to influence thinking of Members of Parliament and the Senate. This is proving to be increasingly effective and CTF solidarity contributes heavily.
4. **Relationships and partnerships with national organizations.** CTF works with numerous national organizations including heritage related groups (Assembly of First Nations, Encounters with Canada, the Media Awareness Network, Canadian Museums Association, etc.); language related groups (Official Languages Commissioner, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Canadian Parents for French, Canadian Association of Francophone School Boards, Canadian Association of Francophone Parents, etc); health related groups (Public Health Canada, Canadian Mental Health Commission, etc); lobby and special interest groups (Conference Board of Canada, Canadian Council on Learning, etc.). The complete list of partners is exhaustive. The reach of all our work is enhanced by being national – in one example, millions of dollars were spent on cyberbullying in several different provinces/territories on efforts that were excellent but localized. CTF involvement in the issue created a national impact for local work.
5. **Relationships and partnerships with global organizations:** Education International (EI) is the global teacher union. CTF has representation on the EI Executive Board and is active and influential in virtually all key decision making situations. The quadrennial World Congress will be held in Canada in 2015, thanks to the efforts of CTF. CTF is a strong part of the Commonwealth Teachers’ Group (54 countries) and the *Comité Syndical Francophone de l’Éducation et de la Formation* (CSFEF – every major francophone country). We have strong working relationships with other teacher and education related unions, notably from the United States (NEA, AFT), United Kingdom (National Union of Teachers [NUT]) the Caribbean (Caribbean Union of Teachers) and many African countries (Uganda, Ghana, Guinée, Senegal etc.). These partnerships give Canadian teachers a strong international voice. Through the Public Education Network in Canada three to four times each year, we share information and updates with many other national education related labour groups.
6. **Communications:** CTF print and Web publications are popular and powerful at spreading teacher values. Our flagship publication “CTF Perspectives” is free to anyone who wishes to subscribe and provides the most recent information on educational research and events. CTF publications are used in university classes, with other national organizations; and to coordinate teacher values within MOs. Effective use of the CTF Web site has expanded the reach of publications as a way to share research such as the recent input from teachers in Aboriginal schools. Our social media reach is vast and growing. CTF publications are popular also for sensitive issues such as the GLBTT publications that continue to be strong sellers. Most publications are also available free of charge on our Web site.
7. **Financial support to support social action projects:** Teachers can receive grant money to engage their students in citizenship and social action activities in their communities through CTF’s Imagineaction program. Recent examples include “Listen, I read” in cooperation with the Council for the Arts, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and Indigo; Digital citizenship in cooperation with the Media Awareness Network and the Aboriginal School Twinning Pilot Project in cooperation with the Assembly of First Nations set for the fall of 2012. Another initiative of this program is currently in the works that will focus on Defenders of Human Rights in Canada in cooperation with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, The Assembly of First Nations and the Robert F. Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights. Teachers can find out more, register and apply for subsidies by visiting <http://www.imagine-action.ca>.
8. At a time when recognition of the special expertise of teachers and even the influence of teachers within the system are being challenged by powerful multinational organizations, it is critical that teacher organizations receive the support from each other through the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. Teachers are getting great value from CTF at the current fee of little more than \$2 per month per teacher.

For more information visit www.ctf-fce.ca and subscribe to the CTF Perspectives or sign up to follow CTF on Twitter (@CanTeachersFed).

(Calvin Fraser is the Secretary General of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation) ●

Project Overseas

by Edwena Arbuckle, teacher at Montague Consolidated

During July, 2012 I had the pleasure of being a volunteer participant of Project Overseas with a teaching assignment in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Project Overseas...

Project Overseas (PO) is a joint endeavor of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), participating member organizations of CTF, and CTF's overseas partner/host organizations located in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The *purpose* of Project Overseas is to improve quality of education at home and abroad through the teachers' professional development. The primary *goal* is improved teaching and learning for students around the world. Project Overseas was initiated in 1962. Since then nearly 2000 Canadian teachers have volunteered during their summer to provide classroom instruction, workshops exploring HIV/AIDS, gender equity, and facilitation skills and general teacher support/ mentoring through inservice programs as requested by host organizations. The *selection process* of a PO teacher participant begins with an application to PEITF by mid November. Following selection communication and preparation with CTF begins with country destination information, teaching assignment, team building and travel arrangements.

Teaching Assignment...

