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Fall 2011



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Erratum

The Editor and staff of Aviso would like to apologize to Dr. Steven Van Zoost for misspelling his name in the Spring 2011 issue. On the Table of Contents page (p. 1), Dr. Van Zoost's name should appear as Dr. Steven Van Zoost.



A QR code (short for Quick Response) is a specific two-dimensional code used to open a website address. Aviso readers who have a camera phone equipped with a QR reading application can scan the image of the QR code to open a web page in the phone's browser.



Resource in the 21st Century: The More Things Change, the More they Stay the Same

Danielle Batstone

It is late August, I'm stacking five cords of wood, and my mind is thinking about writing this article. This stacking wood business is a huge job, it's back-breaking work, requires lots of problem solving, and seems to be endless. Wow! This isn't too far from what I'm about to face for the next ten months in my "day" job. I laugh to myself as I realize the number of similarities I could connect in a metaphor: "stacking wood" as "teaching resource."

A couple of questions occur to me as a result of this strange thought process: What is resource like in the "now," on the cusp of the 21st century? What are the realities we face every day as we work in our schools?

I started my teaching career in 1994, first as a music teacher, and then pursued a Masters in special education that led me to my first resource position in 2002. As I dig deeper into this century and as time flies by incredibly fast, I am constantly hearing stories of "how it used to be." I also find myself in intense conversations about where we are now, where we are going, and how fast it all seems to be happening.

Once I told my father (a former high school teacher and community college principal from Newfoundland) that I had been coerced to write an article for *Aviso*, he excitedly referenced the book he was reading, *Tales Told by Teachers: 2010, Book of Memoirs, Vol. 2* published by the Retired Teachers' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. In it are countless teaching stories from the 20th century (mostly from the 1970s) and quotes that make it seem like not much has changed at all in the field of special education. To quote one teacher from the book, "At times, it seemed

to be a 3-ring circus." Another reflects that students will "remember us more for how we treated them than how we taught them." All stories are unique to a time, a place, a people, and an approach or structure, but what we do in the day-to-day with our students still truly defines our roles, the difference we make, and the impact we have on our communities, whether past or present.

In the latter part of the 20th century, special education meant so many different things. In some school boards, the reality was one teacher, 30 or more students, and no resource support whatsoever. In others, we saw the beginnings of teachers trained in special education who had their own classes of students with diverse needs. Outside professionals such as occupational therapists were starting to become more involved in the "school setting," consulting on programming for the very highest special needs students. Then came a shift: Inclusion. The role of resource teacher was constantly evolving, changing sometimes from board to board and school to school based on philosophies, funding, and human resources. Add to this an influx of research and "best practices" that were now available in the form of professional development op-

portunities, which helped to program even the most challenging of situations.

What are the realities that define where we are now? There are a few fundamental factors that ring true when I think of what my colleagues and I share from school to school:

Demand for Service: The size of caseloads is increasing daily. I've had the conversation many times, and many times with retired teachers: "Have the needs really increased, or are we just better at diagnosing them?" I'm positive that it's a bit of both, and a whole lot of something larger about our generation that we don't yet have the insight to truly understand. Don't kid yourself. This reality is a huge reflection of the complexity of life itself outside our doors and of things over which we have very little control.

More Specialized Training: With larger caseloads comes the need for resource teachers to be knowledgeable and specifically trained in even more areas. We are faced more and more with requests from parents, classroom teachers and education assistants (EAs) to be able to "lead" a program planning team with expertise and in-depth knowledge that can shed light on a diagnosis and provide the best possible programming for each and every student. And yes, every student is unique and different. I can reflect upon the number of students with autism I have worked with over the last ten years and each required completely individualized programming based not only on their autism, but based on their own personalities, their family backgrounds, and their physiological needs.

Increase in Professional Development: With diversity in our student populations increasing, so has the research, implementation and availability of a vast number of outstanding programs. Opportunities for university degrees in special education and professional development opportunities within our boards have provided us with pertinent knowledge. Resources available at our fingertips online and an online network of experts in the field make trying to learn as quickly as possible a little easier. Knowledge truly is power, and expertise in any area (even if it is only slight) is an overwhelming asset to a program planning team.

Human Resources: Finally, there is a fly in the resource ointment. Coordination, communication, and effective delivery of a plan are all essential. However, when your caseload is massive, needs so diverse,

and teams so large (parents, teachers, educational assistants, mental health professionals, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and consultants, to name a few) it takes all our energy just to keep everyone on the same page and "focused" on the interventions that need to be provided. Resource teachers are masters at multi-tasking and we do it well. Because this load has been recognized and we have been heard, boards across our province are looking at new models of delivery for resource. Finding the perfect balance of teacher to student ratio and the quality of programming delivered is still the noble goal. Bringing out the greatest potential in all our students, and discovering the most efficient and effective ways of doing so, is the ultimate objective.

So, these are our programs in a snapshot. What keeps me going at the end of a truly insane week? A few things in particular:

1. **The resiliency of our students:** Hey, enough said. Most of the 6 year olds that come through my door have been through more in their short lives than I will ever experience in my own. And they get up and come to school every day, respond to interventions, surprise us with little successes, and have us in tears on a weekly basis. We just have to tap into their potential: it's always in there.
2. **Belief:** An EA I was working with a few years back had come through a two year period of trying to break through to an incredibly complex student with very challenging behaviours. One morning, at the end of an incredibly tiring week, she showed up at my office with a gift in tissue paper. I opened it to reveal a beautifully carved word: BELIEVE. We had a breakdown moment – hugs, tears, and affirmation. Truly believing in every student, no matter how challenging, works! They know: they have "super senses." They see it in our eyes, our body language, in that high-five, that hug, or that hushed word of encouragement. They "feel" our spirit lifting them up and they respond. To every problem, there is a solution.
3. **Humour:** Use it with everyone. Parents, teachers, community members, and, most importantly, your students. It's a great stress reliever and one of the quickest ways I know to make a real connection with someone.

4. **Letting Go:** Remember Seinfeld – “Serenity Now.” I’m a huge Eckhart Tolle fan, and he talks about embracing the madness, the stress, the insanity of it all, accepting the moment and living through it to find clarity and peace. Some days, we just don’t have any control over what happens. Given that we work with so many people in a school, some days can just be one crisis after another. We can’t always have control and we need to keep our clarity to work through even the most heated situations, learning from them, going with them, and realizing that “this too shall pass” and we will always find a way to move forward.
5. **Best Practice:** No matter what, stick to the plan. Don’t let it go if it works one day but not the next; if it works for two weeks and then doesn’t for two days; allow it time to do its work. We NEED to lean on all of the research and experience that has come before us, to have

faith in what others have lived through, and best practice approaches to programming work. They are solid, research-based, and structured in their focus and resources. They help keep us all on the same page. They give us clear direction. And, they allow us to pre and post assess progress, one of the best ways to measure our own effectiveness in achieving student progress.

I love my job. I like going to work every day. I always look forward to seeing my students. I am energized by problem solving. I feed off the energy and enthusiasm of others. Somehow, I don’t think this is any different than what most teachers before me have experienced. I am a resource teacher in the 21st century and I’m loving it.

Danielle Batstone is a resource/Behaviour Intervention Resource Teacher (BIRT) teacher at Cambridge and District Elementary, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.

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The iPad: A Versatile & Powerful Educational Tool for All

Barbara Cochrane & Barbara Welsford

The iPad is a unique and powerful portable tool new to the educational scene. It looks deceptively simple; too simple to be considered a tool that could potentially change the way education is delivered. The South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB) recently launched a project (thanks to a Nova Scotia Teachers Union Program Development Assistance Fund grant) utilizing iPads to support students with special needs. The intent of the project was to provide accessible learning opportunities through the iPad to students who could not access the smaller interface of the iPod Touch. The application of the iPad in learning centres and classrooms across the SSRSB is proving to impact and benefit all students. The focus of this paper, however, is on the impact the iPad has made in the lives of many of the students with highest needs, as well as on the benefits to teachers utilizing the iPad in their learning centres and classrooms.

The iPad is a tablet computer designed, developed and manufactured by Apple. It is an intuitive, easy to use, portable tool providing Wifi, access to audio and ebooks, children's activity apps, music, video, and academic resources on any subject imaginable.

Because of the addition of iPads to their learning environment, students with highest needs are now seen engaging in academic activities that were previously thought beyond their mental or physical capacity by their teachers.

Six program support teachers (PSTs) were involved in this project. Five of the PSTs teach highest needs students in a learning centre or resources room. One teacher teaches adults in an alternate setting.

