



February 2021  
Vol. LXIII No. 3

# NBTA NEWS

NEW BRUNSWICK TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



**Exploring Teachers' Experiences**  
**Lessons Learned During a Pandemic**



## Your NBTA, Your Magazine

Have you ever thought about writing something for the *NBTA News*? If so, we would love to hear from you! We are always looking for interesting articles, stories or information about the amazing activities taking place in your schools. This magazine belongs to you, the members of the NBTA. Your submissions are essential in making this the best publication possible.

For more information about the *NBTA News* or to submit an article, contact Chantal Lafargue, editor of the *NBTA News* by email at [chantal.lafargue@nbta.ca](mailto:chantal.lafargue@nbta.ca) or [nbtanews@nbta.ca](mailto:nbtanews@nbta.ca).

We look forward to hearing from you!

### Upcoming Deadlines:

April 2021 Issue: March 15<sup>th</sup>

June 2021 Issue: May 15<sup>th</sup>

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**Editor:** Chantal Lafargue

**Editorial Assistant:** Eileen Anderson

**Graphic Artist:** Eileen Anderson

**Printed By:** ROCKET

**Member:** CEPA

Address all correspondence to:

The Editor, P.O. Box 752

Fredericton, N.B., E3B 5R6

**Telephone:** (506) 452-8921

**Fax:** (506) 453-9795

**E-mail:** [nbtanews@nbta.ca](mailto:nbtanews@nbta.ca)

**Web:** [www.nbta.ca](http://www.nbta.ca)

Find the NBTA on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube!



## In This Issue...



4 Provincial Teaching Awards

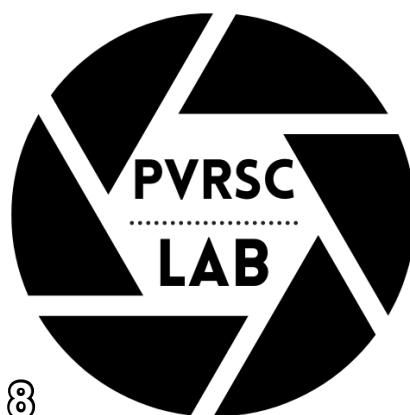
4 Interest-Free Loans

5 #4wellnessNBTA

6 Teacher Designed Professional Learning Grant Recipients

7 So, You Have Decided to Retire?

8 Exploring Teachers' Experiences Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic



10 Growing, Living & Learning

11 Council Page

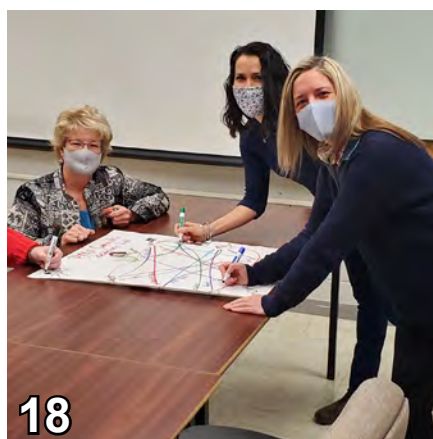
12 Lessons Learned During a Pandemic

15 POINT Page

16 Upcoming PL Opportunities

17 Are You Eligible for a Pay Raise?

18 The Positive Workplace Framework for New Brunswick Schools



20 Wellness Page

# Message from the President



Last year, I was composing what would turn out to be my last pre-COVID message to teachers. What a difference 12 months can make!

It has become clear in our interactions with teachers that many of the underlying issues and challenges in the NB education

system are still present. Many of these issues have been intensified by the pandemic.

In our work on your behalf, our priorities continue to be:

- **safety**
- **time**
- **human resources, and**
- **mental health.**

**Safety** - We continue to work with EECD, districts, and Public Health to ensure that the teacher perspective is considered when critical decisions are being made. Teachers do not take the health and safety of our children and youth lightly. We see it as a part of our professional obligation. This has been the focus of all of our lobbying efforts around teaching & learning environments during the waves of this pandemic.

**Time** - We continue to work with our colleagues at AEFNB and NBTF to advocate for measures to address the workload of teachers. We also continue our work with EECD and districts in their desire to reduce 'red-tape' and improve teacher workload. Our teachers are well-educated and competent public servants who are eager to do the best for our students. We need time within our work day to plan, communicate with families, and network with outside agencies for our students. Successive governments in NB have paid for report after report, that each indicates current investments in education are insufficient to meet the needs.

