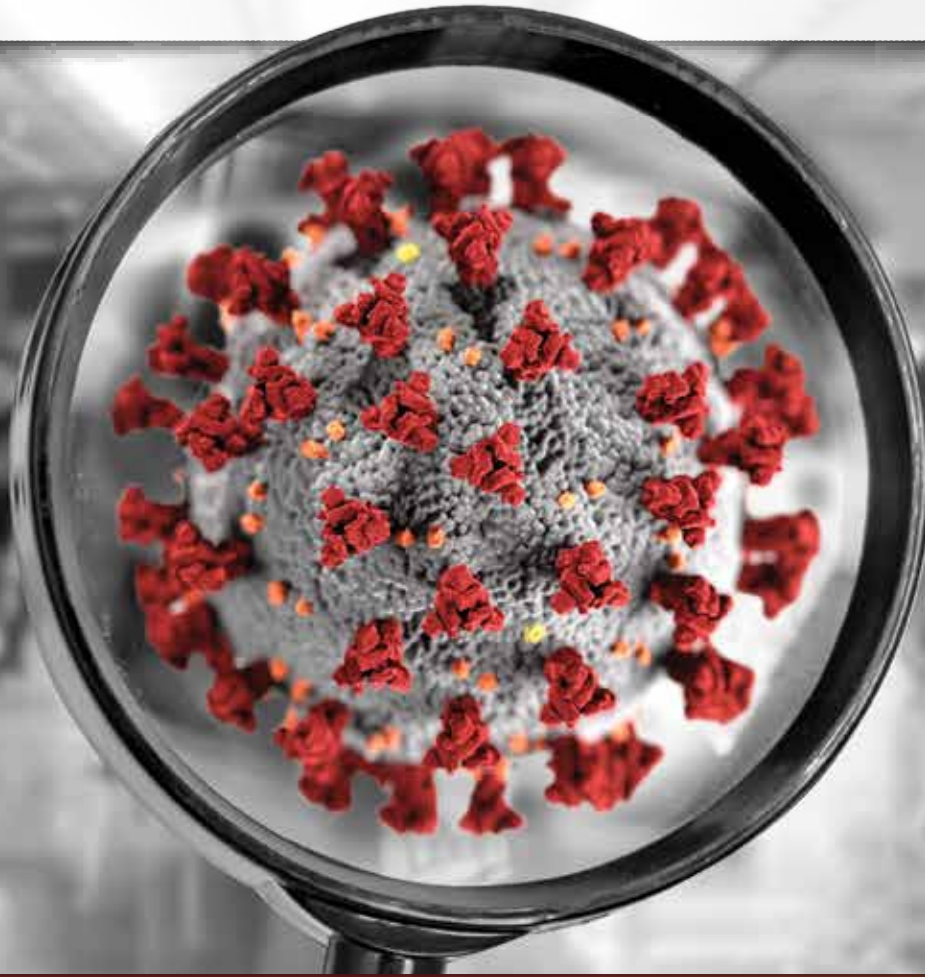


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It's Not Just About The Technology: School leadership during a pandemic



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THIS UNPRECEDENTED TIME TO MAKE CONTINUED
LEARNING POSSIBLE.**

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Terry MacIsaac
President, Canadian Association of Principals

Hello School Leaders,

Would you have ever thought the world could be put on pause?? As you read this, most provinces and territories are planning on how to restart the lives and economies as they ease restrictions due to Covid-19. It's amazing how fast the world had to change not only how we do business and education, but all facets of our lives!!

There are only a few things that will happen in our lives that will have a profound, permanent impact on how we exist each day in our personal lives and in our work, and Covid-19 will certainly be one of them. The beginning (or extension for some of you) of online learning and teaching has caused many people, school boards, provinces, and territories, to look at how our school based practices can be scrutinized and changed to something that can be done remotely. I can't see this going away completely in the future.

What does this mean to you as a school leader? How will education be provided in the future years to come? How do you as a school leader ensure that the instruction is being done according to the expectations of your school and board? How do we support our teachers and support staff that may be struggling personally or with their ability to plan and provide adequate instruction for their students? How do you as a school leader shut off the digital world and maintain a healthy lifestyle with time for yourself and family?

This special issue of the CAP journal "School's closed – What now??" will explore what is going on across our country now in education. How are teachers teaching? Are students learning? Is assessment being done? How do we move forward?

I hope you have been able to stay safe and are ready to embrace this new world of learning and the challenges it will bring. Let's beat Covid-19!!

Take care and be good to each other!

Terry MacIsaac



Christina Pike
Editor, CAP Journal

Hello everyone,

March 13, 2020 marked for many of us the last day of regular in class instruction for our students and staff in our buildings. Fittingly it was a Friday and equally fitting, the 13th. For us, it was also Pie Day celebrating Math. When I speak to our students, they all mention that this was nice because the last memory they have is of our Cake Auction, Math activities and then eating cake... lots and lots of cake... As we move forward in this pandemic, the messaging is consistent, learning is continuing. Educators across this great land are rising to the occasion and embracing the new normal.

Amidst the COVID -19 pandemic, CAP Journal is committed to getting the message out by touching base with our affiliates and seeing how each jurisdiction is coping. The call went out and in spite of the challenges each of us were finding ourselves in, there was fabulous uptake. Thank you to our contributors.

This is uncharted ground and we are truly in it together. Take care. Stay safe.

Sincerely,
Christina

Canadian Association of Principals graciously thanks all of their members and editorial contributors for their submissions in this issue. We also want to extend our gratitude to all of sponsors and advertisers for their ongoing support during this challenging time.

To our members: please be sure to support our sponsors and advertisers - they need you now more than ever.

Also, we would like to remind you that you may continue to review this issue of the magazine and archived issues online by creating a member profile at: <https://cdnprincipals.com/login/>. Be sure to update all your contact information to ensure delivery of all CAP benefits and products for your exclusive use.



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K-12 Education in Manitoba Buffaloed by Pandemic

By **Myles Blahut**

As of March 23, education in Manitoba's K-12 schools has looked a lot different than it did the week before. Due to the Province's Health Order to practice physical distancing, school has gone from school classrooms to students' kitchens and living rooms.