A few teacher comments and observations on the use of the iPad with their students at this point in the project (3 months into the project and 2.5 months following training on the iPad in the Assistive Technology Centre SSRSB) are quite revealing:

Teacher 1

These students are reluctant writers, however both enjoy using the iPad to write on and to print off their work. Book Report app is set up well for them and the larger format of the iPad versus the iTouch allows better access to writing programs for them. Also, both students are rather quiet. Interacting with others

through the iPad produces lots of giggles and conversation starters.

Teacher 2

This student has a great sense of humour but typically did not approach or initiate 'play' with other students. Even his language was very difficult to interpret. He has a personal iTouch that he uses, but with the introduction of the iPad into the class he will initiate getting it and ask other students if they want to play a game with him. If they don't want to play the game initially requested of them he will say, "How about this one?" The iPad has increased his communication and socialization with his peers.

Teacher 3

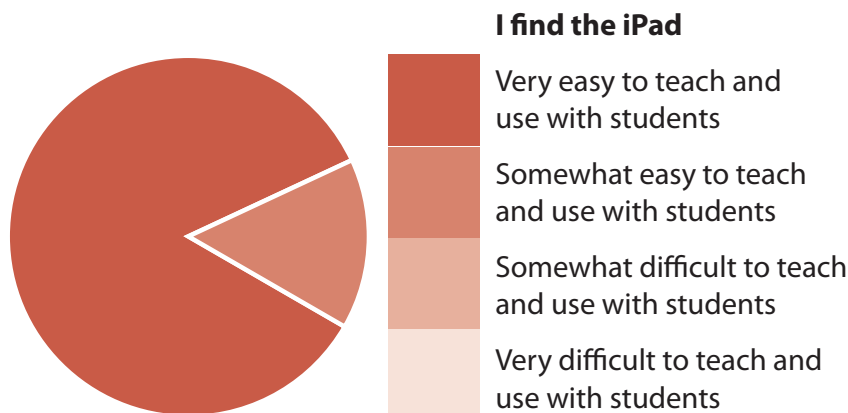
He is non-verbal and the use of the yes/no app has encouraged speech. He utters "sssss" when using the 'yes'.

Teacher 4

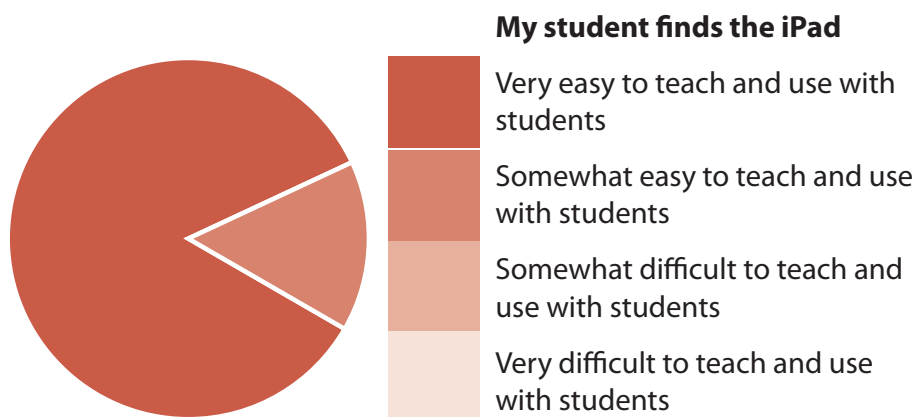
Our student is creating animations using the iPad. He is also successfully using it for video modeling.

The versatility and ease of use of the iPad, both for the teacher and the student, is a very attractive feature of this device. Teacher feedback was extremely positive following initial training in the Assistive Technology Centre where they were introduced to the

device, taught how to set up an account, research and purchase apps, and how to identify appropriate apps to match the students' needs.



Teachers also identified ease of use of the iPad by their students:



Program support teachers use the iPad with highest needs students in many different ways. It is apparent this device can be considered an all-in-one assistive device for students with communication disorders, fine motor difficulties, learning disabilities, cognitive delays, autism, aspergers, and motor skill difficulties. Alternate access devices including switch accessible interfaces and scan capable apps are now arriving in the iTunes Store. For students with visual impairments the accessibility options on the iPad offer high contrast, voice-over and magnification opportunities. Teachers in this project commented on the varied uses of the iPad in the classroom and beyond:

"Versatility, ease of use, and engagement are very beneficial."

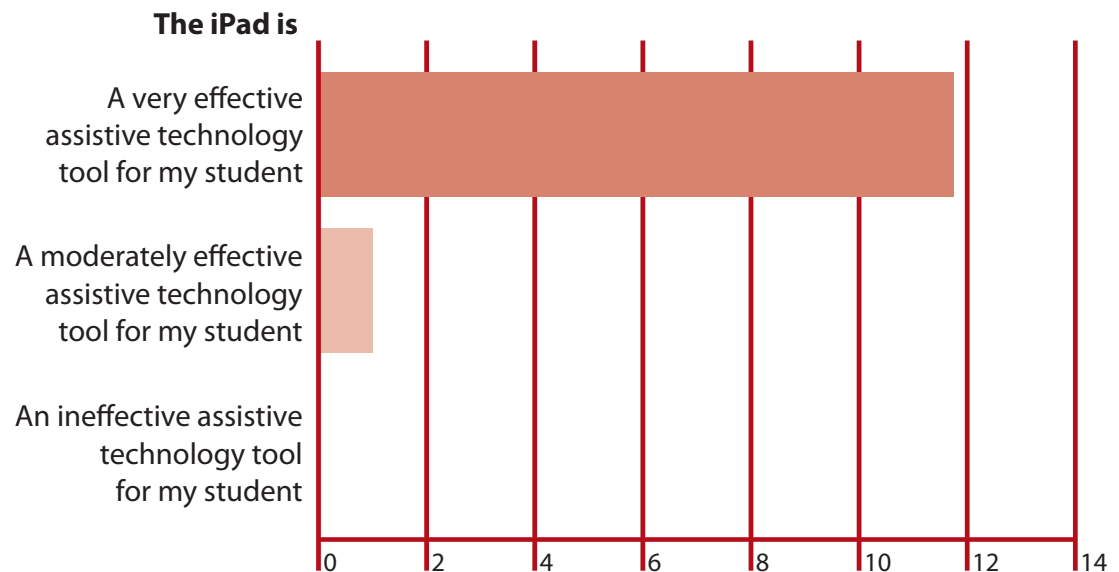
"The iPad's portability and access to a wide variety of interactive games have been very successful with this student."

"These three boys in Grade 8 struggle with math concepts and are very negative about math programming, especially if it involves 'more paperwork.' The wide variety of math apps available on the iPad have these guys engaging together and practicing their math skills without being aware that it is still more drill practice."

"This student has a history of not speaking at school and refusing to complete any work. He loves using the iPad and also his personal iTouch. Portability and engagement are the primary benefits for him."

"It is portable, engaging and there are many different apps to use."

At this point in the study teachers are finding the iPad to be a versatile, portable, affordable, and accessible learning tool for students with low incidence learning needs disabilities with a variety of visual, hearing, cognitive, physical, emotional.



The iPad is an effective assistive technology tool supporting low incidence students. It is noted, however, that the use of the iPad must be seen as a PROCESS. Training is critical for appropriate use and application of any device. The iPad and iPod Touch technology is a seemingly easy to use device but to implement in the school system it should be noted that: firewalls need to be opened to purchase on the iTunes Store; information technology personnel must be aware of each MAC address on each device for seamless use in the school system; iTunes accounts must be set up to purchase apps; apps must be matched to the needs of each student; with low incidence students accessible features must be considered (i.e. visual access, physical access issues like switch use, stylus users, sensitivity of the screen); and, of course, the task that the student will be achieving on the iPad is of primary importance. For example, is the device to be used for communication (requiring TapSpeak Choices or apps like Proloquo2go), cause and effect activities, math, or reading opportunities (i.e. scanning in Kurzweil 3000 and conversion to epub documents in Stanza and accessing the text through text to speech in vBookz with highlighting and tracking capabilities). The possibilities are endless, requiring training and support for effective implementation.

The iPad is a powerful and engaging learning tool for all students. It is proving particularly powerful and beneficial for students with low incidence disabilities. On the conclusion of this project we will be providing an update on progress of the students, a list of effective apps to meet individual needs, and strategies on how to integrate the iPad into program plans and classroom applications.

Teachers are embracing opportunities to learn and improve student engagement. Let's celebrate the many successes we observe daily in our schools through public education.

Barbara Cochrane is a Program Support Consultant, South Shore Regional School Board.