**Human Resources** - This pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for schools to be staffed so that teachers can focus on student learning. Tackling this issue has required conversations about ensuring supports in education are targeted at the school and classroom level. We also continue to advocate for a recruitment and retention strategy to encourage entry to the profession and keep teachers in New Brunswick.

**Mental Health** - Mental Health for teachers must be addressed. Never before has the importance of our Teacher Counselling program and our teacher counsellors been more apparent and necessary than in these trying times. We cannot look after our students properly if our own health & wellness is compromised.

One can assume that these same priorities will help provide the foundations for a future asking package as we realize that the current collective agreement expires at the end of February 2021. At the time of writing, the decision on the K-2 research project is pending. This decision will determine exactly when we will find ourselves at the bargaining table. Either way, negotiations are imminent, and we need to build upon the public's confidence in our education system. This public perception has been an essential consideration in general messaging strategies. We must underscore the long-term impacts that the pandemic will have on our students.

Investing in education and our students IS New Brunswick's future!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Cuming'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

*NBTA President Rick Cuming  
being interviewed in mid-January.*





# 2021 NBTA Provincial TEACHING AWARDS

NOMINATING A TEACHER IS AS EASY AS 1-2-3!

**STEP 1**  
Nomination Form

**STEP 2**  
Highlights of Career &  
Accomplishments

**STEP 3**  
Testimonials from  
Students, Colleagues,  
& Parents

NBTA  
Centennial  
Award

NBTA Credit Union  
Award for  
Excellence in Teaching

Vince Sunderland Memorial  
Award for Outstanding  
Educational Leadership

**Criteria and Nomination Forms:**  
[www.nbta.ca](http://www.nbta.ca) > The Profession > Teacher Awards

## Interest-Free Loans up to \$1500 2021-2022 School Year

Up to **\$1,500.00** in any one school year shall be made available to statutory NBTA members who are **on leave** and **improving their professional qualifications** through educational programs.

Application forms are available on the NBTA website ([www.nbta.ca](http://www.nbta.ca)) under Resources > Forms.

Further information may be obtained by contacting Tina Estabrooks at:  
**[tina.estabrooks@nbta.ca](mailto:tina.estabrooks@nbta.ca)**  
or **(506) 452-1834**.

**Deadline: March 31, 2021**



**Keep It Simple • Small Steps Count • Have Fun!**

## PRIZES

The winning school in each category will receive a \$100 gift certificate for a “**Wellness Break**” from the New Brunswick School-Based Wellness Program.

The **Grand Prize** is **\$200** for staff wellness for the school that has created the most inclusive and sustainable initiative to promote wellness in their school.

## TO ENTER IS EASY

Post your entry on Facebook with the hashtag **#4wellnessNBTA**. Make sure your post is set to “**public**”.



**Duration:**  
**January 4, 2021 - February 28, 2021.**



# Teacher Designed Professional Learning Grant 2021 Grant Recipients

Kimberley McKay, NBTA Staff Officer

The New Brunswick Teachers' Association recognizes that teacher professional learning occurs within a broad spectrum of experiences and processes that lead to deepened understanding and improvement of practice. Effective professional learning strongly links teacher and student learning and is guided by evidence. Further, research highlights that effective professional learning must be personalized and responsive to the complex and unique needs and context of the learner.

*Allowing teachers multiple chances over several weeks to experiment with the new strategies in a low-risk environment, such as their own regular teaching settings, is important.*

(Nelsen & Cudeiro, 2009)

As adult learners, teacher motivation for professional learning is linked to relevance, meaning and choice. Developing competence and a sense of self-efficacy by directing one's efforts to meet student needs is key to teachers undertaking professional learning. An integrated design that focuses on student and teacher learning activities within a job-embedded context and supported by both time and resources is the ideal professional learning context.

In support of teacher designed professional learning, the NBTA is pleased to sponsor five grants valued at \$1500.00 each. The grants are intended to support teacher professional learning within the context of improving student learning, fostering teacher leadership, and facilitating the sharing of exemplary best practices. Each team has autonomy to spend the grant as they see fit. Provision for release time for team collaboration, purchase of equipment, or production of materials for sharing represent some of the most common uses of grant funding in previous years.