What was originally to be a 2-week pause to the 2019-2020 school year is now an indefinite suspension of classes with the very realistic possibility of seeing the remainder of instruction for the 2019-2020 school year being handled remotely. The position of The Manitoba Teachers' Society does not refer to this new reality as home-schooling but as remote learning or learning from home.

I am sure that all of the educational decision makers (Ministers, Superintendents, Principals, Teachers and Trustees) have little, to most likely no experience in dealing with a situation like this. I can't remember ever seeing a University course or PD Session entitled Schools and Pandemics 101.

To set the record straight, everyone involved in making decisions are doing what they feel is best. With no manual or other experiences to follow, decisions made one day are often modified the next or even modified later in the same day.



*School Divisions are looking for different ways to provide programming for their students from **setting up mobile breakfast/lunch programs to be delivered by Division staff to setting up Wi-Fi hotspots in their communities in schools and even on school busses parked in a central location.***

Across the Province, teachers have the choice to work from home or to head to their buildings to gather materials to plan and/or work, all the while observing physical distancing. Here is the directive from MTS which can be found on their website:

- ▶ The directive from federal and provincial public health officials is for all of us to stay at home as much as possible. In turn, that is the position of MTS to its membership.
- ▶ If there is an urgent need to access classroom resources at your school, you must comply with all public health orders and your employer must ensure social distancing occurs.
- ▶ If you're directed to attend your school and you feel unsafe doing so, under the WSH Act you have the right to refuse dangerous work.

For Principals throughout Manitoba, the situation is slightly different. As schools are technically still open, a majority of Divisions are expecting Principals to be in their buildings to assist teachers, direct custodial staff (if still working), support administrative staff (most still working) and to answer questions from parents. Principals who need flexibility with this request because of personal circumstances have the ability to discuss their case with their Supervisor on an individual basis. When concerns have risen, COSL's liaisons with MTS have advocated for COSL members to see that they have been treated fairly.

What does the new reality mean for school leaders in Manitoba? In speaking with several members over the past several weeks, some general questions and wonderings have been raised. Here is a list of some of the more common ones:

- ▶ How long do we need to be in our buildings each day?
- ▶ Supporting staff in learning and using new platforms that they may have never used
- ▶ How to keep in contact with staff? How often?
- ▶ Managing Zoom, Microsoft Teams or whatever video conference they are using
- ▶ Organizing technology for those who don't have hardware and/or connectivity
- ▶ Allowing students/parents access to building to safely pick up supplies
- ▶ Providing supplies and necessities(food)to students/families in need
- ▶ Mental well-being of staff and students
- ▶ Trying to provide meaningful work for support staff so they can remain employed
- ▶ Keeping logs of staff activities
- ▶ Why are things different in another Division? Within another school in the same Division?
- ▶ The use of social media in communicating with students and their parents, what are the parameters/boundaries that should be followed?

The list provided captures the main points, but because of the uncertainty surrounding the Pandemic and the lack of anyone having any experiences with this type of situation, answers continually evolve and new questions arise.

Governments are turning to School Divisions to save money. This past week in Manitoba several divisions have issued layoff notices for EAs, bus drivers, crossing guards and lunch supervisors. Many of these initial layoffs have been with part-time employees but will it stop there? In some Divisions, staff have been retained if they choose to accept a change to their assignment.

School Divisions are looking for different ways to provide programming for their students from setting up mobile breakfast/lunch programs to be delivered by Division staff to setting up Wi-Fi hotspots in their communities in schools and even on school busses parked in a central location.

Recently the Government has come out with guidelines for the amount of work teachers should be sending home by grade (similar to other Provincial guidelines). There are different hourly expectations for the different grade levels. Students are expected to engage in remote learning. High School students who do not keep engaged with their remote learning will be required to take recovery learning the next school year with this being noted on their report cards.

Guiding Principles of Province's Response to Educational Planning

- ▶ Learning and assessment will continue for all students.
- ▶ No student will be held back due to the pandemic. Students on track to graduate will graduate. Adult learners will be included in planning.
- ▶ Families, schools, and school divisions, educational partners, and Manitoba Education are working together to ensure student achievement and success, and planning for individual student needs and circumstances as needed.
- ▶ Resources will be redirected to ensure that students actively engage in learning during the suspension of classroom learning.
- ▶ The plan is future-oriented. Efforts are forward-looking both to reopening classrooms and planning for a variety of recovery learning needs in the fall.

Partners Roles and Responsibilities

● *Manitoba Education*

- Coordinate and oversee provincial-level planning in response to the suspension of in class learning
- facilitate K to 12 stakeholder communication and planning pertaining to issues, priorities, and implementation of pandemic response planning
- Resolve urgent matters, make recommendations regarding resource implications of response plans, and outline opportunities for future system improvement. Some examples include expanding distance/online learning resources, establishing a parent/ caregiver portal for engaging in education, and improving the Manitoba Professional Learning Environment (Maple).
- Ensure accessible resources to support parents and caregivers, as well as students who are at risk.

● *School Divisions and School Leaders*

- Participate in local and provincial planning.
- While considering their local context, implement provincial expectations for teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Review and reallocate resources as needed to facilitate teaching and learning (i.e., non-teaching staff, technology, online platforms, print-based materials).
- Mobilize supports for students who are at risk.
- Support school staff as they change and adapt to learning at home.
- Ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that home-school communication continues with families.

● *Teachers*

- Collaborate with school administration to implement the plans for teaching and learning.
- Evaluate curricular outcomes that have not yet been covered and prioritize remaining outcomes based on what is manageable for students working from home.
- Provide equitable learning opportunities for all students.
- Work closely with families to implement learning opportunities that support grade-level outcomes.
- Provide ongoing support for student learning, including support for families for learning at home.
- Monitor and assess student learning.
- Assign a final grade and identify future learning needs

For the complete document from Manitoba Education on their response planning for Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) learning during COVID-19 suspension of classes go to: https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/education_response_plan_k-12.pdf

When the school year began back in September who would ever have thought that teaching would end up looking like it is today. There are many examples of school staff's going above and beyond to ensure that their students are not only still learning but are also still feeling cared for. Stay well. ■

<http://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2020/04/22/most-recent-questions/>

Author Bio

Myles Blahut is the Chairperson of the Council of School Leaders of The Manitoba Teacher's Society. He has a 35-year career in education, the last 19 as a Principal.