Barbara Welsford is an Assistive Technology Specialist, South Shore Regional School Board.

Community College Q&A:

The Expanding Role of Practical Nurses

Deborah McVeigh

Nova Scotia Community College programs are constantly being reviewed to meet the demands of both industry and outside agencies. In this article, Cathy Caume (MN, BScN, RN), a faculty member in the Practical Nursing program at the NSCC Marconi Campus, informs us of recent changes in the Practical Nursing program available through the NSCC.

Q: *Please describe what the Practical Nursing program entails?*

A: The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) is currently the sole provider of the Practical Nursing program in Nova Scotia. The Practical Nursing Educational Program is approved by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) in keeping with the LPN Act (2006). The program is a two year diploma program available at eight campuses across the province. As well, there is a part-time blended delivery program available via online learning. This approach is delivered over 3.5 years using a prescriptive timeline for the adult learner. The program is not referred to as a “Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program” because licensure is not obtained until the student completes all of the requirements of the program.

Q: *This program was called the Certified Nursing Assistant Program. When did the program name change and why did this happen?*

A: In 1996, the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) title was changed to Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) to reflect national changes. The scope of practice had evolved to include increased competencies and skills with a more independent role which necessitated the name change from Certified Nursing Assistant to Licensed Practical Nurse. The legislation was changed to reflect these changes during this time as well as the LPNs accountability for their practice. The practical nurse no longer had to work under the direct supervision of a registered nurse.

Q: In the past number of years, many changes have taken place in the Practical Nursing Program. Can you describe some of these changes?

A: In 2001, LPNs were able to practice to their full scope of practice. The Practical Nursing program must meet the Entry Level Competencies set by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia. Our graduates have been educated to meet the Entry Level Competencies; however, employers were not utilizing the LPN in relation to the many competencies and skills taught in the program. For example: Even though medication administration had been taught in the program, employers were not permitting the LPN to provide this aspect of care in acute care settings or hospitals. This discrepancy is referred to as a “scope of employment.” In recent years, this practice has changed across the province and country.

In 2006, the NSCC Practical Nursing Program moved from a three-semester certificate to a four-semester diploma program to meet the national standard. As well, the program has continued to evolve with the addition of competencies. Most recent additions include intravenous initiation, intravenous medication administration, and blood transfusion initiation. With all these changes, students are provided with added theory and clinical practice opportunities within the program.

Q: Many of these changes were required to keep abreast of changes required in nursing for the 21st century. How has your program accommodated these changes?

A: I would say that NSCC has made a huge investment in the learning experiences of practical nursing students. The nursing labs have all been recently updated with the most current equipment that simulates the clinical practice environment. This provides the students with well-equipped labs that have several simulators, including a full-body life-like simulator, which can be programmed for a variety of clinical scenarios. Each campus’

demonstration lab is equipped with the supplies necessary for preparing authentic clinical simulations, including electronic intravenous administration pumps and oxygen saturation monitors. Our labs are state of the art and very relevant to the practical nurse learner. Students participating in clinical experiences at sites with electronic documentation partake in additional computerized documentation classes provided by trained faculty.

Q: What role do faculty members have in incorporating changes in the curriculum?

A: Members of the Practical Nursing faculty are critical to incorporating any changes to the program. The driving forces behind curriculum changes are the CLPNNS Entry Level Competencies. The PN faculty members work closely with CLPNNS to determine the Entry Level Competencies for practicing LPNs in Nova Scotia. The curriculum must reflect currency in practice for LPNs to ensure public safety.

All faculty members participate in regular faculty working group meetings led by our provincial program manager and curriculum consultant. Collaboratively, curriculum is reviewed and discussed and any additions, deletions or changes are incorporated into the curriculum with faculty (considered subject matter experts) input.

Q: How long does it take to actually review the curriculum for a program and to make changes?

A: The review of curriculum is ongoing and faculty members work closely with Kelly Kennedy-Pippy (Curriculum Consultant) to ensure that the Practical Nursing curriculum document meets the policies and practices in relation to curriculum.

Q: Are these curriculum changes approved by an outside body?

A: The Practical Nursing Educational Program, including the curriculum, is approved by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) in keeping with the LPN Act (2006).

The program curriculum is based on the

Entry Level Competencies set by CLPNNS. The program is accredited by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia in its entirety by a review team every five years. From 2007 to 2010, The Practical Nursing Program (BurrIDGE, Lunenburg, Kingstec, Waterfront, Marconi and Pictou Campuses) was reviewed by CLPNNS and received a five- year approval rating.

Q: Computer skills are considered essential skills for some programs. What happens to the older student who might not enter the Community College system with the skills or confidence needed to complete this course outcome?

A: NSCC promotes a learning environment that supports student success. Through the interaction of students and faculty, any area in which students require additional support is often identified early in the program. Tutoring, extra help classes and/or referral to services offered by Student Services are often utilized. Many of our students are mature and out of school for many years with family and job responsibilities. These students have a strong work ethic and commitment to learning which greatly contributes to their success. Often they have completed other programs at NSCC such as the Adult Learning Program or the Academic & Career Connections program to acquire the prerequisites for the PN program.

Q: Charting is not done manually in most nursing establishments. How is electronic documentation taught in the Practical Nurse program?

A: Manual charting/documentation is still practiced in some of our clinical practice sites across the province. At some campuses, faculty members have been educated to teach the Meditech component of the course which covers electronic documentation. At other sites, the campus has developed partnerships with the District Health Authorities to ensure that all students are competent in relation to electronic documentation.

Q: Can you describe the biggest change/s that you have observed in the Practical Nursing program?

A: I have to say the transition from a certificate program to a two-year diploma program has been one of the biggest changes. While most of the campuses have a PN intake every two years, Marconi and Waterfront campuses have an intake every year. That being said, these two campuses can have anywhere from 90 to 100 students in their PN programs at any given time, which can be challenging when arranging clinical placements. The other changes relate to the expanding role of LPNs and the addition of clinical competencies.

Q: Have you had the opportunity to participate in item writing for the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Exam (CPNRE)? How has this experience enhanced your role as a faculty member at NSCC?

A: I have been very fortunate to be invited to several “item writing sessions” for the CPNRE in Ottawa. Practical Nursing faculty members from across the country, as well as practicing LPNs, participate in these sessions. After participating in “preparatory classes” under the direction of Assessment Strategies Incorporated (ASI), the team develops the national exam questions. These questions go through a number of reviews and testing before they appear on the national exam as an official question. This experience has been invaluable, providing an opportunity to discuss the commonalities and differences in LPN scope of practice, educational programs, student clinical experiences, etc, at a national level. Moreover, I have gained skills related to preparing fair and unbiased test questions which is applicable to my practice as a PN faculty member.

All faculty members at NSCC are encouraged to participate in the Item Writing experience. They must submit their application to CLPNNS and then CLPNNS forwards the chosen faculty names to ASI in Ottawa.

Q: What challenges do you experience as a faculty member when a new class of students enters each year?

A: One of our biggest challenges with a new class of students relates to the collection of clinical pre-requisite documents. To ensure the safety of our students and the clients they care for, every student is required to have proof of up-to-date immunizations, Tb testing, criminal background check and child abuse registry, as well as BLS-level C and Standard First Aid. Although the requirements are clearly defined, students often have difficulty obtaining childhood immunization records, arranging health care provider (physician, nurse practitioner, public health) appointments in time to have all results prior to clinical placement. We are constantly working to improve the process and this year all immunizations will be available, at specified times on campus, for students requiring them.

Q: How long is the program?

A: The program is 69 weeks over a two year period, including four 15 week semesters plus a five-week intersession after the first year. The student participates in a four-week internship at the end of the two years. During the internship, the PN student is partnered

with an LPN and follows his/her full-time schedule working all shifts (days, evenings, and nights). This experience allows the student to transition from the role of student to independent practitioner and has been evaluated very highly by students.

Q: What is required of the student to obtain their Licensed Practical Nursing designation and where do they find employment?

A: Following successful completion of the PN diploma program the graduate is eligible to write the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination. The graduate has three attempts to successfully complete the exam within one year after completion of the approved program. After successful completion of the exam, and payment of the licensing fee to the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia, the graduate is considered an LPN and may use the title. Graduates may work in a variety of settings such as acute care (hospital units and clinics), long-term care facilities, home care, VON, public health, physician offices, and school boards.

Deborah McVeigh is a faculty member at Marconi Campus, Nova Scotia Community College.

