



Message from our President



Gilles Arsenault

Dear teachers,
We are now officially in spring, and we want to put this winter behind us. This winter was relentless, and our Government has had some opportunities to excite the media in an attempt to turn this year's storm days into a historical event or to try and score some political points. However, we all know and understand that teachers do not control the weather. What teachers do control is the ability to adjust our teachings to ensure that student learning is not compromised in these kinds of winters. There are many ways to cover curricular outcomes and teachers will make professional decisions on how best to cover those outcomes in fewer school days.

Weather is just one of many reasons why students may not be in school. While the government seems concerned about storm days, we are not aware of any actions it is taking to address school time missed by students for things such as sporting events, family trips, or skipping school. All this makes me wonder if the Government's reactions were educational or political?

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The Federation is also concerned about the Government's handling of the School Calendar and the issue of professional development days. A report from its own Department of Education and E.C.D. seems to have been ignored as the Minister faced some pushback from parents. Unfortunately, the Government missed its opportunity to educate parents, and teachers, of the need for extra PD days and now any extra days are being put on the backs of teachers who will now have to work 197 days on a regular basis in order to accommodate government's desired changes.

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Teachers did not ask for extra professional development days. The experience with PD so far has been one which appears to lack the necessary alignment and coordination between all stakeholders to make these PD days meaningful. Everyone wants a piece of the PD pie, but we aren't sure who is baking the pie and not sure what kind of pie. Some want to know every ingredient in the recipe; others want to force down the dessert, while some of us are on diets and don't want any of the pie. Get my drift?

As a Federation, we encourage all stakeholders to rally around PD in order to make this new model a winning one. We need teachers to have a say in the way this model will evolve. Teachers need time to talk to one and other and need time to collaborate and plan in order to enhance teaching strategies and in turn have an impact on student learning. These new PD days can be beneficial if we use them efficiently. Teachers need to be at the center of their professional development activities just like students need to be the center of their learning opportunities. We need to focus on curriculum, teaching strategies and resources.

We hope that the Federation can impact the PD model to reflect the wishes and desires of all teachers.

I trust that you will have a wonderful remainder of this school year and hope that you will continue to entrust in your students the joy of learning.

Take care!

Visit our website at www.peitf.com

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Classroom Realities

Editorial by Chad Gallant

The last few months have been busy ones at the Federation, but I will never complain about being busy. After all, this newsletter is written for teachers and if anyone knows busy, it is teachers.

The recently launched public relations campaign culminated months of work by the PEITF public relations committee and the PEITF staff. This campaign was a result of a resolution passed at the PEITF Board of Governors Annual Meeting requesting the PR committee shines a light on the realities teachers are facing in their classrooms. While it is well known by those of us in the profession that today's classrooms are not the same as they were even 10 years ago let alone when our students' parents were in school, many teachers are feeling overworked and underappreciated in spite of doing the world's most important work; building the future.

The planning process behind the campaign had schools submitting the realities in their building. Teachers were very thorough and communicated very passionately the realities they face daily on the front lines. The list was exhaustive. The PR committee scoured all submissions and attempted to find consistencies across the province. After much discussion, four common themes emerged: Class composition, advocating for students, intensity of technical instruction (reading records, assessment), and the changing classroom.

From the start of the process, we wanted to stand from the highest mountain (or on PEI terms, the highest hill) and shout about the great work PEI teachers do and kick and scream for more money for education. However, there is a fine line we must walk between advocating for children's education and coming across as whining about the difficulties of our job. This campaign was more about opening the classroom door for the public to see the special needs student without support, the EAL student needing more time from the teacher, the student with social-emotional issues, and the teacher giving more of themselves than ever before in the name of education.

If anything, the PR campaign planted a seed in the mind of the public and provided them with a great deal of information in the process. Through a television commercial, print ads, website infographics, a radio spot and social media we believe we have educated the public and have people discussing education and the tireless work that teachers do. From meeting the diverse needs of all students or helping a child who is experiencing emotional difficulties to ensuring students who need a lunch don't go hungry, teachers do so much more than "just teach".

Even with these challenges, we continue to do what we do because we believe in the power of education and how it can affect real change in the lives of our children. You make a difference. Take care.




Technology has changed today's classroom.

The increased use of technology has changed the way teachers communicate and deliver lessons despite constraints that face them in our school system.

With the use of email, online marks and attendance, and class blogs, parents are better informed than ever of their child's progress.

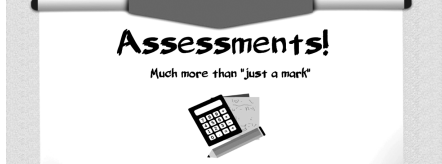
Teachers spend countless after-school hours learning new technologies, exploring online resources, and integrating new technologies into lesson plans to increase student engagement.

To learn more go to www.peitf.com



Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation
Education: our best investment



Assessments!

Much more than "just a mark"

What Are Assessments?

Assessments are ways of measuring what a child has learned. These are grouped into two types:

Formative

"Assessment For Learning"


Monitors student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used to direct future teaching and improve student learning.

Summative

"Assessment of Learning"


Evaluates student learning at the end of an instructional unit. End result is a mark or grade!