My adventure with Project Overseas began by attending the Orientation Program in Ottawa July 4th to July 8th. During this time Project Overseas participants of 2012 and PO alumni gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of CTF International Programs! Team building activities and final preparations for teaching assignments and travel filled our days and evenings. On July 9th I flew with members of Team St. Vincent and the Grenadines- Lina Radziunas (YTA), Lizzie Akulukjuk (NTA), Donna Lindstrom (STF), Danielle Neron-Baril (OECTA) and Akane Nishimoto (ETFO) to the capital of St. Vincent, Kingstown. We arrived to a full day of Vincy Mas Carnival, receiving a lively introduction to the culture of Vincentians. The next several days were spent meeting with officials of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers' Union (SVG TU), adjusting to the humid heat of the Caribbean and coordinating our teaching assignments with our local Co-Tutors. Our host

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earth to buy it for. I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, the people who went to my church.

I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobbie Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock's grade-two class. Bobbie Decker didn't have a coat. I knew that because he never went out for recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough; but all we kids knew that Bobbie Decker didn't have a cough, and he didn't have a coat.

I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobbie Decker a coat. I settled on a red corduroy one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that. I didn't see a price tag, but ten dollars ought to buy

anything. I put the coat and my ten-dollar bill on the counter and pushed them toward the lady behind it.

She looked at the coat, the money, and me. "Is this a Christmas present for someone?" she asked kindly. "Yes," I replied shyly. "It's ... for Bobbie. He's in my class, and he doesn't have a coat." The nice lady smiled at me. I didn't get any change, but she put the coat in a bag and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat in Christmas paper and ribbons, and write, "To Bobbie, From Santa Claus" on it ... Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy.

Then she drove me over to Bobbie Decker's house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially one of Santa's helpers. Grandma parked down the street from Bobbie's house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his



The Vincy Mas Carnival

was quite impressive to be part of a group of educators so committed to a reflection of their individual teaching styles and skill sets while equally committed to building a view of Primary Social Studies as a continuum of skills for student learners. Highlights of my teaching assignment included organizing a class field trip to historic Fort Charlotte, discussions on Differentiated Instruction and introducing strategies such as familiarity with Text Features and Read Aloud for Social Studies.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines...

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a small group of islands

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in the Caribbean Sea. Most of the nation lies within the Hurricane Belt and these islands include St. Vincent, Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Mayreau, Tobago Cays, Union Island, Palm Island and Petit St. Vincent. These islands are known for beautiful black and white sand beaches, great scuba diving, lush green mountains, waterfalls, festivals and friendly people. St. Vincent was originally named *Hairouna* “The Land of the Blessed” by the native Caribs and much of the history of St. Vincent is known through the stories of enslaved Africans who escaped slavery to intermarry with the Caribs. The country also has a



Executive members of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers' Union

French and British colonial history and from 1763 until its independence in 1979, St. Vincent and the Grenadines passed through various stages of colonial status under the British. Today St. Vincent and the Grenadines has approximately 120,000 inhabitants and is working hard to improve its economy through a growing tourist industry. The filming of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies has helped to expose the country to potential visitors and investors. Some of the highlights during my stay

front walk.

Suddenly, Grandma gave me a nudge. “All right, Santa Claus,” she whispered, “get going.”

I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his doorbell twice and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma. Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobbie. He looked down, looked around, picked up his present, took it inside and closed the door.

Forty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my grandma, in Bobbie Decker's bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were: Ridiculous!

Santa was alive and well ... AND WE WERE ON HIS TEAM!

in St. Vincent included visiting the oldest Botanical Gardens in the Western Hemisphere, hiking 4,048 feet to the top of La Soufriere, an active volcano and enjoying the live music of internationally acclaimed steel drum artist, Ken Isles.

Lasting Impressions...

The lasting impressions of my experience with project Overseas in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are directly tied to food, faith and fellowship. Among the staples of the nation are breadfruit, salt cod and fresh fruit. The Canadian teachers often received gifts of fresh fruit. Agriculture in these Caribbean islands is a challenging livelihood however, and the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines increasingly rely upon imported goods. My wondering is “How will this affect the future life of students?”

At the beginning of each teaching day Vincentians initiated songs and prayers of thanksgiving. They are a people of tremendous love for their families and homes and take great pride in their country homeland. As the use of technology advances in St. Vincent and the Grenadines teachers are preparing for “the education revolution.” My wondering is “How will this shape the cultural traditions and values of Vincentians?”

The Canadian teachers were extended genuine hospitality from the Ministry of Education, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers' Union executive and all participating teachers of the In-Service Training Program. The fellowship which developed was evident through the readily established team teaching approach of local Co-Tutors and Canadian teachers and through the relaxed and jovial atmosphere that was shared when sightseeing on weekends.

