

# Teachers who make a difference

## Janice Gavin

Itinerant teacher Janice Gavin, who works with students who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) for the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA), was re-assured that her work does have a positive impact when she was selected as one of this year’s *Teachers Make a Difference* award winners.

“It is a huge honour to be recognized by a student/family to whom I provide support,” says the 26-year veteran teacher. “As an itinerant teacher, my work is in several schools and I see as many as five students in a day, each in a different school. Although I enjoy working with school teams in various locations, the work can be very isolating because you are never in one location very long. Receiving this award was a huge boost in that it really showed me that the work I do with students supporting their speech, auditory skills, and language development really does make a difference for the child, the family, and the school team.”

Gavin was the APSEA member selected for the fourth *Teachers Make a Difference* campaign, in which 308 nominations representing 227 NSTU members were received from students and parents recognizing teachers who made a difference in their lives, schools, and/or communities.

Through Gavin’s abundance of experience, knowledge, and skill, along with her love of helping students reach their potential; it’s easy to see why she was nominated as a teacher who makes a difference. “I love the work I do with students, families, and schools and am passionate about what I do. Recognition is not the motivator, but it is very nice to be recognized.”

Gavin started her career in Vancouver, British Columbia teaching at the Jericho Hill School for the Deaf before accepting a position with APSEA as an itinerant teacher in Fredericton, New Brunswick one year later. “I travelled from Fredericton to Edmundston supporting students with hearing loss for two years before transferring to the South Shore of Nova Scotia,” she says.

Gavin served students in Lunenburg and Queens Counties for six years before moving to Halifax and working for the APSEA Centre’s DHH assessment department as an Academic and Language Evaluator and then Coordinator. “In 2002, I returned to the field as an itinerant teacher serving schools in the Halifax Regional School Board and private schools who happened to have students with hearing loss.”

Gavin took an educational leave in 2007 to do a Master in Education (Counselling) and then worked as the Nova Scotia student and family counsellor at APSEA for a year. She returned to the field in the Halifax area, was a supervisor of assessment for a year, then back as an itinerant teacher. Since January of this year, Gavin is continuing to use her counselling background and long-time DHH teaching experience again as a student and family counsellor for DHH students and their families. “I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in various roles within APSEA,” she adds.

In addition to being appreciated by her students and their families, she is known to be a valued colleague and supportive mentor. “I have supervised many student teachers,” she says. “It’s important to share your expertise and pass along your knowledge to teachers new to the field.”

Her nominator says that Gavin gives 150 per cent to each of her students and cares about them. She is well organized and follows her plan, but adapts with the needs of her students and is able to change to meet their needs on any given day. She sets goals that will help her students grow.

Gavin has also been involved with the NSTU throughout her career. “I have been involved with the NSTU as a rep and on various committees within the APSEA/DHH sub local of Halifax City before we became our own Local. I attended Halifax City Local meetings and gained a good sense of many aspects of the union.”

While Gavin was aware of the program, because her colleague Kate McCara received a *Teachers Make a Difference* award a few years ago, it still took her aback. “I was completely surprised to hear I was a *Teachers Make a Difference* recipient of the award as I had no idea I was nominated.”

The program is “a wonderful initiative on the part of the NSTU,” she says. “It is a far reaching initiative from my experience because I was contacted by people all over the province who saw the media coverage of the award. Teachers work very hard and often for little, if any recognition. This is most definitely a great campaign.”

She goes on to say that it is extremely important for teachers to be recognized for the great work they do. “Teachers are innovative, creative, hard working, caring, and go the extra mile for their school communities and the students they support,” she remarks. “The public is often unaware of these great efforts and will continue to be unless we as teachers get the message out. This is a way to get the message out to the public in a way that honours and celebrates our profession.”



*Janice Gavin (centre) is shown with NSTU president Shelley Morse and APSEA superintendent Bertram Tulk at a special presentation given in her honour on February 4 at the APSEA Centre in Halifax.*

Teachers Make a Difference

To learn more about how teachers make a difference go to [nstu.ca](http://nstu.ca)

  
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