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New World Disorder

Bill Redden

*“We cannot always build the future for our youth,
but we can build our youth for the future.”*

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

I have always admired the wisdom in President Roosevelt's quote but, unfortunately, the world has changed and continues to change so dramatically that trying to decide what the future may look like so that we can do our jobs as educators is like trying to see images through a thick fog. This presents educators with the tremendous challenge of identifying those essential learnings that will help students to survive and thrive in an ever changing world. This is not an easy task.



To know something about the future we need to understand a bit about where we are today. So what is it we know about our world today? In the global context, we see political unrest and the struggle for democracy, particularly in the Middle East, brought on, to a large extent, by high unemployment levels especially among youth. We see an increasing trend towards more violent weather occurrences resulting in fires, drought, floods, hurricanes and other severe environmental disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. We see all the misery that these bring to humanity, including starvation and displacements. A global liquidity crisis persists with countries like Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, and even the once world dominating economy of the USA, and all are wrestling with overburdening debt loads. The problem in the USA is further complicated by a current dysfunctional political situation resulting in a paralysis of the decision making process. The solutions imposed on countries that need outside financial aid from foreign banks and bodies such as the International Monetary Fund include forcing them to cut government spending and services, thereby

3.8% of the population controls 67% of the wealth

reducing public sector jobs, cutting wages, benefits and pensions, and squeezing unions. In reality, however, many countries – including Canada and the USA – have a debt problem not because they have overspent, but rather because they have cut taxes so that they no longer have the revenue to pay for the many services that improve the quality of life for citizens. We are not redistributing the wealth fairly. For example, in

Canada 3.8% of the population controls 67% of the wealth!

When governments stop providing services for their citizens, individuals are left to fend for themselves. They are also left to the mercy of private enterprises that will capitalize

on these new opportunities that result from the new void. The rich will survive as they always do. The middle classes find it harder and harder to maintain a decent lifestyle with the weakest or most unlucky slipping into poverty. The poor and disadvantaged are pushed further into the vicious cycle of poverty from which few ever escape.

Canada already has a shameful number of people living in poverty, estimated to be in the range of more than three million people. To quote Senator Art Eggleton, who recently chaired a Senate Committee investigating urban poverty: “A recent study estimates that poverty costs this country about \$7.5 billion every year in health care costs alone and between \$8 and \$13 billion in lost productivity.” This is not the way to expand an economy or build a future for our youth.

I do not have the space to try to provide an exhaustive list of the many challenges we face. The picture that I have painted here of the present is pretty bleak. The future need not be. Although we cannot predict the future, fortunately, as human beings we have the capacity to shape the future. As educators we have the responsibility to do just that. We can do it in several ways: by stressing the importance of education to our youth; by advocating for a well funded public education system; by demanding adequate public services; and, perhaps most importantly, by taking a lesson from the late Jack Layton who wrote to us in his last days. He said, “Let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. We will change the world.”

Bill Redden is Executive Director with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.



The Four Cornerstones of Public Education: Plus ça change



David Ritchie



21st Century Classrooms

Twenty some years ago while visiting Paris, I was on my way to do some sight-seeing and passed a dusty store window with a large crystal ball on display.

The price was appealing and I was tempted but decided it would be an unwanted encumbrance to my tourist activities for the day. Unfortunately, when I retraced my steps later that same day with the idea of acquiring the crystal ball, I could not locate the shop. With no magical crystal ball to aid me, I will instead present a future view by examining the four cornerstones of public education: demography, public expectation, the culture and the client.

Demography

It does not take a crystal ball to be able make some really obvious predictions about the population distribution in Nova Scotia. The increased urbanization pattern will continue. As a result, we can expect the overall rural population to diminish and the ratio of old to young will continue to dramatically diverge with the mean age of the rural population increasing. As the population ages and the younger population diminishes in the rural setting, the school population will continue to decline. This pattern has been evident for many years and the expectation is that it will continue unless there are some very dramatic interventions. Serious planning to cope in effective ways with these decreases and steadily increasing demands on the school system, both for the urban setting and the rural setting, is a necessity. There needs to be adjustments and solutions and these will impact dramatically on all the current institutions as we know them – perhaps most dramatically in the school system.

If immigration is used to increase the population of our rural settings then there must be significant changes in the schools of the twenty-first century. Many large Canadian cities are scrambling to accommodate the growth of immigration in public schools. This has meant the alteration of curriculum, the adjustment of multicultural integration and dramatic developments in English or French as second language programs. Many Nova Scotia high schools have already had a little taste of this adjustment with the influx of exchange students. The financial advantages of foreign exchange students will not,

however, be matched by an immigrant tide if that should become the rural policy practice. The benefits of this increase in rural population will be satisfying to the way services can be delivered in shrinking schools and communities. I would be shocked if these possibilities were not under consideration at this very moment. Schools and teacher education will have to change but at least there will be schools in rural communities *to* change. As well, the normal economies of scale will be enjoyed with the enlarged population and will have similar beneficial results for other services in the communities.

Public Expectation

Expectations are always changing. Currently there are expectations that every student should graduate from high school. The belief exists that all students should move through the school system regardless of their acquisition of skills and intellectual accomplishments without repeating grades until they reach high school where achievement is credit-based. A quick glance at the level of numeric grades will show a real inflation. If this trend continues all students will be receiving nineties. Current reporting practices are disturbing the distribution of comments and evaluations to avoid the negative and to augment the positive. These changes have been a direct result of changes in child-rearing. Education practices that encourage the development of positive self-concept (sometimes without concrete achievement as a foundation) are the new expectation. It is easier to give everyone a trophy for having been in attendance and avoid the embarrassment of having the very best



performance receive a single trophy. Until the powers that be and the public changes the expectation, as teachers we will comply knowing full well a 50 or a 90 does not have relative performance accuracy. We comply knowing full well that any subsequent challenges may be insurmountable because the students may not be ready. The luxury of repeated grades to improve the students in need of additional time is not being supported. Our role as public school teachers is to follow regulations and work as best we can to provide students with the best possible education given the restrictions that are imposed. A secondary role is to work in those areas, when and where we are allowed, in order to help to change the regulations to meet the needs of our students.

The Culture

We live in a culture which supports indulgence. These indulgences may not be in our best interests. The image of the student who is only willing to work to their schedule which is over-saturated with social time, recreational screen time, and down time is all too common. Our culture has created this by deluding children into believing that they are a princess, a prince or a hero as a simple right of being. I know all children are special but the reality for Nova Scotian children is that being a princess, a prince or a hero requires hard work, attention to detail, responsibility and self-sacrifice. We should not get the tiara, the gold star, the trophy or medal for just showing up. I am not sure how we have failed to encourage the above mentioned requirements. This is our failure as a culture, not theirs; they are a product of our socialization and parenting practices. Cultures change and given the dramatic oscillations in the current world economy we may be required to change our cultural mores if we expect to survive in our current status in the evolving world. There is a restricted need for ill-prepared princesses, princes and heroes. If we want our students to be able to succeed and adapt we must pro-

vide them with the culture that will encourage and support adaptation and success. This means handing out tiaras, gold stars, trophies and medals for real achievement based on the individual achievements of the students.

The Client


The student is our client. While we may wish the quality or quantity of students were different and until we can encourage qualitative or quantitative changes, we are required to teach the students in front of us. We know certain facts. We know that for the first time ever medical predictions are showing that because of diet, lifestyle and sedentary practice, our current children will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents' generation. We know that our students spend huge amounts of time screen-centered and are being influenced by a barrage of unhealthy advertisements that are leading them in directions that are not in their best interests. We know current brain research is breaking new trails in allowing us to provide each and every one of them with a map to personal success. We need to charge the barricades and supply them with the information, skills and practices for successful living.

Many years ago, on a history exam at Dalhousie University, I was faced with the quotation, "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." From both a historical and a futuristic point of view it captures the authenticity of our existence. Change is constant and we are constantly facing the same problems from different points of view. There has always been criticism, but the best course is to define the best pathway for our particular time. We owe it to ourselves and to our students to face the changes with courage and intelligence. Now, if only I could find my way back to that side street in Paris and the shop that sold crystal balls.

**David Ritchie is a visual arts teacher
at Avon View School, Annapolis Valley
Regional School Board.**

Engaging Technology to Reduce Absenteeism

Allister Wadden



What has using technology in the classroom done for both my students and me? Using technology in my classroom has made my job more efficient and more enjoyable. This has helped my students achieve better results and deeper learning. I have also noticed an unexpected benefit: my students tend to miss fewer days.