It was an honor to meet, work and share fellowship with my Canadian colleagues. I am grateful to PEITF for extending me the opportunity to take part in Project Overseas and encourage interested teachers to give participation in PO true consideration. The challenges, special memories and professional growth for all involved are tremendous! 🌍

To all Teachers and Administrators, have a Safe and Happy Holiday Season and may you find yourselves on Santa's team.

Les cérémonies du jour du souvenir sont finies et la saison des fêtes arrive à grand pas. Nous savons que l'hiver n'est pas loin et nous espérons qu'elle ne sera pas trop sévère, mais saura nous apporter quelques jours de tempêtes.

Que ce temps des fêtes soit pour vous un temps de relaxation et de joie avec vos proches. Prenez du temps afin de vous reposer un peu et de faire ce que vous voulez quand vous le voulez.

À tous et à toutes, un Joyeux Noël et une Nouvelle Année rempli de joie, bonheur et santé.

Gilles Arsenaault, Président, PEITF 🌍

Meet your Colleague



Lorna Larkin, Gulf Shore Consolidated

Years teaching: 25+

Grade/Subject teaching: Gr. 4 Mid Immersion, has done Gr. 1 FI

Favorite teaching moment: They are all favorites. It's tough to pick one. Teaching a second language, it is gratifying when they begin to speak without inhibition and have actual conversations.

No. 1 item on bucket list: Going to Paris and taking my family to enjoy the experience of a French culture.

Hobbies: Travelling to sports with my 3 children, shopping, aerobics, gym.

Favorite summer activity: Beach, walking, relaxing, working in our summer family business.

Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): Lili B. Brown - a series of student books, and Les Centres de Litteracie.



Marc Duguay, Birchwood

Years teaching: 29

Grade/Subject teaching: Gr. 8 Late Immersion, Phys. Ed. 7-9 FI

Favorite teaching moment: Seeing the students you taught being successful and contributing to society.

No. 1 item on bucket list: Fly fishing in Labrador.

Hobbies: Fly fishing, fly tying, archery, cycling, most sports, coaching and helping out with sports for my own children.

Favorite summer activity: Fly fishing

Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): John Gierach's "Still Life with Brook Trout."



Rebecca Rioux, Parkdale Elementary

Years teaching: 12

Grade/Subject teaching: VP and Core French 4-6, Gr. 5 L.A., and Gr. 5-6 Resource.

Favorite teaching moment: The "AHA" moment was when a child connects two ideas, and develops a new level of understanding, however they get it. Using technology to facilitate this.

No. 1 item on bucket list: Travel to Italy and experience the food in the 21 regions.

Hobbies: Professional couch potato.

Favorite summer activity: Learning to love gardening.

Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): "Putting Faces on the Data" by Lyn Sharratt, and "Civilization: The West and the Rest" by Niall Ferguson.

*Do you know who teaches
down the road from you?*

*Who are the teachers
in your area?*



Zain Essaghaier, Ecole St. Augustin

Years teaching: 26

Grade/Subject teaching: Gr. 3/4 French First Language

Favorite teaching moment: They are all great. I enjoy all of them. Right now, I am really enjoying read aloud with the students and the interesting stories they share because of it.

No. 1 item on bucket list: Go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Hobbies: Walking, jogging, reading.

Favorite summer activity: It's been awhile since I had a summer off because I worked at the Department.

Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): Professionally reading about PLCs, and personally "Spies of the Balkans" by Alan Furst.

Resources Corner

May I Suggest?

As teachers you have many responsibilities, and are very busy trying to meet the needs of your students. Often you would like to have the time to search out new resources. Let us help. Each issue we will feature articles, web sites or books that may be helpful to you. Some of you may already be aware of some of these, others may not – hopefully they will be of use to some.

Check out the 'Into the Book' web site at:

<http://reading.ecb.org/teacher/index.html>

You will find suggestions for K-4, complete with demonstration videos on how to teach comprehension strategies. These could be adapted for higher levels too. There are supports for both the teacher and the learner on this page.

