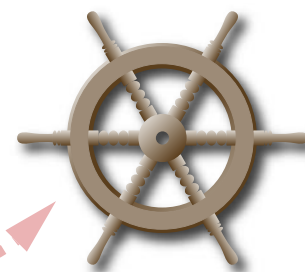


# Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## A strong voice for school administrators

By Martine Adriaensen

NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

When an NSTU member hears the words *professional association*, the first thing that comes to mind is provincial conference day. For many professional associations, organizing conferences and providing professional development opportunities for the membership are the heart and soul of their mandate. However, the *Nova Scotia School Administrators Association (SAA)* spends little time discussing conferences at its executive meetings. Due to its structure, this role is delegated to a regional branch which hosts the provincial conference day of the year.

The SAA is an umbrella organization representing local SAA branches across Nova Scotia. These branches take turns organizing the annual provincial conference in their area. SAA locals are active in the Halifax, Colchester-East Hants, Pictou County, Lunenburg/Queens, Annapolis Valley, Cape Breton-Victoria, Tri-County and the Strait regions. Representatives of these locals meet four times per year to discuss all aspects of the SAA mandate.

The first meeting of the Executive Committee of the School Administrators Association of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union was called to order November 3, 1961. The first SAA conference was held at Dalhousie University September 22, 1961. Reading through the minutes of 47 years of SAA meetings is a fascinating experience; for example, in the 60s, the question of "defining the role of the administrator in taking up the slack of the church, home, society. What limits are there to this?" was discussed. Going through these pages of minutes reveals a range of issues dealt with throughout the years: the length of the school year, supervision and evaluation of teachers, administrative allowances, substitute teachers, achievement tests, student suspensions, site-based management, early retirement, budget cuts and salary freezes, accreditation, and professional learning communities, just to name a few.

In 1980, the SAA joined the board of the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) which had been created in 1977. CAP provides SAA members with opportunities to have access to PD at the national level through the annual CAP Conference and the CAP Journal. SAA members can be nominated for the CAP

Distinguished Principal of the Year Award as well as Canada's Outstanding Principal Award. Through CAP the SAA can have a voice on issues that impact commonly on students, schools and educators all across Canada.

The SAA had the pleasure of hosting its first National CAP Conference in Halifax in 1990. Many current school administrators will remember the second CAP Conference held in Halifax in 2005 with highly inspiring keynote presentations by Todd Whitaker, Crystal Kuykendall, Michael "Pinball" Clemens, and Justin Trudeau. In recent years, two Nova Scotia principals have been bestowed with the prestigious national CAP Distinguished Principal of the Year Award: Jim Burns (Colchester County) received the award in 2005 and in 2008 the honour was given to Allison McNeil, of Pictou County. It is also through CAP and the SAA that every year high school students are eligible to win the CAP and SAA Student Leadership Awards. There is one CAP award of \$500 for Nova Scotia students and four SAA awards of \$250 each.

In 2007 the SAA Executive voted in favour of becoming a member of the Board of the Atlantic Association of School Administrators (AASA). The aim of this newly created organization is to provide networking opportunities for Atlantic school administrators. Its goal is to represent the perspective of school administrators in Atlantic Canada on regional needs and issues that affect students, schools and educators. The AASA will organize an annual Atlantic Leadership Symposium. PEI will organize this event on May 7 to 8 in Charlottetown, followed by Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, October 4 to 5. Stay tuned for more information on these events.

The most important role of the SAA is to provide a unified voice for administrators within the NSTU. The organization monitors evolving questions of importance to administrators and provides leadership and advocacy on issues pertaining to educational leadership. The SAA has representation on the Teachers With Administrative Responsibilities Committee (TWAR), an NSTU standing committee. This provides the SAA with a voice in identifying items that have an impact on improved benefits administrators may receive in the provincial contract.



Members of the NSSA at their December 4 and 5 executive meeting at NSTU's Dr. Tom Parker Building in Halifax. Sitting (l to r) is Mike Landry, member-at-large and principal at West Hants Middle School; Joanne Santilli, secretary, principal at Sir Charles Tupper School in Halifax; Martine Adriaensen, president, principal at Harold T. Barrett Junior High School in Beaverbank; Dan Myles, president elect, principal at Newport Station School in the Annapolis Valley; Rosalie Stewart-Fisher, member-at-large, principal at Cobequid Education Centre in Truro; and David Sollows, TWAR rep, principal at Meadowfields Community School in Yarmouth. Standing: Henry White, member-at-large, principal at Malcolm Munroe Junior High School in Sydney; Patsy Blais, member-at-large, principal at Memorial Composite High School in Sydney Mines; Eileen English, treasurer, principal at North Nova Education Centre in New Glasgow; Ruth Bond, member-at-large, principal at Nelson Whynder Elementary School in Dartmouth; and Ann Whalley, member-at-large, principal at Whycomagh Education Centre.

The SAA supports excellence in administrative practices through a series of activities. These include the annual SAA Distinguished Administrator of the Year Award, presented at the provincial conference, and membership on the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSELC) Board and program committee. This consortium provides workshops, modules and conferences on a broad spectrum of topics promoting effective leadership in schools. The SAA communicates with its members through a newsletter and a website.

In spite of its high level of activity and support for Nova Scotia School Administrators, the issue of keeping SAA membership numbers at an adequate level is ongoing. Interestingly enough, the topic of increasing SAA membership was mentioned for the first time at the very first executive meeting in 1961! Historically SAA membership has generally been made up of the delegates attending the Annual Conference paying membership dues. The SAA membership fee is \$30. Ten dollars of this amount is sent

to the Canadian Association of Principals for membership in this national organization. Membership numbers are usually around 200, which is far less than the actual number of educators working as school administrators in Nova Scotia. The SAA continues to search for ways to increase membership to support its programs, regional professional development and awards. Membership application forms are available on the SAA website (<http://local.nstu.ca/web/saa>).

The SAA is more dedicated than ever to voice the issues of Nova Scotia school administrators. Increasing work demands and stress are experienced by all educators; however the origins of these increases are not always the same for teachers and school administrators. For this reason the SAA will continue to endeavour to be the voice school administrators can count on to represent their interests within the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

*Martine Adriaensen is a principal at Harold T. Barrett Junior High School in Beaverbank.*



Do you believe that the principal or vice-principal of your school deserves special recognition for their outstanding effort and success in improving student achievement?

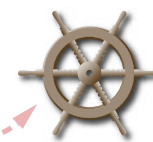
Then nominate your school administrator for the

### NSSAA Distinguished Administrator's Award

For nomination information, go to <http://local.nstu.ca/web/saa>. The nomination form is at the bottom of the home page. **The deadline is April 25, 2009.**



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Email your name, home address, and school or campus with PD in the subject line to [theteacher@nstu.ca](mailto:theteacher@nstu.ca) by January 30 to be eligible for the draw.

This month's book give away is Lee Canter's *Reading and Literacy A-Z Teacher Plan Book #7*. This book supports the elementary teacher in planning and developing a strong literacy program. Teacher Plan Book #7 has compiled a multitude of tips and ideas for literacy instruction and has organized them for you from A to Z. The weekly planning pages offer motivating activities and strategies that address phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, assessment and much more. Each planning page also includes space for listing favourite books to read to students or for independent reading. Have fun planning and teaching - from A to Z and beyond.