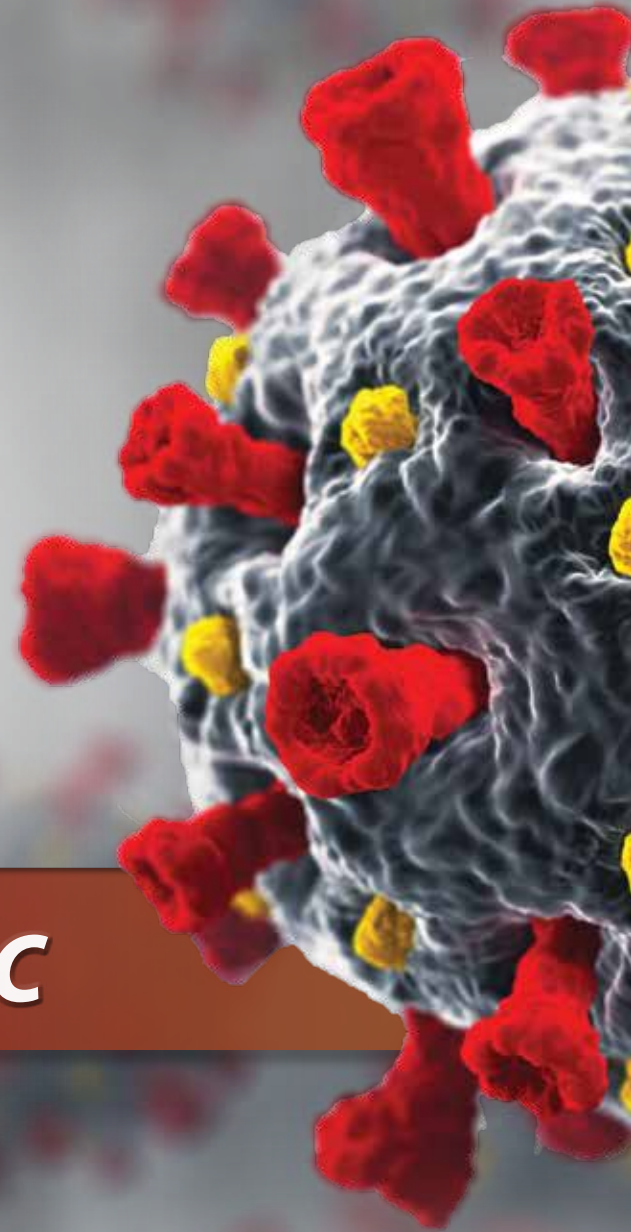
It Is About Tech

School leadership

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In the past, when school leaders considered tech innovation, they had time to reflect on implementation. Today, that luxury of time has evaporated. Rarely have school leaders innovated while immersed in change matching the scale and pace of the current school closures. No one could have predicted the multiple variables occurring simultaneously. Not only are schools moving to distance learning, some overnight, but this is happening amid a deadly health crisis and crushing economic losses. Canadians are struggling to regain resilience in the face of vulnerability and social instability.

Not Just out The nnology: during a pandemic



Canadian school leaders are tasked with providing continuity and compassion for their students and communities despite these uncertainties. They are navigating murky waters populated by “just-in-time” policy decisions, cautionary union messages, mounting parent requests, and the pressing need to support communities skilling up to distance/online learning. Yet school leaders are ideally suited for this. They are expert problem-solvers and instructional leaders who have their experience to bring to new challenges¹. Flexibility and resilience have always been essential school leadership skills.

School leaders work alongside expert educators who have the pedagogical strengths to carry forward in a crisis. They are specialists in how students learn and in how to engage them. While shifting to online learning can be intimidating for the tech novice, Canadian educators have expertise in designing age-appropriate curriculum and assessment. School leaders can repurpose those skills. In this pandemic, a report for UNESCO encourages school leaders to think “Maslow before Bloom”² meaning that, while the first priority is the safety and well-being of every student, the role of school leaders now is to provide three key functions: normalcy, safety, and continuity of learning². Schools already do this well.

“...while the first priority is the safety and well-being of every student, the role of school leaders now is to provide three key functions: normalcy, safety, and continuity of learning².”

Consider some of these examples of how school closures are prompting innovative educational solutions: A teacher in Calgary has put his physical education program online. He deliberately re-designed his program for students at home who need daily activity, using resources found in homes. While he is giving students autonomy and choice of activities, he also runs live daily sessions. His open approach reflects key trends in online learning: democratization and open access¹. Or, consider how in one school district in Northwestern Ontario, a principal and a student achievement lead structured a user-friendly, online collaborative platform to support K-12 distance learning, engaging leaders at all levels of schooling to provide resources and best practices. Their collaboration provides just-in-time key resources for teachers at

a single source². Their model, founded on both teacher collaboration and effective pedagogy, could bring long-term change to teaching and leadership.

Continuity of learning is not just about student work. Leaders in another Ontario school district have created a guide to learning at home that is founded on the learning outcomes of the Catholic faith and supported by technology. Their learn@home resource will support their teachers with both continuity of learning and compassion⁷. A northern district is using school buses to deliver learning materials to students who lack reliable internet access. Some rural school buses are being repurposed to provide Wi-Fi hot spots for students. There is room for both innovation and tradition as school leaders navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

Those experienced in online learning know that working at a distance has its own pedagogical characteristics and challenges. There is an established need for structure, communication, and dialogue - three key elements of transactional distance theory, which acknowledges that distance teaching is flexible and pedagogically complex³. The nature of the teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions contributes toward building social presence which supports student engagement and continuity of learning. School leaders promote and model respectful online dialogue and collaboration, and their teachers in turn model for students. The focus is not the technology, because innovative approaches to online learning follow fundamental basic pedagogical principles. While teachers are experts at establishing classroom community, school leaders model how to broadly build community to support students.