Grant applications were received from 13 teams representing all 4 districts and representing all 3 levels (elementary, middle, and high). Grants for 2021 were awarded to 5 teams – 3 high school, 1 elementary/middle, and 1 elementary. Successful team applications were designed within the context of best practices and required grant criteria. The successful applications were clearly linked to teacher professional learning and gave thoughtful consideration to how to make the work sustainable once the grant funding was depleted. Finally, the project proposals awarded grants were both convincing and clearly explained as to the potential impact on student development as well as describ-

ing a practical and realistic approach to measuring team goals.

In a year of COVID-19 restrictions and continual workplace fluctuations, recognition must be given to all teachers who submitted an application. It is hoped that all who submitted an application benefited from this collaborative experience of developing a professional learning project to improve both teaching and learning.

The grant recipients will receive their cheques, as well as the TDPL manual containing information to support record keeping requirements and current research pertaining to professional learning. Teams may extend their work until December 2021.

The grant criteria requires that each project include a sharing component. We look forward to learning more about the successes and challenges teams experience as they go through a personalized learning process designed to deepen teacher understanding and, ultimately, enhance student learning.

Works Cited:

Nelsen, J. & Cudeiro, A. (2009). Lasting Impression. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30(5), 32-35.

## Grant Recipients 2021

### Harbour View High School

Project: *Forensic Science meets Human Anatomy through Experiential Learning*

Team Leader: Nancy Butler

### St. John the Baptist/King Edward School

Project: *Science of Reading*

Team Leader: Amie Belyea

### Bernice MacNaughton High School

Project: *Indigenizing Education*

Team Leader: Dara Harris

### Rothesay Park School

Project: *Cardio Drumming*

Team Leader: Jeanette Fisher

### Compass Education Support Centre

Project: *Fine Woodworking PLC*

Team Leader: Tim Vandenberghe

# So, You Have Decided to Retire?

Below is a checklist of things you should do when you have decided to stop teaching and receive your pension.

## Retirement Process

- Verify that you are Eligible to retire by contacting NBTA or Vestcor Pension Services.
- Notify your Superintendent, in writing, of your intention to retire: Specify the date of retirement (always at end of the month - e.g., June 30, 2021)
- Make arrangements with a financial institution to have your Retirement Allowance placed in a RRSP account or any other registered investment mechanism.
- If you are age 60 or over, do not forget to apply for the Canada Pension (CPP).

**Note:** In the case of a disability pension, these steps will only occur once the teacher has received approval for his/her disability pension from the Vestcor Pension Administration Services (Pensions Branch).

Pension cheques are received on the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month, except December. For any additional information on the above process, please contact:

**Michael Ketchum**  
NBTA, P.O. Box 752,  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5R6  
Tel. 452-1722

*District Office will contact you to complete various forms and will require the following documents:*

- Birth Certificate for you and, if applicable, your spouse/partner
- Blank/void cheque for direct deposit
- Name of financial organization to send your Retirement Allowance
- Your latest Income Tax Assessment (to verify RRSP space)

**Vestcor Pensions Preliminary Retirement Statement** will be forwarded to your home address. Choose the surviving spouse/partner percentage option on this document (if applicable).

**Note:** It is important that the Vestcor Pension Administration Services receive the necessary forms properly filled out (notice of termination and TD1) at least **90 days** prior to the month you expect to receive your first pension deposit. The School District will look after sending these forms where appropriate.

## Attention 2021 Retirees!

Teachers retiring this school year will be able to choose the option of having a donation made in their honour to the **Children's Wish Foundation**, rather than receiving the framed, inscribed print, featuring the NBTA stained-glass window. Those retirees wishing to choose the option of a donation must **contact Tammy Boon at the NBTA by April 23, 2021 ([tammy.boon@nbta.ca](mailto:tammy.boon@nbta.ca)).**



\*These donations are not individually tax-deductible as it is the organization making the payment.



# Exploring Teachers' Experiences Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

Matt Rogers & Casey Burkholder,  
University of New Brunswick

How have teachers been navigating the Covid-19 pandemic? How are teachers navigating changing roles and responsibilities in their work and home lives amidst the Pandemic? How have teachers been coping? What are the most pressing issues that teachers are seeking support for?

With the aim of understanding teachers' responses to questions such as these, we—Dr. Matt Rogers and Dr. Casey Burkholder (UNB, Faculty of Education)—have begun a research project called, "Exploring Stakeholders' Responses to New Brunswick Educational Reforms During and After the Covid-19 Pandemic." Within the project, we have been speaking with teachers from around the province to build an understanding of the impact of the pandemic on teachers' working conditions, on their experiences with students, within schools, and how education is being reformed in New Brunswick. The project has been funded by the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation Special COVID-19 Fund and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation.