I should start by describing the technology I use in my classroom. My school (Annapolis West Education Centre) and community have made a huge commitment to integrating technology into all classrooms. I have a SMARTboard, a data projector, a class set of Texas Instruments (TI) Nspire CAS graphing calculators, and access to the Internet. I regularly use such software as Geometer's Sketchpad, Autograph, TI Nspire Navigator, SMART Notebook 10, and Excel. By having Internet access, I can also access great websites such as <http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html>. This particular site offers a variety of interactive activities designed to further enrich a student's grasp of a concept. This technology and software has allowed my students to deepen their learning of the concepts learned in my courses.

Today's students are quite savvy in the use of technology. Most have a cell phone and not **just** a cell phone but a Blackberry or an iPhone. Watch them as they move from class to class, texting each other while somehow not walking into one another. They get so excited when they see a new piece of technology that

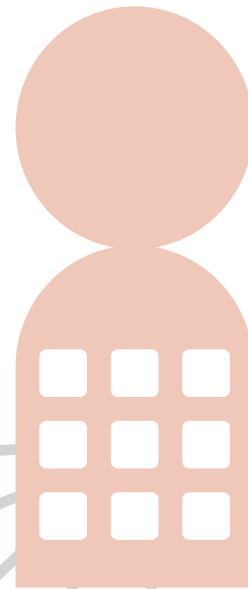
they can use in a class. I have students declare every year that they want a SMARTboard in their bedroom after using mine. They are unafraid to test the boundaries of any software.

I use the TI Nspire CAS graphing calculator in all of my classes. The first question the students want answered is, "Will it connect to the Internet or is it wireless?" They also want to know if they can communicate with each other using one. I love their enthusiasm when I unleash the Navigator system on them. This piece of software allows me to wirelessly send activities to the handheld graphing calculator. Using Navigator, I can observe what each student is doing on the calculator. By sending the feed through the data projector, the students can not only see their calculator, but all the other calculators as well. I have the option of showing or not showing their names but invariably they demand that the names be viewable. We can share data with each other, making it real for them. This technology allows me to be able to save valuable teaching time and focus on keeping students engaged in the math class.

By designing activities related to the concept of the day, or acquiring a pre-made related activity allows me to get the class started quickly. While the students work on the activity, I can complete tasks (or chores!) such as collecting and/or returning assignments, taking attendance, or providing support to those students having difficulties with a particular concept. These activities might review



My challenge is to use the technology as a tool for engaging my students in learning, not just entertainment.



concepts from yesterday's class, complete an anchor or activity to introduce a new concept, or review skills that will be needed in investigating this new concept.

This philosophy addresses an issue with the use of technology in a class. My challenge is to use the technology as a tool for engaging my students in learning, not just entertainment. This tool is used, as I stated earlier, to enhance student learning, like other instruments used in the classroom. While showing my students the various features the technology provides, I try to demonstrate how the technology will help them master the skills needed for the course.

Here is an example. Using the TI Nspire CAS handheld graphing calculator, I can have the students create a line, a parallel line to the first line, and then create a line that cuts across both lines called a transversal. I can then have my students measure the various angles created by these three lines and identify certain relationships. They should identify that the two angles opposite each other measure the same, two angles joined to form a straight line should total to 180° , or that two angles in the same position on both parallel lines have the same measurement.

I could have drawn this diagram on the board, measured the angles for my students, and then had the students come up with relationships. This would be me doing all of the work, not the students. By having the students create the diagram and measure

the angles, the concepts are solidified in their minds. They enjoy these activities and students often find the integration of technology is more engaging (and fun!).

My students want to know what technology will be used in class. Attendance has improved significantly since the school integrated the technology in my classroom. I rarely have students missing significant time from my classes. I even notice that all of my students arrive on time and rarely encounter any stragglers. As I stated at the beginning, their attendance performance has improved and I believe that part of the reason is their access to technology. Traditional low attendance days such as just before Christmas, just before exams, and just before March Break are now used to reinforce a concept or introduce one that will be investigated after the break. Another observation is that it is not just the keen, successful students who attend those days but also those who struggle with math. I take time to have them trust that the use of technology will enhance their learning and push them to succeed.

Allister Wadden is a teacher at Annapolis West Education Centre, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.



Connecting School Counsellors:

An Online Professional Learning Community

Teri Cochrane

The Nova Scotia School Counsellors Association (NSSCA) is embarking on an exciting project to make its role as liaison and resource for school counsellors across the province more effective. We are in the process of developing an online Moodle website that will connect school counsellors to current information, resources and best practices taking place in our schools.

Through newsletters, communiqués and its annual October conference, the NSSCA has served school counsellors across the province for many years. These initiatives are intended to provide members with opportunities to connect with their colleagues across the province by engaging in professional development, sharing resources and voicing concerns.

Many educators have experienced the benefits of being part of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). In schools where teachers meet regularly as part of a grade level or curriculum department, the information sharing and collaboration enhance our work and ultimately benefit our students.

The NSSCA's vision is to create a virtual PLC by maintaining an interactive Moodle site where counsellors can "meet" to access information, pose questions and potentially take part in "live chats." School counsellors who wish to participate will be given access to the site. The site will be protected and school counsellors who have permission will have unlimited access. The more frequently the site is accessed and developed, the more useful it will become. For example, we will be asking members to share one program, resource or initiative that they would recommend to

other school counsellors. From this portal alone members will gain a variety of strategies that could prove timely in their own practice.

The development of a Moodle site has been one of the primary goals of this year's executive since it took office last October. Through discussions at the executive table, conversations with and support from the NSTU Professional Association Liaison Officers and the Department of Education, the executive moved forward in creating an interactive communication platform available to school counsellors from primary to grade 12 throughout the province. In May of this year (2011), Sue Taylor-Foley, Technology Consultant for the Department of Education, met with Executive members. Under her guidance, the members learned the features of a Moodle site that could consist of resources, tips, websites and opportunities to "chat" with school counsellors. While we were far from being ready to launch the site, Sue showed us a variety of ways school counsellors could connect with their colleagues. In short, we are currently well on our way to providing an online province-wide Professional Learning Community. Rola Abi-Hanna, Guidance Consultant with the Department of Education, is supporting further professional development for executive



members Marc Breaugh and Wade Van Zinck in their roles as Moodle managers.

There are many reasons to enhance the NSSCA's role as liaison with school counsellors in our schools. We can easily feel overwhelmed by the daily demands of our work and can feel isolated in situations where information sharing is limited due to confidentiality and the specialized services we offer. We envision that having a dedicated site to provide resources and wisdom will prove a valuable tool to school counsellors.

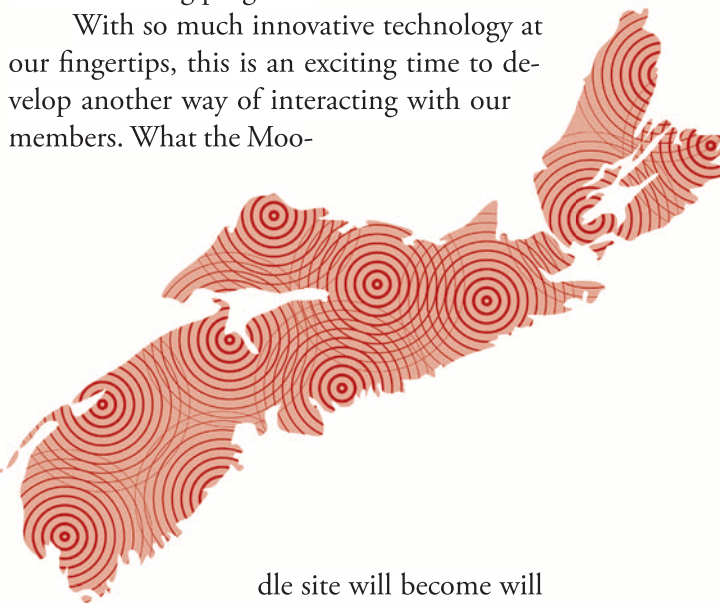
In the past, many school boards provided opportunities for their school counsellors to meet several times during the year. These meetings provided valuable opportunities for sharing resources, receiving professional development and consulting on common concerns. As school board funding has been reduced so have the opportunities for school counsellors to meet locally on a regular basis. While not a replacement for face to face interaction, an online Professional Learning Community could provide an alternative way of maintaining ties with our colleagues.

The Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program (CGCP) provides a framework for developing a school's guidance program. Individual schools are tasked with developing specific programs and services to meet the identified needs of that school. While there may be areas of concern that are unique to a school, many of the resources school counsellors find beneficial will fit the needs of other schools dealing with a similar topic or issue. When developing activities designed to meet the social, emotional, educational and career goals of the CGCP, school counsellors need to be knowledgeable of best practices and current research, and engage in professional development through reading and attending in-services and workshops. School counsellors do not have time to "reinvent the wheel." Through the Moodle site we will have opportunities to share programs that have been implemented effectively, to

ask questions about issues around the myriad of concerns presented by students and other members of the school community, and to recommend resources that are relevant to those concerns.

A Moodle site where counsellors at elementary, middle and senior levels can engage in sharing information will be invaluable to new as well as more seasoned school counsellors. We can take advantage of the wealth of expertise and experience that exists among our members to enhance our own guidance and counselling programs.

With so much innovative technology at our fingertips, this is an exciting time to develop another way of interacting with our members. What the Moo-



dle site will become will largely depend on its users.

We encourage school counsellors to become active participants on the site and visit it regularly. To this end, we will showcase the Moodle site at this year's annual October conference taking place at South Queens Senior High School in Liverpool. The NSSCA Executive looks forward to supporting a network that will improve connections with our colleagues and strengthen the work we do in our schools.

Teri Cochrane is a Guidance Counsellor at New Ross Consolidated and Chester Area Middle School, South Shore Regional School Board. She is the current president of the NSSCA.



Citizenship and Community Service – the Nova Scotian Way

Terry Doucette

Those of us who participated in Brownies or Cubs will remember with some fondness our quest for pins and badges. We will remember the sense of belonging, of being part of a team and of growing self-confidence, the friendships, the games, and the general excitement of participation.

Little did we suspect at the time that such organizations were contributing in a very significant way to our sense of nationalism, patriotism, community service, and citizenship.

One needs only to recall the promise and motto of Cubs and Brownies for confirmation:

Cubs: *I promise to do my best
To do my duty to God
And to my country
And to help other people.*

Brownies: *I promise to do my best
To be true to myself,
my beliefs and Canada.
I will take action for a better world.*

Reflection on our commitments to self, to others and to our country should amplify our notions of citizenship and community service. With this in mind, it is time to reflect on where we are today.

The Department of Education mandates a list of six Essential Graduation Learn-

ings. Included in the list are aesthetic expression, citizenship, communication, personal development, problem solving, and technological competency. As teachers, we recognize these essential learning outcomes to be the collective responsibility of the education process.

The multiple objectives of citizenship focus on teaching students the skill set necessary to become effective participants in their communities. Activities related to the objectives and goals lead students to develop:

- an understanding of what it means to be Canadian
- an understanding of human rights
- an understanding of Canadian law
- an understanding of individual differences
- an understanding of multiculturalism
- an understanding of the sustainability of our environment
- an understanding of global awareness
- an understanding of our economy
- a commitment to being a valued contribu-





*I promise to do my best
To be true to myself,
my beliefs and Canada.
I will take action
for a better world.*

tor to the positive improvement of our communities

Considering the objectives, we are left to ponder the level to which our goals are being met. The news is not great. We may be in serious trouble if we are unable to increase a commitment to community service for the 21st century.

Organizations central to our communities are shrinking in size and in some cases are becoming extinct. Volunteer fire departments and search and rescue groups are constantly seeking members. Our community service clubs, such as Kinsmen, Lions and Kiwanis, are decreasing in numbers. New members are scarce, leaving service clubs wondering, "Who is going to fill the void?"

Ladies auxiliaries so necessary to the churches and other institutions are reduced in numbers and the volunteers are aging. Our hospital auxiliaries are facing the same challenges. How are we going to replenish and re-fuel commitment to community service?

Numbers of community breakfasts and community suppers are decreasing. What will become of our food banks, soup kitchens, parades, community festivals, and Legions

without local commitment to volunteerism and community service?

The challenge for us as educators is to strategize on how we can best educate and motivate our students to commit to community service. They, in turn, will become better citizens.

As we focus a discussion on community service, it is important to recognize that many graduation scholarships and bursaries feature community service as part of the criteria for consideration. Students in all schools have opportunities to participate in numerous clubs and committees thanks to the efforts of our teachers.

While schools generally support a large variety of community minded clubs, several schools in Nova Scotia feature KEY Clubs. Liverpool Regional High School's KEY Club was introduced in 2002. The impact of this club was immediate. The club has grown exponentially and has seen positive results as students take the initiative in supporting community improvement.

KEY Club (Kiwanis Educating Youth) meets weekly with representatives of Kiwanis and two staff advisors. Club members have

*I promise to do my best
To do my duty to God
And to my country
And to help
other people.*





ranged from an initial 15 to a peak of 58 students. Their meetings focus on developing leadership skills, on being an effective volunteer, and on strategies and activities to better serve our community.

Some of our KEY Club community service projects include:

- Adopt a Highway (Exit 19 of Highway 103)
- Queens Manor Bingos
- Crime Prevention Breakfasts
- Community Suppers
- CanSkate Volunteers
- Privateer Craft Show Volunteers
- Community Craft Shows
- Kiwanis Christmas Concert Volunteers
- Liverpool International Theatre Festivals
- Luncheon Volunteers

- Collecting for Causes (Heart & Stroke and March of Dimes)

Students who become involved with the club experience a very positive sense of giving back to their community and the joy that comes from helping others. The networking between retired business and community leaders and our students is amazing to witness. The community and parent response to this program has been wonderfully positive.

Students who have participated in three years of KEY Club graduate with many noted improvements. Growth is noted in communication skills, organizational skills, self-confidence, social skills, networking skills, public speaking skills, time management skills, leadership skills, and awareness of the needs of others.





Our 2011-12 school year will commence with an additional community service initiative. Our Options and Opportunities and Co-op teachers recently presented at a conference on the topic of community service, focusing on how students can make a difference. As a result, four hundred *Make A Difference* wrist bands have been ordered for our students. The challenge for each student is to think of how they can make a positive difference in our community by giving something back.

The student must pick two community locations and volunteer a minimum of 10 hours in each place. Once the community service is completed the student gets to wear the multicoloured band with the bold words *Make a Difference*.

Each student has a second band to give to the receiver of the service. The receiver is then encouraged to pay it forward and commit to a service for a person or another organization in the community.

In addition to the personal satisfaction of giving, the student volunteer receives an appreciation letter from the receiver to add to their personal portfolio.

Citizenship equates to membership in a community and may be measured by our contributions to our community. If you are looking for prime examples of community service leaders look no further than our teachers.

Atlantic Canadians are noted for their spirit of generosity and their volunteering commitments. Community service and volunteering are critical components of our culture. It is recognized by outsiders and is a part of what makes us special. The value of responsible citizenship and the benefits that go with

it should begin at a young age and continue through life.

Nova Scotian teachers continue to lead by example through their ongoing dedication to extracurricular activities. At our school, 63 clubs, committees and athletic teams have teacher advisors. I am convinced that the vast majority of our province's schools have staff members who serve as role models for community involvement.

While we educators are not fully responsible for teaching citizenship and community service, we are certainly in a power position to champion the cause. We must recognize the importance of these Essential Graduation Learning outcomes and instill in our students the desire to make contributions to our communities.

The reward for our efforts will be the knowledge that we are making a positive contribution to our students and to our communities. We will also celebrate in the maintenance of what makes our communities and province so strong: community service.

Citizenship and community service are critical components of Nova Scotian culture. Let's protect and promote its continuing importance.

Terry Doucette is principal at Liverpool Regional High School, South Shore Regional School Board.

*Citizenship
equates to
membership in
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and may be
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contributions
to our
community.*



Biodiversity: What does it matter? Explore it with a CWF opportunity!

Tracy Webb

The past few years have witnessed the implementation of many protective strategies for the environment, from water to land to biodiversity and individual species – including humans as one of those potentially endangered species. Programs and opportunities to become more aware and educated about environmental concerns and issues are readily accessible, from the global context of the United Nations initiatives to more local issues, such as the controversial rezoning of viable farmland in Nova Scotia. While the recent ruling to maintain and protect Nova Scotia farmland is applauded by many, there are still many concerns about sustainability issues. For example, at least 40 per cent of the world's economy and 80 per cent of the needs of the poor are derived from biological resources according to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity. Underlying all of these issues is the keystone that supports the delicate and profound inter-relationships of sustaining life: biodiversity.

The United Nations defines biodiversity as *“the variety of life, as expressed through genes, species and ecosystems...”* This diversity of life ultimately provides us with the air, water, food and other resources (such as fuel and shelter) that we require. The immense economic capital we draw from living resources is astounding – from fisheries, forestry and farming to other resources such as mining and oil. Our intake, however, is not sustainable at the present rates of consumption and our “ecological footprint” is bearing heavily on other species. The continued loss of species is very costly overall as organisms lose the ability to adapt to new conditions, genetic diversity is compromised and the gene pool is weakened; the complex, inter-connected value of each species is put at risk. Becoming aware of the significance of biodiversity is a fundamental first step on the road to ecological health.