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What is old is new again

Canadian school history provides multiple examples of pre-internet distance schooling. Canada at the turn of the 20th century was mostly agrarian; school came to rural families on the prairies and those working in mining and forestry operations in the north. Teachers and parents worked on solutions to ensure that students, regardless of geography, ability, or background, could receive education. Some received assignments by mail and sent finished work to teachers in correspondence schools such as the Alberta Distance Learning Center (adlc.ca). In other cases, educators used railway train schools such as:

Sloman's School on Wheels
(centralhuron.com/schoolcar).

Older students and students with physical challenges relied on correspondence courses offered through parent-teacher collaboratives such as:

Windsor's Red Cross School
(jmccentre.ca/history).

The advent of the COVID-19 virus and decision to close educational facilities invite school leaders to once again bridge social and geographical gaps among learners, teachers, and communities. School leaders today have more technology tools to draw upon, but questions and concerns about learning and equity persist.

Emerging unknown-unknowns

School leaders will face known and unknown concerns. Equity issues abound, challenging school leaders' goals to create inclusive and equal educational opportunities. Some define equity with respect to devices and internet access; however, assumptions about how students learn online can significantly disadvantage those who learn in their own way. Some students have the social capital and family composition that allows for stay-at-home care and spaces for independent learning while others are in homes where devices and space are shared. Early research on K-12 online learning⁴ indicates that students who are more mature and independent are better able to make the transition to online learning. When English⁵ promoted curriculum alignment (curriculum walkthroughs), he

was primarily concerned with the "have-not" students who depend on schools as their primary source of learning. These students in particular, are impacted by changes in routine and structure. Creating enabling online environments is therefore a key leadership challenge.

Unanticipated problems will continue to emerge. Boundaries between personal and professional lives are impacted by the lack of a structured school day, and this may impact the balance between professional and off-work time. School leaders will need to help staff set realistic expectations

concerning response times and availability. Modern information and communication technologies are new practices with new privacy challenges. Teachers phoning students' homes will seek ways to keep their personal numbers private. Video conferencing is now being adopted to communicate with colleagues and students, yet video can expose personal space and new videoconferencing tools are being criticized for their lack of attention to privacy⁶ ref. zoom. School leaders will become key players in developing the policies to work around these privacy and equity issues.



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“The advent of the COVID-19 virus and decision to close educational facilities invite school leaders to once again **bridge social and geographical gaps** among learners, teachers, and communities.”

There are no experts for today and tomorrow’s unprecedented challenges; no proverbial playbook that principals can reference. We know from research

that expert school leaders rarely problem-solve on their own¹ but draw on their ability to build and maintain strong and positive collaborations. They have consistently

demonstrated the capacity that will guide themselves and their schools to the other side of this crisis. Their expertise will ensure that students continue to learn and thrive. ■

¹ www.freephysed.com

² <https://sites.google.com/kpdsb.ca/kpdistancelearning>

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Maintaining Civility During Calamity

By Dr. Scott Linehan



World War II, Britain, 1944. Earthquake, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2011. Hurricane Maria, U.S. Virgin Islands, 2017. Tragic disasters with epic devastation and loss of life. And, as horrific as all these events were in human history, they also share another less reported catastrophic interruption in people's lives – school closures. Significant losses of instructional time, as taxing as it is on students, teachers, and families, is not, research indicates, as impactful on student achievement as we might tend to believe.

Newfoundland and Labrador shuttered its schools on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. It is unlikely that the doors will reopen for the remainder of the school year. Factoring special events and holidays, the students of the province will miss approximately 10 weeks of instruction. No one will argue that this is not a significant loss of instruction. It is. But, large scale interruptions in instruction have happened before in our province. Students lost 3 weeks of learning in 1983. Ten years later, in 1994, students lost 4 weeks of school – both owing to teacher strike/lockouts (in the former I was a student, in the latter I was a teacher). I remember both clearly. The conversation then, as it is now, was exactly the same; What do we do about the missed content when school resumes? And guess what? Everything worked out just fine. Why? Well, the answer is a relatively simple one – the teachers.

One of the most important educational researchers of our (all) time, Dr. John Hattie, weighs in on this COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting impact on school closures and lost learning. In his impressive meta-analyses research, Hattie ranks, with effect size, all those influences that impact student learning. The 277 effects range from -0.90 to 1.44. The vacation effect, when students are not in school for extended periods of time, is -0.01. This means prolonged absences from school have virtually no effect on student learning. To put this stark reality in context, Australia and the United States have the longest school years, and days, in

the industrialized world. But, if 10 weeks of instruction were to be removed from their calendars (which it will most likely be), then these two countries would still fall below, in terms of performance, than countries like Finland, Korea, and Sweden which already have 10 less weeks of instruction.

In light of this pandemic, it might be rightly asked; “How is that even possible?” Based on strike research and interrupted schooling, when schools reopen teachers respond. In ‘normal’ times teaching tends to focus on what we believe students need. But following prolonged absences from ‘normal’ times

teachers tend to focus instruction on what “students could NOT do” (Hattie, 2020, p. 2). Educators become hyper-focused on filling in those gaps. As a result we refocus our instruction on not what we think students need but what students actually need.

After the destruction of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the education system was delivered a terrible blow. Many believed at the time that the loss of almost 7 weeks of instruction would have a catastrophic effect on student achievement. They were wrong. The focus for teachers (and for themselves) was on the individual first, the instruction second. Most students had no connection with the school, teacher, or work. However, after schools reopened teachers rose to the challenge (the drop in state test scores was 0.06).

So, what does all this mean? Well, to put it simply, Hattie points out that when it comes to lengthy shut downs “the message is that the effects are very low” (p. 2). Collective sigh of relief. Now, to be clear, that is not to trivialize or minimize the effects of school closures. Education is a human endeavour. It is a societal enterprise. There are many layered effects on countless levels. And there will be no shortage of work to do in September. But on balance, students are resilient and teachers are masters of making-it-work.