One of the goals of our project is for teachers, policy makers, and stakeholders to understand the findings of the study as they unfold. In order to make the findings accessible to the public, we have been producing online reports that aim to provide information to educators, stakeholders, and policymakers as they craft policy and reform to respond to the crisis<sup>1</sup>. In sharing these short reports with the public, we aim to enhance policy, practice, and inform decision-making in priorities and reforms motivated by COVID-19. The reports fill important knowledge gaps in responsive and timely ways. They provide analysis and perspective on the implications of reforms in lives of youth and teachers, and on curriculum, teaching practices, policy, equity in education. Along with the reports, we are also releasing short videos (Figure 1) that highlight key components of the research on social media as a way to disseminate teachers' voices and encourage public conversations (see our YouTube page: <http://bit.ly/pvr4scyt>).

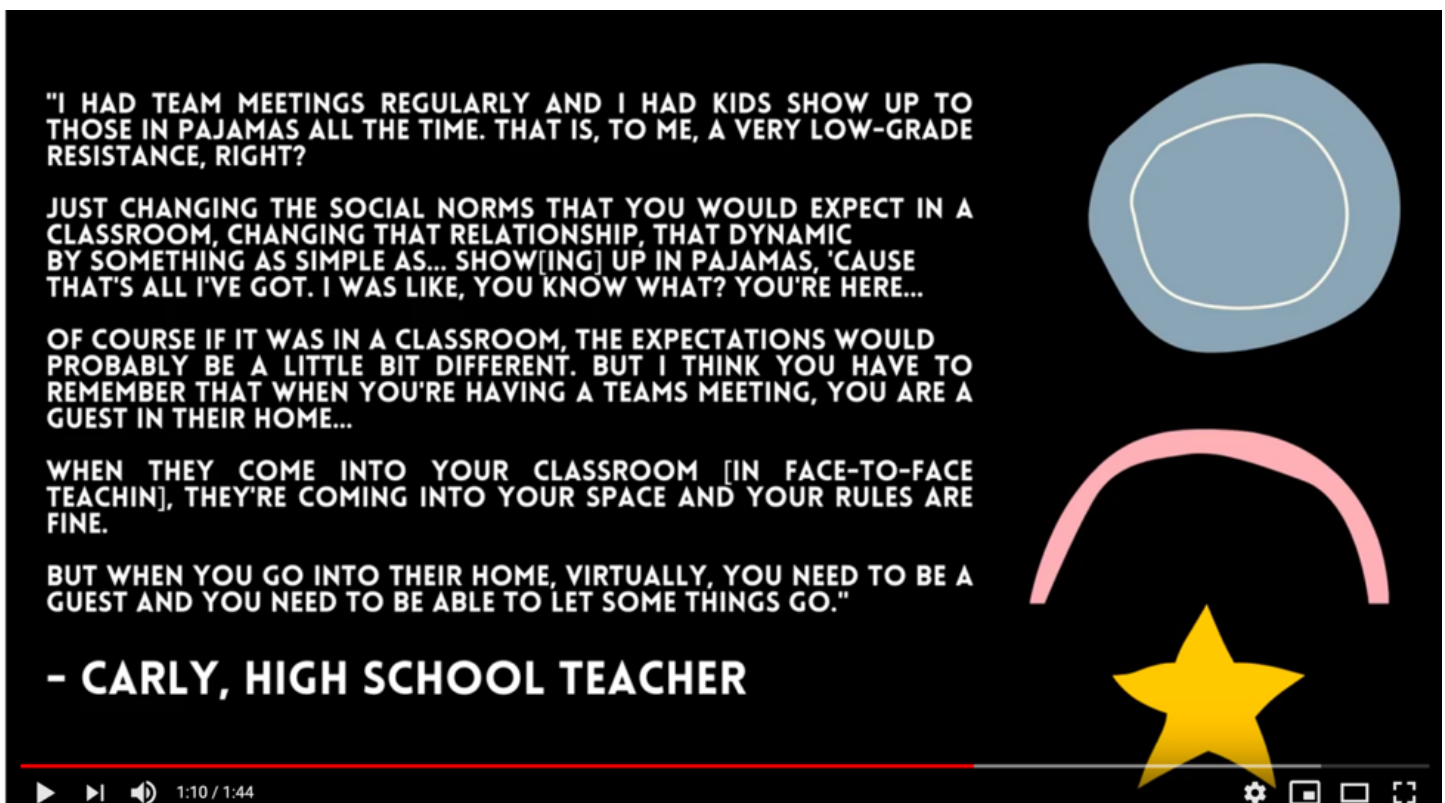


Figure 1: Still from the video "Difficulties Reaching Students"