Teaching Academic Vocabulary is an important component of student success. Education Update from ASCD contains an article detailing ways to help in this area. Included is Marzano and Pickering's six-step process for vocabulary development. If you are interested in this article, drop me a line and I will send it along. A flash presentation of this process is available at:

http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/media/siteASCD/common/six_step_flash.html

Convention Draw

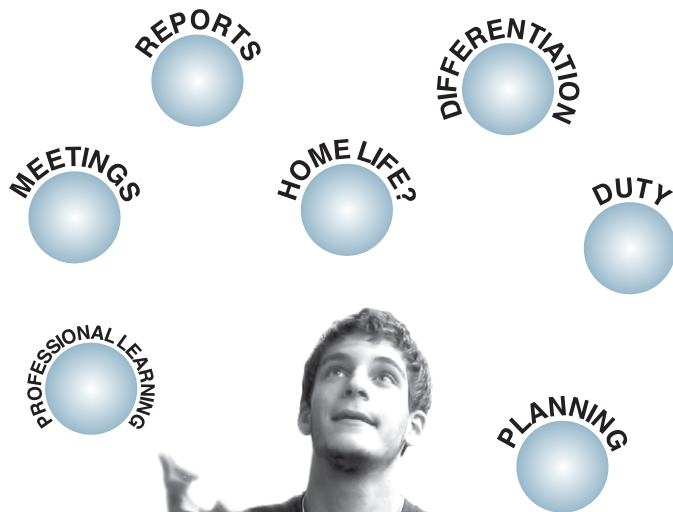
Gilles Arsenault, President and Lois Adams, Executive Assistant draw the winner of the free night at the Delta. Karen LeBlanc of L'Ecole Francoise Buote was the winner. Her name was drawn from the list of people who completed the on line evaluation of the Convention. Congratulations!



What Busy Teachers Need to Know

About Electronic Communication with Students

by Blake Robichaud, NBTA Staff



1. Although Modes of Communication have changed, the legal parameters of the Teacher-Student relationship have not.
2. Teachers are teachers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They cannot take their “teacher hats” off.
3. Due to #1 & #2, being social media “Friends” with students is not a good idea. Teachers can “be friendly” with their students, but they should not “be friends.”
4. Professional and Public electronic communications with students are fine, but private and personal conversations can be dangerous.
5. Teachers should be cautious about the use of informal language in their electronic communications with students. These words can become permanent, public and open to misinterpretation.

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Patrick MacFadyen
Deputy General Secretary

The Scoop

Pension Payment Increase

As you may have heard the Government announced that there will be a one percent increase to pension contributions for both the Employer and Teachers. Currently teachers pay 7.3% of their salary towards the Teachers' Superannuation Fund (TSF), commonly referred to as the teachers pension plan, and

4.95% of their salary to the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP). For 2012 the CPP portion had a maximum employee contribution of \$2,306.70, which means when your year to date salary hits \$50,100 (called the YMPE or yearly maximum pensionable earnings) you will have paid the maximum amount (there is a basic exemption of \$3,500 for CPP). When you reach the maximum amount and stop paying CPP, your contributions to the TSF increase to 9%.

With the proposed changes, your contribution rates to the TSF will be 8.3% up to the YMPE and when your year to date salary goes above the \$51,100 (2013 figures), the contribution rate will increase to 10%. Don't forget all the pension payments are tax deductible and the Employer matches the amounts dollar for dollar.

As you may have figured out the total amount you pay into your pension decreases once you pay off the maximum amount of CPP even though the contribution to the TSF increases.

For 2013 total pension deductions:

$8.3\% + 4.95\% = 13.25\%$ payment into the TSF and CPP until year to date salary hits \$51,100 and the maximum \$2,356.20 has been paid into the CPP

and

$10\% + 0\% = 10\%$ into the TSF after all payments made into CPP

Employment Insurance payments also stop when a teacher's year to date earnings reach \$47,400 (2013 numbers).

This means at some point in the fall when their CPP and EI payments are paid off, your take home pay seems to increase. When your salary payments start for January 1 you have to start

paying CPP and EI again so it looks like your salary has decreased.

This year when you get your **first pay cheque** in January the CPP and EI payments will start again and you will notice a decrease in pay. Later you get paid for your time worked in January (the pay period in January) you will see the extra deductions taken off for the increase in contributions to the TSF.

So remember, when your take home pay is lower in January some of it is because of the 1% increase in pension payment and some of it is because CPP and EI deductions have started again.

Website

Part of the PEITF new communications plan involves an update to our website. The new website will offer a members only area where we can share more sensitive information to our members. We are also adding a section that shows discounts from businesses that are available to members of the PEITF. We hope you like the new website and visit it often for up to date information.