What are some formative assessments teachers use?




Reading Records

Used primarily in Elementary / Intermediate Grades, Reading records involve a student reading a leveled text to a teacher in a 1-1 setting. The Teacher assesses the reading for fluency, comprehension, word decoding and pace.



White Boards


Each student, or groups of students, has a mini whiteboard. As students work through problems, they share their either with the teacher as a class, or read-aloud with a partner in the classroom and see their work.



Quick Write


Used at any grade level, a QuickWrite is a brief, timed writing activity. Giving students two or three minutes to reflect on and summarize their learning in writing allows them to make sense of what they have been studying. Teachers review the writing to add in determining a student's understanding.

What are some examples of summative assessments?




Presentat

Teachers may have students make presentations to assess their level of mastery over a completed unit of study.



Written Assignments

Teachers often will use a written form of summative assessment to determine student understanding of a completed unit of study.



Test

For a test, the students are asked to answer questions at the end of a section, chapter, unit, theme, etc., to demonstrate what they know. Tests are marked and become a part of the student's grade.

Prince Edward Island teachers continually assess students using a variety of methods to ensure the best possible education for your child.




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Meet your Colleague



Leona Jackson-Deveau,

Souris Consolidated

Years teaching: 23

Grade/Subject teaching: School Counsellor

Favorite teaching/counselling moment: My favorite moments are when students can solve their own issues using the tools that were given to them.

No. 1 item on bucket list: To attend a Bob Seger concert.

Dream vacation: Touring castles in Ireland and Scotland.

Favorite winter activities: Curling

Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): "Gone Girl" by Gillian Flynn



Jane Munn, Morell Consolidated School and Mt. Stewart Consolidated School

Years teaching: 10

Grade/Subject teaching: School Counsellor, Grades K-8

Favorite teaching/counselling moment: My favorite moments as a teacher and now as a counsellor are seeing students work past a challenge to find success.

No. 1 item on bucket list: Visit Australia.

Dream vacation: Anywhere warm sounds good to me right now!

Favorite winter activities: skiing, knitting, yoga and reading

Book(s) currently reading (personally, professionally, or both):

Personally, "And the Mountains Echoed", by Khaled Hosseini



Calvin MacPhail, Southern Kings Consolidated and Belfast Consolidated

Years teaching: 15

Grade/Subject teaching: Currently K-9

Favorite teaching/counselling moment: Being able to share in a student's sense of accomplishment when they understand how to do what they need to do.

No. 1 item on bucket list: Learning guitar.

Dream vacation: Do it every summer - the North Shore!

Favorite winter activities: Skating with my son.
Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): "MIND UP Curriculum and Shambhala Principle"

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

*Who are the teachers
in your area?*



Andrea Garland, Currently English Language School Board - Counselling Consultant

Years teaching: 10

Grade/Subject teaching: 9 years at Hernewood Intermediate as School Counsellor, 1 year at ELSB Counselling Consultant

Favorite teaching/counselling moment: Being able to support students and families and see as they overcome adversity and challenges!

No. 1 item on bucket list: Learn how to play the guitar.

Dream vacation: Visit Ireland!

Favorite winter activities: Snowshoeing

Book currently reading (personally, professionally, or both): "I am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban" - Malala Yousafzai

In Defence of our Teachers

As published in the Guardian March 2014

Emily Pass, Grade 12 student

Charlottetown Rural High School

Editor: I am writing in response to John W.A. Curtis's Feb. 24 letter ("A suggestion for PD days") in which he advises the Minister of Finance that "the government can save money by not paying teachers until there are improvements in PISA scores."


As an academically-minded Island student, I have had in the realm of 50 teachers over my 12 years of schooling, and I can count the number on one hand who I have felt were unequipped to teach. Sure, there are poor teachers out there, but no more than, say, poor security guards or poor gym instructors.

When it comes to PISA scores, I strongly believe teachers are not the problem.

The issue has a number of roots: many students simply do

not care; many parents are unsupportive of their children in academics; many schools are not provided with the resources needed to educate in any manner other than one-size-fits-all.

You see classes with 30 students - some gifted, some struggling and some in the middle - and it is impossible for even the most talented teacher to teach in a way that benefits each individual to the fullest, no matter how many PD days that teacher has attended.

Yes, the question of academics in our province sorely needs to be addressed. No, the solution is not to scapegoat Island teachers. We have a great number of truly remarkable educators here on P.E.I. They definitely do not deserve Mr. Curtis's failing grade. 

Executive Council



Back row (L-R): Peter Love, Member-at-Large; Isabelle Savoie-Jamieson, Member-at-Large; Aldene Smallman, Member-at-Large; Mary Bradley, Member-at-Large
Front row (L-R): Blaine Bernard, Vice President; Gilles Arsenault, President; Bethany MacLeod, Vice President 

*The PEITF Executive
pose for a group
picture after a monthly
executive meeting.*

Sowing Seeds:

Professional Learning for a New Generation

Are you a Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 educator interested in environmental education? Dr. Lyndsay Moffatt from the Faculty of Education invites you to participate in a research study concerning how a teacher-inquiry group can support professional