Recently, I heard Dr. Hattie speak about the plight of education following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the final analysis, he pointed out, “for most kids, this shut down is not going to affect them much at all.” Why? Simply put, Dr. Hattie went on to add, that this is a time to “unbelievably esteem the competence of teachers. They are going to find ways for recovery for nearly every kid as we go through this. They will find ways to make this not such a difference.” If this doesn’t settle the jittered instructional nerves, then I encourage you to keep reading Dr. Hattie’s work. During these difficult and uncertain times, it is just what the doctor ordered. ■

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Author Bio

Dr. Scott Linehan is a Program Specialist for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. His Ph.D. is in Educational Leadership. He is the provincial facilitator for Visible Learning. Scott’s first book *And The Tony Goes To – NL On The World Stage* was released in the fall of 2019.

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Educating Citizens More Important Than Ever

By John R. Wiens



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“You are what you learn,” claims the Manitoba Teachers’ Society. The truth of this adage is revealed in the actions of our leaders, our neighbours and the general public in a time of unprecedented crisis, another reminder of why we need public education now more than ever.

The late Tom Green, a distinguished educational philosopher, claimed that children do not become citizens by birth, they must be taught. The central purpose of education was to create a public, and that education was the primary justification for schooling. If this sounds weird, we now know that our schools are about more than caring for children while their caregivers are off working, more than about training for future work. Green reminds us that, if we don’t educate citizens who feel an obligation to each other, there will be a political and ethical price to pay – the contrast between Canada and our neighbours to the South is stark example.

Green was concerned as much about habits of human action as about habits of the mind, although they are not distinct and not always separable. He thought schools should teach the young the inclinations and behaviours of membership, memory, craft, sacrifice and imagination which he believed to be basic to democratic society.

Educating Citizens More Important Than Ever

By membership, he claimed that being a citizen means that one had a connection to everyone else and obligations which arose from those connections. Today we know this to be true – pandemics are not selective about whom they touch, and we need everyone's ingenuity and commitment to overcome them. Creating a democratic public means acknowledging all others equally and expecting them to reciprocate. This is what we want children to learn in public schools. On a human level. It means that we must acknowledge that everyone matters and is vital to our humanity.

Memory is the inclination toward reality and hope. We learn how humans have dealt with crises before, turning them into times of great creativity, ingenuity and human solidarity. History reminds us of previous bad times and how people have rallied together to encourage, support and withstand the inclinations toward protectionism and selfishness, and embrace something called the common good. History also shows us that if we think there are others we think we would be better off without because of their cultural, religious or social differences we are on a slippery slope to self destruction.

Craft is the practice and the art of common sense in both its aspects – the use of rational and logical thinking using truths to inform us and the sense that what we experience we share in common. Together we can make sense of the science, the political rhetoric and the ethical challenges which confront us. It also means learning to trust and respect others and showing that regard through our inclusive and justice actions.

Sacrifice is the willingness and desire to forego personal gratification and pleasure for something larger than ourselves, what we might call giving up private interest for the public good.

During pandemics this looks like voluntary physical distancing, volunteering, supporting the most vulnerable and those who care for them, putting their own safety at risk for the sake of others – going “above and beyond.”

Imagination is seen as an ethical response to human problems, and as an optimistic but positive driver for positive change in the way we live our lives and relate to others. Humans are the “authors of miracles,” who, according to Hannah Arendt, make the improbable repeatedly happen by their own initiative. Our media daily report their unexpected and generous efforts that people are capable of, giving us hope in a time of uncertainty and despair.

If these capabilities are not learned, they present a scary public display and a threat to civility. civic responsibility and ultimately, our democratic way of life. The contrast between us and our neighbours to the south as represented by the media could not be more stark and should be another lesson to us all to practice the craft of critical thoughtfulness, thinking more deeply about we as humans are doing, are capable of when we are at our best ... and our worst.

Americans are stockpiling guns; their Federal Government leads in initiating continuous conflict between it and the states, practicing partisan favouritism, ignoring and denigrating science, promoting protectionism, blame and division and dismissing public servants who don't echo party rhetoric talking about freedom as the right to protest carrying weapons and hurling obscenities and hate; and states are ending necessary physical distancing against the best advice possible thereby compromising the health and safety of their neighbours. A sense of the common and talk of a greater public good seem distant memories.

Meanwhile, while some Canadians are stockpiling toilet paper, our federal and provincial governments have put aside partisan differences and provincial entitlements, pulling together in a way not thought possible just months ago, paying heed to and rallying around our health care professionals, first responders, and our grocery workers and imagining ways to help people who have lost their livelihoods. While not perfect, this is Green's citizenship in action, very unlike what is happening to the south of us.

The United States has spent the last four decades promoting home and private schooling, viewing education more as a private good than a preparation for public life. Diane Ravitch (2013), a federal conservative Republican education secretary, in *A Reign of Error*, wrote that America's education privatization path is a huge mistake with predictable consequences. Her view – democracy cannot be renewed and sustained without public schools.

Canadians, when offered similar private schemes by governments over the last three decades, have mostly continued to support public schools as a public good. Our public schools accept everybody, teach honesty, empathy, reality, creativity and ingenuity, and stand for self governing individuality tempered with a collective responsibility for all. After this pandemic we will need Green's “citizens” more than ever as we together renew and rebuild our fragile democratic world, and our public education is the perfect antidote and remedy.

Finally, now more than ever public education demands the leadership, advocacy and support of all educators for the love of our children and our world. Our world is what we learn! ■

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Covid-19

Continuity of Learning Plan



The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development wants to remind all New Brunswickers their highest priority should be to follow the recommendations of Public Health and our provincial government to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, flatten the curve and save lives. We realize that the closure of school facilities, as part of our systemic response, will require us to change traditional educational approaches.

As Canada's only bilingual province, New Brunswick has a constitutional requirement of educational duality. Our Anglophone and Francophone sectors have a rich history using their own unique approaches for the last 40 years. As such, our approaches to the current situation will likely vary as well.

Graduation

All Grade 12 students who had at least 12 credits at the end of first semester, January 2020, and were on track to graduate in June 2020, will do so on time and will receive a New Brunswick high school diploma. Transcripts will indicate the student was "enrolled," in current semester courses. These second semester classes will all count towards the required number of courses for graduation.