Communications Survey

A big thank you to the teachers who filled out the communications survey in the fall. We had a very good response rate and the feedback we have received has been very valuable. The full survey results will be released on our new website. Some interesting facts from the survey were:

Question:

Where would you expect to see important messages directed to members of the Federation?


Website 72.3%

Newsletter 63.1%

Facebook 7.1%

Twitter 3.1%

As well 77.8% of members agreed with the statement "PEITF does a good job of communicating with its members."


That is something we are working on and hopefully we will see that number get even higher. Check out the full survey results on the new webpage. 

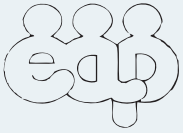
UPEI News Faculty of Education

We are very excited to announce a new focus for our Master of Education degree coming this July. *The Master of Education in Leadership in Learning: Literacy and Inclusion* will be available as a special cohort delivered online and face-to-face in Western PEI. The degree consists of ten classes, delivered online during the school year, with face-to-face courses offered during the summer in air conditioned settings in Summerside or Wellington.

This degree is one way the Faculty of Education is responding

to the need of teachers in Western PE and to identified priorities in our school system currently. Feedback collected recently from teachers and principals indicated a desire for a Master's degree focusing on Literacy and Inclusion and for this to be delivered outside of Charlottetown and/or online.

We look forward to your questions and we hope to receive your applications. An information meeting will be organized soon but in the meantime please explore our website for more details - <http://education.upei.ca/med-programs> 



Self-Care for Teachers Caring for Yourself So You Can Care for Others

You became a teacher because you want to make a difference; because you love children; because you enjoy seeing the expression on a child's face when he or she finally understands a new concept. It is that passion that makes you a great teacher—the same passion that can also lead to burn-out.

Avoiding burn-out is why self-care is important. You cannot care for others if you do not take care of yourself. Practicing self-care enables you to be an effective teacher. If you are tired, either emotionally or physically, you cannot do your job well. Finally, self-care is important so you can model good balance and healthy boundaries to your students and co-workers. Here are several strategies to help you care for yourself more effectively:

Set healthy boundaries. Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no. Recognize your limits, and do what is most important. Trying to be super-teacher has consequences (mostly negative ones). No, you cannot leap tall buildings in a single bound!

Take breaks often. You will be amazed at what a five minute break will do. Whether it's spent just relaxing your brain and body, eating a healthy snack, or meditating, you will be rejuvenated so the work you do is more efficient. Set a goal to take a five minute break at least every hour.

Exercise. Research shows that exercise can help increase energy, improve concentration, and decrease stress and depression. It also allows you to focus on yourself and take care of your body. Both are important for reducing burn-out.

Know your own threshold for stress. Recognize the first signs of stress. These may include increased heart rate, change in appetite, fatigue and irritability. Pay attention to what triggers stress for you and either avoid those situations or learn relaxation techniques so you can manage your stress

effectively. Modeling these skills for your students will teach them how they can handle their own stress. Focused breathing and deep muscle relaxation have been proven to work.

Find at least three activities that relieve stress for you. Do these things consistently. Planning ahead of time to prevent stress or becoming aware of what you can do when you become stressed will help decrease burn-out.

Start your day on a positive note. Begin your day by doing something that lifts you up and makes you feel good. It may be enjoying quiet time in meditation or prayer, thinking about the positive things that are in store for you that day, taking a walk or conversing with your spouse about positive things. What you do first can set the tone for how you manage your entire day. ☺

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Tel: 902-368-5738
Toll-free: 1-800-239-3826



RTA CORNER by Patricia McCardle

Hope your year is going as planned and that you are enjoying your work. The PEIRTA has been busy since September. Three members attended the Eastern Canadian Retired Teachers Organization (ECRTA) meeting in Dieppe in October. There were many interesting presentations on such topics as Insurance, Lobbying and Pharmacare. We finished the meeting with a discussion of common concerns to each organization.

Our AGM was held November 8 at the Royal Canadian Legion in Summerside. The members voted to add a bursary for a Holland College student in the Early Childhood Care and Education program to complement our Scholarship and prize to the B.Ed. program at UPEI. All three are to be awarded to students who attended a Prince Edward Island high school for their secondary education. I hope you will have a merry and restful Christmas holiday. ☺



Shaun MacCormac

Thoughts and Comments

from the General Secretary

DEAR SANTA
Hi Santa. I could have sworn you were just here? Someone special must have asked you to have this year fly by because it sure has. Things have been hectic again this year in education, Santa. For that reason, and lots of others, I hope you are nice to everyone on my list.

As I say each year, my requests are all with good intent, Santa, I know that all of these people work hard and do the best that they can for the children of this province.

