

Newfoundland and Labrador English School District Director's Report



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Regional Updates

Labrador

A number of interesting initiatives are underway in Labrador. Regional office staff are in the process of developing a Labrador Inuit Society and Culture Course scheduled to be piloted in September. The course will focus on the history of Inuit living in Labrador and will explore the people, language, culture, and traditions of the Inuit way of life, spanning approximately a thousand years. Three schools will participate in the pilot: Jens Haven Memorial School (Nain); Amos Comenius Memorial School (Hopedale); and, Northern Lights Academy (Rigolet). Menihek High School (Labrador City) will offer students and families the opportunity to have a conversation with the RNC later this month as they present "Parenting Challenges in a High Tech World." The presentation will delve into issues such as sexting and social media awareness.

Eastern

Holy Heart High School (St. John's) will be hosting a province-wide conference April 24 & 25th titled "Mental Health Matters." This student led conference, which is open to all high school students in the District, will focus on various aspects of mental wellness, breaking down barriers and ending the stigma often associated with mental health. Clarenville Middle School undertook an initiative during Bell Let's Talk Day that saw members of the school community discussing mental health issues on social media, using the hashtag #CMSTalks. The positive messages that were captured through the use of this hashtag were displayed throughout the school on monitors to help further the conversation about mental health and awareness.

Western

A number of schools have engaged in interesting professional development opportunities. The staff of St. James Elementary (Port aux Basques) participated in Teaching Struggling Learners with a particular focus on boys, though participants found the strategies beneficial for all students. C.C. Loughlin Elementary (Corner Brook) participated in the NLTA's Second Languages Council Supporting Students Needs in the French Second Language Classroom session. Also, Our Lady of the Cape (Degrau) and St. Thomas Aquinas (Port au Port), both K-8 schools, will collaborate this month in concurrent primary, elementary and junior high 21st Century teaching methods.

Central

Classroom teachers are moving forward with some engaging and timely activities within their schools. Holy Cross School (Eastport) has just introduced the "Little Green Thumbs" project as part of Agriculture in the Classroom. At Gander Academy, Ms. Annette Warren has been using QR codes to increase participation in French Immersion language for her kindergarten students. The QR codes also allow students to demonstrate their vocabulary to their parents/guardians. At Exploits Valley High (Grand Falls-Windsor), a very interesting approach to teaching global citizenship and empathy through a Memory Project for young orphans in the Dominican Republic is occurring. Art Teacher Stephanie Power is leading 58 students who have volunteered to create a memory book for these young people who otherwise would have no record of their childhood.



Pink Shirt Day

As you know, Pink Shirt Day has become a significant event, supported by both students and staff. As this anti-bullying initiative and awareness day fits within the objectives of our strategic plan, the District has placed an emphasis on promoting this day and the values it represents. I was pleased to attend three Pink Shirt Day events on February 25 and was glad to see that our senior staff were also involved in events. On that day we also launched our first ever, *My Anti-Bullying Pledge* which allows members of our school communities to sign a pledge to show their support to prevent bullying and to increase tolerance. This year was our first attempt at issuing the pledge challenge and the response was positive with over 1,100 pledges signed and 130 schools participating. I look forward to increasing awareness through this initiative, or another like it, next year.



Kindergarten Registration Video

A shoot of our information video to help parents/guardians register for Kindergarten/Kinderstart has taken place and we are finalizing the product. The video shoot was undertaken by Andrew Mercer who is a teacher with the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, and was hosted by Nicole Mercer, a teacher at Coley's Point Primary. It is a five-minute tutorial which provides parents/guardians a 'how to guide' to registering their child, including what information they will need, when registration takes place and detail on Early French Immersion registration. We plan to have the video available in the coming days.

Accomplishments

We are extremely pleased that two of our students have been named as 2015 Loran Scholars. Patrick Hickey of Holy Heart High School was named the Ralph M. Barford Loran Scholar and Darcy Taylor of Gonzaga Regional High School (St. John's) was named a Loaran Scholar. As part of 30 scholars from across Canada, Patrick and Darcy receive a scholarship valued at up to \$100,000 over four years at one of 25 partner universities. They will also receive mentorship and a summer program. Patrick and Darcy were chosen from approximately 400 semi-finalists through a three-month selection process which is based upon their character, commitment to service and overall outstanding leadership.

We were also excited to learn that Exploits Valley High Level II student Kirsten Dalley, a resident of Bishop's Falls, was awarded the Lester B. Pearson Scholarship for Newfoundland and Labrador this year. This scholarship is valued at \$80,000 for two years of pre-university study at Pearson College in Victoria, B.C. Pearson College is a United World College, one of 12 in the world, where up to 200 students from over 100 countries attend to study Grade 12 and an additional year, known as the Gap Year. The school focuses upon educating students to be global leaders and its mission is to make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. Kirsten will be attending the school in September 2015 and we wish her much success.

Greta Warner, a Grade 6 student of Bishop Feild School (St. John's), will be attending the upcoming Scripps' National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. after recently winning The Telegram Spelling Bee. Aside from the trip to Washington in May to compete against over 200 spellers from eight countries, she also received \$2,000, a trophy and a dictionary for winning the provincial competition where she competed against 55 of the top spellers in the province.



Congratulations to Greta and we cannot wait to watch her compete from May 24-29.

Three principals from Newfoundland and Labrador English School District schools have been honoured with the distinction of being named Canada's Outstanding Principals™ by The Learning Partnership.

Congratulations to:

- Elizabeth Churchill - Elizabeth Park Elementary (Paradise)
- Della Healey - Mount Pearl Intermediate (Mount Pearl)
- Wilson Warren - All Saints All Grade (Grey River)

On February 24, these three exceptional educators joined 37 of their peers from across the country in Toronto to attend a gala reception in their honour. That event took place while the principals attended the five-day Executive Leadership Training program at that University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. Program highlights from the week included sessions on social media, achieving better results, leading in a period of transformation and education law.

I understand it was a remarkable five days for the principals and I am so glad they were recognized nationally for the hard work they and their staff put forth each day. We look forward to their continued contribution to our system.



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