“Mental health is a key focus. In the current situation, wellness and a sense of connectedness are primary concerns for all learners within our school communities.”

Grade 12 students who plan to graduate but have not passed the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) will not be required to complete this assessment. Their transcripts will indicate that the ELPA was "not required."

The New Brunswick Government will work with post-secondary institutions to ensure this situation does not prevent student eligibility for admission to post-secondary studies in the upcoming school year. Officials will also reach out to registrars to request flexibility on scholarship deadlines. This is a pandemic situation and students across the world will be facing interruptions or alterations in learning. All learning institutions, including universities, will need to adapt to this reality.

Decisions on graduation ceremonies and other graduation events will be made in the coming weeks based on direction from the Office of Public Health. No decisions have been made at this time.

Provincial Assessment

The remaining 2019-20 provincial assessments will not take place, with the exception of the Grade 12 French Oral Proficiency Interviews which will be offered on a voluntary basis. The department is currently working to develop a process to offer interviews to interested students online or by telephone.

Report Cards

April report cards are postponed until further notice. Learners on track to move to the next grade level will do so. Upon return to the classroom, educators will determine where students are in their learning.

Content Delivery

The ability of the education system to deliver learning content will be greatly dependent on advice from Public Health and government response to the situation throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have developed a number of planning stages to reflect a number of different potential situations.

State of Emergency Educational Delivery

During the current state of emergency, under guidance from the Chief Medical Officer for all New Brunswickers to stay home, teachers are unable to work in their classrooms with access to school resources. Nor do they have the ability to send home learning materials physically and would be forced to rely on electronic methods.

The department understands that many families do not have access to technology or the internet and that their immediate priority is, rightfully, on health and wellbeing. We also realize there is a significant portion of our population who do have access to these resources and they are looking for educational direction and, at times, mental health support. Learning needs to be flexible and reflective of the various circumstances and environments that currently exist.

Mental health is a key focus. In the current situation, wellness and a sense of connectedness are primary concerns for all learners within our school communities. They are cornerstones of learning. Our first priority is for educators to make contact with every family. Following this, weekly check-ins, at a minimum, will serve to maintain social connections and to provide support.

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The department and school districts have already begun to circulate regular mental health support material. Starting this week, each District announced a mental health support line where students can access guidance counsellors and Child and Youth teams. Additionally, schools will provide suggested outcomes and materials to guide families in the development of their adolescent's age-appropriate life skills, along with activities for physical and mental wellbeing.

All teachers, no matter the level or what they teach, will be available to participate in the planning and development of home learning options in addition to maintaining weekly contact with their assigned students. Teachers will also work to prepare for the eventual return of students to in-school learning and will participate in required professional learning and regular school team meetings. Guidance counsellors will be available to deliver services, within their professional scope, via the support lines. Speciality teachers will also be available to help produce learning options to facilitate student participation in personal interest areas like the arts or trades.

Department and District staff will work with school leadership and teacher teams to assist with the home learning options development and delivery.

For each of the categories below, families are encouraged to continue discussions and to participate in activities, to the extent possible, that promote physical fitness and positive mental health, nurture creative expression, stay connected to others, and encourage social responsibility. An Education and Early Childhood Development Family Resource page has been set up online to offer information, general ideas to support learning and guides to support mental health and wellbeing. Information can be found at Learning at Home: Resources for Families¹.

Schools will work with families of students with Personalized Learning Plans, Adjusted (PLP-ADJ) Learning Plans - Individualized (PLP-I), to discuss how parents can best support their child in the current situation. Electronic resources will be shared as they are developed on the Education and Early Childhood Development Family Resource page.

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Covid-19 Continuity of Learning Plan

Every family has a different home environment and we understand they may not be able to consistently support the suggested guidelines. However, parents will have a key responsibility of encouraging students to complete the provided material helping

to ensure the continuity of children's education in this current model. Teacher's regular content will be meant to support the parent's efforts, and to further assist parents looking for options beyond those supplied below.

Kindergarten to Grade 2

Home learning options to support literacy and numeracy outcomes will be made available electronically to families. Families are encouraged to read aloud with their children daily and to support their child to complete provided options for an average of 1 hour per day. Families are encouraged to consider daily physical activity and free play as important parts of their child's mental health and skill development.

Grades 3 to 5

Home learning options to support literacy, numeracy, and science outcomes will be made available online to families. Families will be encouraged to have children participate in these options, to the extent possible, an **average of 1 hour per day** (5 hours per week). In addition, learners are encouraged to participate in a daily minimum of 30 minutes of reading and 30 minutes of physical activity.

Grades 6 to 8

Home learning options to support literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies outcomes will be made available online to families. Families will be encouraged to have children participate in these options, to the extent possible, an **average of 2 hours per day** (10 hours per week). Learners are encouraged to participate in a daily minimum of 30 minutes of reading and 30 minutes of physical activity.

Learners who are currently enrolled in on line courses offered within the New Brunswick public education system, or as dual credits with other institutions, are encouraged to continue with those options as usual and as their personal circumstances permit.

Schools who already have fully developed, or are able to develop, online course options will be permitted to proceed with those courses to further the learning of students who are willing and able to participate. While principals will have the option to award a credit for these course options, they will indicate a pass only format and no mark will be attached.

Non-State of Emergency Educational Delivery

When the province removes the state of emergency conditions, access to travel and resources may be different. If schools continue to be

Grades 9 to 10

Home learning options to support provincial literacy, numeracy, science, social studies, and personal skill development outcomes will be made available online to families. Families will be encouraged to have students complete these options for a **minimum of 2.5 hours per day** (12.5 hours per week). Learners are encouraged to participate daily minimum of 30 minutes of reading and 30 minutes of physical activity.

Grades 11 to 12

Education content will focus on core courses to meet high school graduation requirements, including: Math, English, Second Language, Science/Technology, History/Social Studies. Families will be encouraged to have students complete these options during a **minimum of 2.5 hours per day** (total of 12.5 hours per week). Learners are encouraged to participate in a daily minimum of 30 minutes of reading and 30 minutes of physical activity.



closed for students, the overall home learning options will remain the same; however, the type of materials and supports provided to families may be supplemented. This could involve more specific teacher designed and prepared material, along with broadened options to ensure access to all students in the province.