We are approaching the end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2014), wherein the UN promotes and emphasizes “that education is an indispensable element for achieving sustainable development.” Teachers (can) play an integral role in helping students become *bio-*

philes rather than *biophobic*, especially in the elementary grades. Children are particularly fascinated with nature at this age, and it is an opportunity to inculcate an appreciation of and a sense of stewardship for the natural world. On May 22nd this spring (2011), the Decade of Biodiversity (2011 – 2020) was globally launched in Tokyo to support the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Goals. One of these goals is sustaining biodiversity and the environment, and new educational resources will soon be available. Educators are more versatile when they have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of conservation and biodiversity in order to maximize “teachable moments” and other learning opportunities.

To assist teachers and other like-minded professionals in this endeavour, the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) has developed the Canadian Wildlife Federation Learning Institute (CWFLI) to promote learning through innovative technologies, combined with unique experiences and opportunities to explore in the natural environment: “By spreading knowledge of human impacts on the environment, developing and delivering educational programs, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources...CWF encour-

ages a future in which Canadians can live in harmony with nature.”

The Learning Institute is now beginning its third year after two very successful programs, the first held in Nova Scotia and the second in Quebec. In 2009 the initial program was organized at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia and was led by Dr. Leo Elshoff and other members of the CWF. Participants from across Canada spent over a week together discovering the beauty and culture of western Nova Scotia while exploring biodiversity issues surrounding species at risk, forest management and fragile coastal ecosystems. The group traveled throughout Nova Scotia’s Annapolis Valley, observing riparian and agricultural systems and practices, examining tidal mud flats, relaxing at the winery in Grand Pré, and finding fossils at Blue Beach.

Participants also spent time exploring the UNESCO Southwest Bioreserve, which, according to the UNESCO description, “Represents the natural region of southwestern Nova Scotia. This encompasses the five counties: Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Digby and Annapolis. The biosphere reserve comprises major landscapes of the province, which exist in a near-pristine condition with intact ecosystem structure, processes and functions. Located in the boreal needleleaf forest biogeographical region, it includes rolling plains, river plains, glacial plains, hills, drumlins and coastal cliffs. As a result of its unique southerly position in the Maritimes, the region contains significant disjunctive populations of Atlantic coastal Plain plant species, Blandings turtle (*Emydoidea blandingi*), ribbon snake (*Thamnophis sauritus*) and southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*).” Paddling around Nova Scotia’s Kejimikujik National Park to seek out the Blandings turtle and other endangered species, hiking out to the Kejimikujik Seaside Adjunct, and learning of the work done by volunteers at the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute were highlights of exploring the UNESCO Southwest Bioreserve. Throughout the week, participants were given instruction in various mediums of technology so that they could record and document what they were experiencing and make a video at the end of the institute for future use in classrooms. The final evening celebrated the unique experiences while feasting on Nova Scotia’s prime arthropod – the lobster!

This year (2011) the Learning Institute went

north. From July 23rd to 31st participants visited Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, and Pangnirtung, often referred to as the Switzerland of the Arctic. Starting at the Nunavut Arctic College, the Institute will begin with a program overview and introduction to technologies. Inuit traditional knowledge was an important part of the experience and some discussion was based on preliminary reading and work done by participants prior to heading north. There were presentations by the Nunavut Research Institute and Nunavut Arctic College, visits to the Unikaarvik Visitor Centre to learn about local attractions (Katannilik, Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park and Qaummaarviit Territorial Parks) and introduction to the ecological features of the Iqaluit area. Later the group flew to Pangnirtung to meet with Parks Canada staff and set up a tent base camp near the Pangnirtung Fjord and learn about the local wildlife such as caribou, polar bears, seals, and beluga whales. Additionally, members of the Nunavut Division of Fisheries and Sealing were doing field research in Cumberland Sound (Qikiqtaaluk region), providing an opportunity to learn about a unique northern fishery. It specializes in the harvesting, processing, and marketing of Greenland halibut and arctic char and is expanding to turbot, Greenland shark, Icelandic sea scallops, and Northern shrimp.

More details of the CWFLI can be found on their website. Information about the 2012 Institute should be available soon.

When we experience this type of opportunity firsthand we can bring the understanding and knowledge into our classrooms more effectively. We can help to inspire a greater sense of wonder, curiosity and compassion in our students. We can better prepare them with the awareness, knowledge and critical thinking skills that are crucial for the youth of this 21st century. Regardless of the subject matter, education for sustainable development (ESD) is an essential lens through which the world can be viewed, from the innovative farmer, to the fisheries up north, to protecting biodiversity for our future. Many ESD organizations have curriculum-linked resources across K-12 subjects to support teachers and the Canadian Wildlife Federation is one in particular that takes you on a real journey to “walk the talk.”

Tracy Webb is a teacher at Horton High School, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.

Rethinking citizenship

Dr. Steven Van Zoost

So there I was, rethinking citizenship in The Shire (the nickname of my classroom). It was a warm day in May when Mrs. Matheson, a teacher from a nearby elementary school, brought her grade 5/6 class to meet with my grade 12 students and I admit—it was a lot for one classroom. Certainly, there were many people in The Shire and there were many intriguing conversations. The grade 5/6 class had been reading chapters from the grade 12 students' book *realfriends: stop cliquing, start connecting*, published earlier in the spring of 2011, and their teacher was interested in educating her class about cyberbullying. She contacted me to ask about connecting our two classes. We connected in The Shire by hosting a three-hour workshop about digital citizenship.

Let me tell you—it was fun. It was fun to plan a student workshop with a teacher from another school and grade level. It was fun to facilitate conversations among our multi-aged students. It was fun to learn from their ideas about digital citizenship. Let me provide you with a description of the workshop and samples of what students were able to collectively think about and produce in The Shire that day.

First, students individually recorded what they considered characteristics of good citizens. They read descriptions of this year's student recipients of the Premier's Power of Positive Change Award for inspiration. Then they met in triads (two elementary students with one high school student) to share their ideas and choose three common characteristics. Typically, students chose words such as "involved," "helpful," "caring," or "thoughtful" to describe a good citizen. Together, they thought about the following questions and the Grade 12 students recorded their group's responses:

- What does a person do to demonstrate these characteristics in the "real" world?
- What does a person do to demonstrate these characteristics in a digital world?
- What does a person do to undermine these characteristics in a digital world?
- What guidelines should be in place to encourage positive digital citizenship?

During lunch, and in a "fish-bowl" scenario, Mrs. Matheson and I modeled how to categorize the many guidelines that the students had created in their triad groups. Our goal was to produce five guide-

lines for digital citizenship that were written not by adult policy-makers, but by the multi-aged students in our classrooms. After all, problems are best solved by those who own them. I believe that young people need to learn and practice how they can contribute to their communities and the wider world as current citizens. Involving students in creating these guidelines was one way that young people could see how their perspectives can inform social expectations.

By the end of the working lunch, our workshop had produced five student-created guidelines for digital citizenship:

- Students should use technology to protect their online security.
- Students should represent themselves using positive values and beliefs.
- Students should be mindful of others in their online behaviour.
- Students should use technology to create and sustain community.
- Students should respect the privacy and property of others.

After lunch, the students reorganized into new groups and worked through a series of case studies that they co-created. Each group described a scenario that related to a specific guideline. For example, one scenario went as follows: "Jack logs into Facebook. As he is checking his newsfeed, he sees his name mentioned on Sean's status. Sean was calling-out Jack by saying he had a huge ego and was full of himself." The scenarios were passed to other groups who would offer multiple ways of responding to the situation. The

scenarios were returned to the writers who chose what they considered to be the best response.

I'm leaving parts out, you know. I did not mention how I primed my grade 12 class for working with younger students. How one of my colleagues, a guidance counsellor, came and observed the workshop to monitor students' levels of comfort in this unfamiliar setting and combination of students. How technology consultants from my school board and the Department of Education came to observe the workshop. How the students recorded themselves on video, responding to a series of questions such as, "Why is digital citizenship important?" How our classes later exchanged thank you cards. How I am still reflecting on our pedagogical practices from the notes I made about this collaborative experience. How digital citizenship seemed to be a topic that put students of different ages and interests "on common ground."

At the end of the workshop, the students completed an individual reflection that included two questions that sought advice for others beyond The Shire.