*“...we have been speaking with teachers from around the province to build an understanding of the impact of the pandemic on teachers’ working conditions, on their experiences with students, within schools, and how education is being reformed in New Brunswick.”*

The first report draws on interviews with teachers that took place between June – August, 2020. The goal of the first round of interviews was to develop an understanding of how teachers and students responded and experienced the shut-down of schools in March and the move to online and distance-education models in the spring. The dominant themes that we identified in these interviews included:

- 1) The challenges, complexity and realities of teaching and learning from March – June, 2020;
- 2) Equity issues and disparities brought on by the pandemic and the changes to the school system; and
- 3) Concerns, ideas and hope they had during the shutdown and those they continue to have for the 2020/2021 school year.

Within our first set of interviews (Summer 2020), we found that teachers expressed concerns that the closure of schools has also removed important support systems and services for students who experience a range of issues (e.g. breakfast programs, counselling services, etc.). Some of the concerns teachers raised in the summer included a lack of support for students who experience violence in and outside the home, abuse, exploitation, and addiction. Teachers also identified how students in rural or urban settings experience the challenges brought on by the Pandemic in different ways. For example, schools sometimes can act as community centres, especially in rural settings.

We have shared our initial findings in interviews with CBC Fredericton’s Terry Seguin<sup>3</sup>, and CBC Moncton’s Jonna Brewer<sup>4</sup>. Having just finished the interviews and analysis for their second report, we anticipate sharing the report widely in mid-January, 2021.

The themes in our second report (from interviews with teachers in Fall 2020) highlight the need for more time for planning, the changing nature of their work expectations, and the ways in which changing school climates have affected teacher and student mental health. Our second set of interviews (Fall 2020) also echoed some of the challenges from the Spring semester, including the need to highlight equity issues, the practical challenges of teaching amidst the Pandemic, new duties and roles for teachers and students, the implications for time, teacher voice, agency and professionalism, and anticipated lasting changes to the system.

We will continue to speak with teachers, and share their ideas about the changing nature of work and teaching amidst the Pandemic. We encourage anyone interested in sharing their perspectives to reach out to us. If you would like to participate in the research, please e-mail [mrogers2@unb.ca](mailto:mrogers2@unb.ca) and/or [casey.burkholder@unb.ca](mailto:casey.burkholder@unb.ca).

Reports can be found on our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/PVRSCLAB><sup>5</sup>.



#### Links:

- 1 Rogers, M., Burkholder, C., Hamill, K., & Tenzin, J. (2020, October). *Exploring Stakeholders’ Responses to New Brunswick Educational Reforms During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Findings from Summer 2020*. Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/COVIDNBEDUCATION>
- 2 Participatory Visual Research 4 Social Change Lab YouTube channel: <http://bit.ly/pvr4scyt>
- 3 Interview with CBC Fredericton’s Terry Seguin: <http://bit.ly/3nPhLkw>
- 4 Interview with CBC Moncton’s Jonna Brewer: <http://bit.ly/3qARCYB>
- 5 Participatory Visual Research 4 Social Change Lab Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PVRSCLAB>

# COVID Impact: Amplifying Inequities in our NB Public School System?

Ardith Shirley,  
NBTA Staff Officer



*When schools closed in March, too many of our teachers knew that if they didn't act quickly, children's well-being would suffer.*

If there is one lesson I have learned repeatedly over the last eleven months, it is to take nothing for granted. The number of times I have paused to yearn for a return to even that which vexed me in our pre-COVID world astounds me. Today's hardship can quickly become tomorrow's longed pleasure as public health, and operational plans unfold following each GNB news conference.

Over the years, your NBTA has consistently advocated for appropriate funding for our K-12 public education system to mitigate the many challenges due to societal inequities in our province. We know that schools are microcosms of the populace. As such, teachers see first-hand the struggles faced when adult-sized problems of poverty, hunger, homelessness, mental health, relationship breakdowns, violence, abuse, and many other challenges impact our children and youth.