Return to Regular School Attendance

Return to regular school attendance will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis. As the situation continues to unfold, we are unable to predict a start date at this time. Moving forward, the department, school districts, and schools will work to develop contingency plans for any potential future return dates. ■

¹ <https://teachfromhome.google/intl/en/>



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Learning During a Pandemic:

Staying connected to continue learning

By **Chris Byrne, Doug Pippy, and Niki O'Brien MacDonald**



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Around the world leaders in education quickly acknowledged that they were out of their realm as the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted everyone's reality. At the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) educators felt out of their element and normal routine. There was a collective recognition that we would need to evolve as a result of our new normal. Our primary focus was on the well-being of our students, their families, and of our entire NLESD community. From there we were positioned to be mindful and deliberate as we worked together to stay connected and support learning. Our students and families were our primary focus and educators explored, discovered and began to reimagine learning.

Learning at Home a Province Wide Collaboration

The need for a Learning at Home resource surfaced in response to classes being suspended for all students as a result of Covid-19. We wanted a family-friendly learning resource to serve school communities and our students while they were away from school.

The initial work began with video conferencing with Programs staff from across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador considering how we could foster learning at home. There were more questions than answers and not one of us really knew what the final product would be. There was, however, an optimistic energy amongst us to bring equitable and joyful learning opportunities to our students and their families.

It is a collaborative and ever-evolving work of passion. Many of us were working together for the first time. Overcoming the barriers of geography and our traditional focus on regional work was a necessary shift if we hoped to support our diverse families. In true Newfoundland and Labrador form, we connected and quickly developed norms that helped to create the conditions for rich learning conversations. This enabled us to be curious, dig deep, and share our thinking openly and freely as we invested in using this challenging time to innovatively transform learning for our school communities and families.

The shared goal of the team was to design a resource to support families by demonstrating what rich authentic learning could look like at home. The purpose was not to create a replica of traditional schooling. In fact, it was the team's hope to clearly portray that the intent was not for caregivers to assume the roles of teachers or for students to teach themselves during this complex time. We needed to ensure that this resource supported caregivers in creating a positive mindset about learning, and empowered our students as learners.

This team was able to imagine because we allowed ourselves to be vulnerable. The connectedness led to deep conversations. A Framework for Engaging ALL Learners was created and is now the compass for our work.. A consistent and collective vision to create learning opportunities that are equitable, authentic, engaging and relevant resonates throughout this online resource Learning at Home: Good at Learning Good at Life.

Learning During a Pandemic: Staying connected to continue learning

There was a collective desire to ensure that all students and their families had an equal opportunity to access this resource. We knew that the online resource did not provide this option. Another team from the group enthusiastically came together to create an At Home Learning Resource Guide that would be distributed via Canada Post to every family in our province.

Children and young adults are naturally curious learners and we are committed to providing opportunities at home to engage them in learning. This province-wide team will stay connected to continue to provide a variety of learning opportunities to support well-being, literacy, numeracy and our students' individual passions for learning. These at home learning resources will enable students to stay connected and engage in learning conversations with their teachers as learning continues at home.

Educators Engaged and Learning

As educators we are also naturally curious learners. So the question was, how do we meet the learning needs of educators during this time? Could professional learning (PL) opportunities for educators address learning needs during these new uncertain times? It was like we had our own Deep Learning Project!

At the heart of our PL planning are a number of guiding principles. Students and educators learn best when conditions have been created for a safe learning environment. This is a priority as we design our PL opportunities. Teachers create conditions in their virtual work space where both students and teachers can safely speak, work and learn together. This can be accomplished with privacy protocols and the principles of internet safety, but also through ensuring that teachers understand a guiding pedagogy in a number of key areas. The learning environment must provide opportunities for voice and choice; facilitate a gradual release of responsibility with specific and ongoing feedback to help each learner move forward; offer relevant and authentic tasks, and offer opportunities to learn in a variety of structures that activate teachers as the owners of their learning. In addition, PL for teachers must provide access to a broad range of tools - concrete and technological.

One such opportunity for NLESD teachers is "Developing Learning Goals and Success Criteria". Prior to offering the opportunity, we wondered if teachers would be ready or able to participate in virtual learning opportunities during this time. To gauge teacher interest, a survey was distributed to intermediate and secondary teachers in NLESD. The initial response to the survey was overwhelming with more than 160 responses in less than 24 hours. This reaffirmed the role of teachers as learners and the need to offer learning opportunities to respond to teacher learning needs. We are now in week three of the seven-week learning opportunity and among the participants are teachers, administrators, district programs staff and directors. There are participants from all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador and representation from English, French, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies curriculum areas.

Teachers are engaging with weekly video conference meetings using the Google Meet platform. Each week, using Google Classroom, we explore content that describes what is required to develop learning goals and success criteria with students. Participants are actively engaged in discussion using the "Question" feature inside Google Classroom and discussions are further expanded during the live video conferences.

The participants have fully embraced the virtual learning model and learning material. Teacher learning is continuing in this new educational landscape we are all exploring together for the first time.

Forever Forward - En Avant

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is committed to serving our learners and their families during this pandemic. As we and other educational organizations across the globe look into the future, we see a multitude of unknowns. The province's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald strongly advised the people of our province "to work on our shared goals, not the obstacles we encounter along the way." We are focused on doing exactly that. We are committed to staying strong together, as we continue to create conditions for all to learn during these complex and uncertain times. ■

Author Bios

Georgina Lake, Assistant Director of Education - Student Services • **Doug Pippy**, Director of Education - Programs
Niki O'Brien MacDonald, Director of Learning • **Chris Byrne**, Program Specialist (Math)



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Remaining Connected in Disconnected Times

By **Kyran Dywer** and **Melanie Forward**
- St. Teresa's School, St. John's, NL



Social distancing, social isolation, certainly not terms we are used to hearing in a profession that prides itself on collaboration, cooperation, on being hands on and mind on. At a time when connection and relationships are more important than ever, Canadian schools and educators, and in fact world schools and educators all over the world find themselves in a very different situation, one which demands physical separation but also seeks to maintain relationships and personal connections among students and staff.