What should other students in Nova Scotia know about digital citizenship?

- They should know about how to go online and not hurt people's feelings. They should also know about digital citizenship guidelines. – grade 5/6 student
- They should know to treat people the way you want to be treated. – grade 5/6 student
- That citizenship is about more than protecting your information; it is about making the world a healthier, more positive place. – grade 12 student

What suggestions do you have for teachers to promote digital citizenship?

- I think they should talk about it in class. – grade 5/6 student
- Explain that it does not take long for simple things to turn into bad rumors online. – grade 5/6 student
- Technology is an unavoidable part of the lives of younger children. All of

the grade 5/6 students I spoke to knew more about the digital world than I did. Teachers should promote things for students to help take social action and encourage online positivism and kindness. Students should make more face-to-face connections and then they will find that their online personality will become healthier. – grade 12 student

It is no secret that concerns about cyberbullying are heightened for many people in Nova Scotia. In fact, the Department of Education plans to release a report on cyberbullying later this fall. My concern is broader than cyberbullying. How can we, as educators, foster digital citizenship that is not only about following school rules, but about a greater awareness of consequences and opportunities in a digital world? How can we help students understand the context of online behavior and create positive uses for digital participation? Over the past year, we have witnessed how social media sites have allowed the world to respond to a tsunami in Japan, an earthquake in New Zealand, and political instability in Libya. We've also witnessed "flashrobs" in England and other group crimes that have been initiated in a digital world. Perhaps now, more than ever, students need to learn how words can be used for good or for bad, in person or more permanently e-fossilized in a digital world. Perhaps now, more than ever, students need to learn about how new guidelines for citizenship will be expected of them to participate in worlds that are beyond The Shire—guidelines for digital citizenship.

Our goal was to produce five guidelines for digital citizenship that were written not by adult policy-makers, but by the multi-aged students in our classrooms.

Dr. Steven Van Zoost is a teacher at Avon View High School, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.



Five years have passed into history since I was called upon to write my Back Page thoughts to reflect on twenty years of Aviso's publication. Now, five years later, it is my pleasure to mount my loyal horse and present my twenty-fifth anniversary gift to Aviso. It is also a perfect time to offer my golden congratulations for sister publication *The Teacher* as it marks its 50th anniversary as the NSTU's longest running and most widely distributed publication.

These two publications have served as models to teacher organizations nationally and internationally through the NSTU's membership in Education International (EI). Their professional production and informative articles reflect on NSTU members and their positive contributions. The direct input of NSTU educators province-wide who share their ideas and suggestions based on everyday direct contact with

their students is invaluable. I have been fortunate to be directly involved with many professional and support staff at the NSTU, as well as with many teachers across this province. I encourage all of you to take a bow for your continued cooperation in the past, in the present and in the years to come. The high level of our educational offerings in Nova Scotia is in no small measure due to your starring role in these two sister

publications and in the sharing of your many positive ideas with your fellow teachers.

This fall seems to be driving home the point that we as humans seem to have a need to recall events of the past – be they historical or personal in nature. As I write these lines I'm not yet over the blanket coverage in the media of the 10th anniversary of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in New York. The majority of Canadians who have access to a TV or to a radio are well aware that it's the 75th anniversary of the CBC. We also mark the passage of time with more joyful memories of important events that touch us deeply – wedding anniversaries come to mind, be they a 40th for Mary and I in June, a 45th for good fiends Agnes and Tom Gaskell in August, or a 60th for my sister Ollie and her husband Joe in September.

Each of us can come up with our own list of memorable times in our lives. Some will be happy, some will be sad. ECCLESIASTES (3:1-8) comes to mind:

*To everything there is a season, and a time for
Every purpose under the heaven.*

A time to be born, and time to die;

*A time to plant, a time to pluck up that which
is planted;*

A time to weep, a time to laugh;

A time to mourn and a time to dance;

A time to get, and a time to lose;

A time to keep, and a time to cast away.

Of course, while looking to the past may be fine, other readers have their eyes focused on the future.

My first Back Page article appeared in Aviso's first issue, to be followed in the same back page location in each and every subsequent Aviso publication for the past twenty-five years. I take great pride in making that statement as I'm the only person who can truthfully make it. I owe a great debt of gratitude to many who made the request for me to continue producing this labour of love. Yearly support of the publication from delegates at the NSTU Annual General Meeting, the Executive Members province-wide, the Advisory Board members over these many

years, and NSTU's professional and support staff members (with a special thanks to Lillian Pottie for service of top quality and patience shown to me and my handwritten words). The advice of the editors with whom I worked, along with their suggestions and positive feedback were and continue to be much appreciated.

These twenty-five years have also been positively endorsed by former executive directors of the NSTU starting with L. Emmet Currie, and followed by Ronald Morrison, Jim MacKay, Earle Tubrett, Wayne Noseworthy and Bill Redden. The appreciation they showed for my literary efforts indeed made my job a joy and not a chore.

Aviso's twenty-five years arose from Provincial Executive deliberations on the importance of having a professional magazine. These led to motions for delegates to discuss and vote on during the Annual General Meeting. The NSTU President during this time was the late Brian McCabe. The President who saw this work carried through was Karen Willis Duerden. Succeeding her as President of the NSTU were Russell MacDonald, John MacDonald, Donnie MacIntyre, Brian Forbes, Mary-Lou Donnelly and Alexis Allen. In their travels across the province speaking and listening to teachers they saw the high positive regard that these public school and community college educators held for Aviso. The fact that a total of 56 national Golden Leaf Awards have been awarded to Aviso since 1994 (presented by the Canadian Educational Press Association) speaks volumes to the respect of teachers' organizations nationwide for the professional presentation of the wide range of articles which are the hallmark of each Aviso issue.

It has stayed true to its founding purpose – to produce a venue for the distribution of the very best of those practices and principles of successful classroom teaching. Ideas are shared by present public school and community college teachers, showcasing their many successes with their fellow teachers across the province and across the

country. Aviso continues today to fulfil the promise and hope of its very first issue. In 1986 teaching was a vocation – a profession. It remains so today in 2011. As teachers we continue to learn, to seek out new ideas and new methods to make what we do on a daily basis ever more useful and understandable for our students. It is this combination of searching and sharing which has remained a constant over the years.

The individual make up of our profession has changed greatly in the quarter century since Aviso's first appearance. Every year

we see hundreds leaving the system by way of retirement. To counter this loss, we have new teachers beginning their teaching careers. This happens each year. Our readership is in a constant state of flux.

The success of Aviso goes back to its founding principles – teaching is a profession, teachers are professionals. Teachers constantly seek and adopt ideas and positive practices from their fellow teachers. The members of a true profession are willing to share their abilities and knowledge with others in that profession. These building blocks have built a strong foundation upon which

Aviso continues to stand.

Readers of Aviso – some for as long as twenty-five years, others for the first time with this issue, and everyone in between – know the truth of these statements. The range of topics has changed greatly over these years. Information on Aviso is easily obtained from a visit to the NSTU website (www.nstu.ca).

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed articles to Aviso for these many years. I, along with many of your fellow teacher readers, have learned much as a result of your willing-

ness to share your knowledge and talents in the classroom and beyond. Your articles have provided me with insight and an appreciation for the excellence of the teaching being done at all grade levels. I have talked to many of your readers who echo this praise for your approach, your commitment to learning, and your overriding respect for your students, all of which shine through in your respective contributions.

Those of us who take pen in hand (or whatever method gets words onto paper) to submit an Aviso article thrive on the responses that our words may generate. I always look forward to my invitation as a Past President of the NSTU to write for Aviso; it gives me an opportunity to meet old friends and make a few new one as well. I'm pleased to report that many in the latter group open their conversation with a reference to Aviso and my contribution to it. Some are positive in their views; others are a tad on the critical side which is their right. Many gained my favour with the suggestion that I should write a book. These teachers I liked the best! Thank you to all. It's nice to know you read the article, whatever your view of its content. It is contacts such as these that reassure me that I made the correct answer to a request I received from a member of the NSTU professional staff twenty-five years ago; he called to see if I would write an article for inclusion in the soon to be published professional magazine Aviso. He further informed me the topic was my choice, in my own style, with the caveat that it was to be a professional magazine written by and for teachers. I agreed to what I thought was to be a one time request. It has turned out that I have received a phone call from the editor of Aviso to write a similar article for every issue for twenty-five years. It is one of the highlights of my long and varied career that the phone calls kept coming before each and every issue of Aviso. Thank you to all involved in those prepublication decisions.

Greg O'Keefe is a retired teacher and former President of the NSTU.

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