I'll start, as usual, with the staff here at Federation House. The people here are so great to work with, Santa, they are excellent workers and excellent people. Make sure you give them lots of great presents. Here are my requests for them, and some other nice people as well:

President Gilles Arseneault: Last year I asked for a helicopter for Gilles, Santa. This year, I think a padded seat belt would be nice. The past year has been a bit wild, so we better add some safety to the ride. Maybe a life-size image of him too, Santa, this job takes him away from his family far too often. Add in some peaceful time at home with his three boys and his kind and patient wife, Leonie.

Patrick MacFadyen: Well Santa, to start, I forgot about Patrick last year when I did this list. That was not good, Santa, because he has been an excellent addition to the staff and has been doing great work since he arrived at Federation House. He is a fan of food, Santa, so how about all the Swiss Chalet he can eat. Throw in a few McDonald's coupons too, Santa, for the days he's in a rush.

Michel Plamondon: A hobby for the winter, Santa. The NHL lockout is keeping him from watching his beloved Habs. What's just as bad, is there isn't anything for the Montreal media to talk about either, Santa, so following them is no fun either. Maybe you could just end the lockout, Santa, so Michel can continue to follow his team.

Lois Adams: How about peace and tranquility, Santa. She is a goer and a doer, however, so I'm not sure she would ask this for herself, Santa, but I thought it might be nice. She is doing great work in her short time here, Santa, so I say just give her whatever she asks for. I'm sure she has earned it.

Sheila, Marion and Lisa: A few of my favorite people, Santa. It's always tough to find the right gift for them. For Sheila, a cattle prod so she can use it on me when she is waiting for me to get stuff done for her. Please make it with low voltage, though, Santa. For Marion, a tech free vacation. We have thrown a lot of technology changes her way Santa and she has been a trooper, but she deserves a break from it for a bit. For Lisa, a headset to help her answer the phones, Santa, and could it be embedded into a space helmet that goes with her new desk?

For the Provincial Government:

Robert Ghiz: The strength of conviction, Santa. The Premier has continued to state that education is one of his main priorities and that is a wise thing for any premier, Santa. It is said, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going," so lets hope the he's

tough, Santa, because the fiscal times are challenging for all the provinces right now. The education of our children can't wait for better economic times, however, Santa, so we hope that the Premier can find a way to increase funding for education even when times are tough.

Alan McIsaac: The power of persuasion, Santa. The Minister is just one of many sitting at the Cabinet table looking for money. He now has a year of experience as the Minister of Education (and ECD), Santa, so we are looking for even bigger things from him. His role is very important, Santa, and we know he does not take that lightly.

Wes Sheridan: Potatoes of gold, Santa, or potatoes that have turned into oil. Anything that will turn us into a "have-province" would be helpful. He is a bit like you, Santa, he has everyone contacting him with a wish list, but I'm not sure he can match your resources. Regardless, we know he values education, Santa, and we hope he can find some golden potatoes somewhere to keep education moving forward.

The Official Opposition: An important part of our political system, Santa. Support them in any way that helps our education system and our teachers. Help them keep the government on the straight and narrow.

The Department of Education:

Dr. Sandy MacDonald: Give him continued resolve Santa. His position is very important when it comes to education financing. We know his heart is in the right place, Santa, and he's a pretty smart guy. Give him whatever he needs to get education more money to meet our many challenges.

The Staff: The number in this staff has been shrinking, Santa. Many have moved over to the new school board and others have moved on in other ways. The roles of those who remain are very important and those roles have been changing and growing. Grant them patience, and the assurance that they are valued in our education system, Santa.

School Boards:

Jane McMillan and Gilles Benoit: A peaceful and enjoyable retirement to both, Santa. They have both worked hard and done what they thought best for our schools, Santa. What else could you ask of anyone. They both have lots to offer, Santa, so we may see them doing something else in the future. We wish them good health and good fortune in all that they do in the future.

Teachers:

As I always do, Santa, I saved the best for last. Teachers are amazing people, Santa. They give everything they have to others. Despite the increasing challenges that they face everyday, teachers seem to be able to dig just a bit deeper each year to meet those challenges and do their best for their students and for education. They ask for very little in return, Santa, but it is important for us all to remember that "respect" is one thing that teachers value highly. I think that is one gift that we all should give teachers, Santa, and it should be given to teachers all year round. They certainly deserve it.

Have a restful and happy holiday. Be good to yourselves, your students, and your fellow teachers. 🌟