*“There was no teacher’s guide to follow, no rule book to turn to, we were facing this event and living history with those around us, guided only by the **strength of our staff and the strength of our students.**”*

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News media reported that 90% of students worldwide were not in school due to the COVID-19 Virus. The first reported case in the world appeared in China in November, 2019, while the first reported case in Canada quickly followed on January 15. Newfoundland and Labrador officials announced the first known case of COVID-19 on March 14. At the time of this mid-March announcement local public health officials maintained that schools in Newfoundland Labrador would not be closing as they provided a vital and essential service to essential workers and the incidence of and risk for COVID-19 among children was low, that we would instead focus on increased health hygiene and sanitization. However on Monday March 16, the premier and minister of Education announced schools would in fact be closed indefinitely in a physical sense, the buildings would be closed, but learning would continue in various ways. There was little time to prepare for this to happen, teachers reported to work on March 17 and the coming days saw rapidly changing plans for the retrieval of student materials and access to school facilities and teaching and learning materials for teachers and staff suspended on short notice.

In early March, prior to the arrival of COVID-19 in our province, staff at our school, and likely many others, were already discussing ways we could support students and families if the inevitable happened and schools were closed, as we watched schools close in one province and then another, the need to have a plan became more apparent. We struggled with how to best meet the needs of families without overwhelming them, how to ensure social emotional needs were met first and foremost, as well as other needs that would arise based on extended closures and closures of other community resources. Our main goal was to remain connected, to ensure the strong connections between students and staff remained strong throughout this unprecedented and unexpected time in our school year...in our school history. There was no teacher’s guide to follow, no rule book to turn to, we were facing this event and living history with those around us, guided only by the strength of our staff and the strength of our students.

Social media quickly became a medium through which we could reach out to students and families, as schools in our province showcase many fun and exciting ways that schools and families are staying connected even though they are disconnected from the normal way of schooling. Numerous videos are circulating of school staff sending motivating, uplifting and encouraging

messages to students and families. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and school websites are flooded with pictures of teachers using various forms of communication to bring joy and hope to our students and families. Teachers and school staff have engaged in plenty of emailing back and forth from teachers to students and families; lots of phone calls –some to say hello, some to wish a happy birthday, some just checking in to say you are missed, and some to gather information. The main message in the calls and the emails, while not always stated, has been this COVID-19 crisis has caused so much uncertainty and angst that connecting with each other is comforting for all of us.

For many educators throughout our province Google’s Suite of apps has been the main tool of communication, of connecting, of teaching and learning. The district has used Google Hangout for meeting online with Administrators to deliver information and get feedback on what is happening in our school communities. Administrators, in turn, use it to have online staff meetings to share information, check in with their staff and gather feedback and stories about students and families. Many teachers, in turn, are using Google Meet as a way of connecting with students and doing fun, learning activities with them. Often this visual checkin helps and comforts staff members seeing each child, knowing they are safe and happy. The opposite is also true as students and families get to see their friends, the teacher, the student assistant, the guidance counselor, the teaching and learning assistant or the administrator. A sense of normalcy is afforded to all involved. Teachers miss their students, students miss their teacher, students miss their classmates and seeing them even virtually brings comfort, joy and a sense of togetherness, it continues to reinforce the connection in this disconnected time.

In continuing with learning at home, without overwhelming families with new materials and structured, demanding schedules, the district’s “Learning at Home: Good at Learning - Good at Life” website is a tool to support continued student learning in areas of interest as well as curriculum content. (<https://learningathome.nlesd.ca/>) The site has four areas of focus:

Well-being, Math at Home, Literacy at Home and Passion for Learning. In guiding families in using this site, the connection with students remains the focus, as teachers know their students,

and know how the school closure is affecting them, as they become aware of family situations during this closure (i.e. many families are working from home, and demanding full day schedules may not be achievable for them), they are better able to guide their students towards activities on this site that may be more suited to their particular needs at this time. For many, the first few weeks of this closure, staff were focused very much on the health and well-being of students and families and for many families this will continue.

Just as when school is “in session” in the physical sense, students are on various parts of the continuum of learning and social and emotional well-being, this continuum is magnified for both students and families in times of crisis and at home learning. Students throughout our district may be wondering where the next meal is coming from or how they can be expected to learn online with no access to WIFI, or no technological device. They may be struggling with how their mental health issues within the home environment, or worried about friends in precarious life situations. Many will wonder, how is my teacher doing? With questions like these, a focus on health and well-being is paramount. Virtual guidance services are available throughout the province and school guidance counsellors are regularly sharing ideas on mindfulness and the importance of self-care in times of crisis.

In a typical school year, teachers and staff members are continuously involved in professional learning opportunities to enhance their knowledge of classroom practices of new and evolving pedagogies and assessment and instructional strategies. This remains the same and in some ways is enhanced as teachers continue to work from home. Many teachers are using their work hours, to support student learning, but also to support their own professional learning as they complete sessions on such areas as Trauma Informed Schooling, Feedback for Learning and Online Learning and Google Educator Training. Teachers continue to connect with each other through social media and professional learning networks, through Google communities and even through international teacher communities on Facebook, as never before have so many educators been connected by one event that has impacted our roles.

While COVID-19 continues to prevail in our province, our country and our world, the thing that is certain is that it is our connections to our students, our families and our colleagues that will see us through this uncertain time. We will see lessons learned, relationships formed, and teachers and administrators prepared to weather this storm until we are once again, back where we belong, inside our school walls. ■

Author Bios

Melanie Forward is the Teacher Librarian at St. Teresa’s School in St. John’s NL. She is a champion of literacy who models her love of reading to the students every chance she gets.

Kyran Dwyer, past president of CAP and principal of St. Teresa’s School in St. John’s, NL. He is a strong supporter of social emotional learning initiatives and promotes the importance of classroom relationships in student success.



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