Layer a pandemic on top, and gaps that already exist become amplified. When schools closed in March, too many of our teachers knew that children's well-being would suffer if they didn't act quickly. We heard stories of teachers feeling compelled to deliver food from their own cupboard to doors of their students, writing COVID operational plans so that school breakfast and backpack programs could continue, feeling helpless as they informally counselled families when, during our COVID 'check-ins', we became even more acutely aware of families struggling with significant mental and physical health concerns.

At the other end of the continuum, teachers were also asked to advise families as they purchased technologies, listen to frustrations about trying to access the internet with too many devices in a home at once, or not having a prom. Regardless of the concern, we responded. In so many ways, New Brunswick's teachers became a lifeline for students and their families, not just for learning but for life. (All of this while negotiating our own uncertainties associated with living through a pandemic.)

Your NBTA continues to strive to amplify your teacher voice in public, in the media, with politicians and other decision-makers. We also work within our membership to share our members' sometimes conflicting personal views as we endeavour to maintain a strong collective and professional voice.

When we became aware of the research being conducted at UNB on the impact on our teachers of responding to COVID-19 by Dr. Casey Burkholder and Dr. Matt Rogers (see page 8), we were quick to invite them to meet with your NBTA Executive and staff. Their research affirmed the stories we have heard of your heartbreak and heroism on the front lines. We will continue to follow their research and keep collecting your stories from the front lines as we work hard to amplify your professional voice at the provincial level.

As we navigate the multitude of challenges over the weeks ahead, we encourage you to continue sharing your wisdom with us, with the researchers at UNB, and with each other. There is strength in learning together as we help shape what New Brunswick education and our province will eventually look like in a post-COVID world.

Take care,

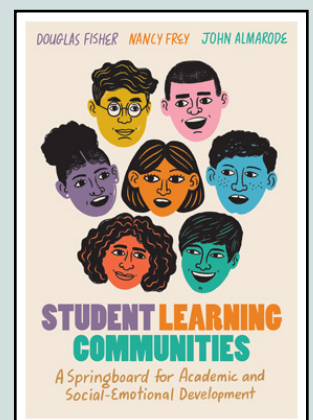
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ardith". The signature is fluid and cursive.

## Book Give Away:

Congratulations to last month's winner, **Suzanne Robertson Wilson, Saint Rose School, ASD-S.**

Up for grabs this month is a copy of "**Student Learning Communities: A Springboard for Academic and Social-Emotional Development**" by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and John Almarode.

Sound intriguing? Send me an email at [ardith.shirley@nbta.ca](mailto:ardith.shirley@nbta.ca) with 'Book Draw' as the subject line!



# May 7, 2021

## Virtual Council Day 2021: Altogether Different



Elementary Council



Middle Level Council

## Teacher Recognition Awards

Do you know a deserving teacher?  
Nominate a colleague today!  
Go to [www.nbta.ca](http://www.nbta.ca) for more information.

**Deadline: April 1<sup>st</sup>**

# Lessons Learned During A Pandemic

Tina Estabrooks,  
NBTA Staff Officer



School leaders quickly learn to respond to change and crisis in an acute fashion. Some events, such as an unpredicted midday school closure, create a short-lived frenzy, exhausting teachers as they frantically find ways to get students home safely. Unfortunately, there are also more catastrophic events like a death or a serious injury that rocks the foundation of a school environment. These incidents linger and require ongoing support and attention from leaders. Regardless of circumstance, in times of emergency, school communities look to their principal for direction and hope. As a former principal, I experienced crisis and, in hindsight, acknowledge that they were not enjoyable moments but admittedly times of intense learning.

In response to this pandemic, schools have been forced to operate in crisis mode for nearly a year and I am curious about the

experience. In turn, I reached out to school leaders from across the province and asked for a short response to two questions:

1. As you reflect upon the year thus far, what was one way your school responded to the equity gap(s) created by the pandemic?
2. From the leadership perspective, what was a lesson learned during the pandemic that has left you forever changed?

A few principals were able to carve time out of their very busy and stressful days to share their thoughts. I extend my thanks to them and pass their words of reflection along to you. Enjoy.

## Christine Roy St. John the Baptist – King Edward School

Reflecting on the past several months of leading a school during the pandemic, I realize that, while this extraordinary time has not been without challenges, it has also served to highlight the significance of strong relationships and the importance of educators supporting the “hidden curriculum” that is often overlooked. We recognize that students cannot “do the Bloom until they have the Maslow”, and it takes a village of families, community members, and staff working together to ensure students are provided the necessities to thrive and learn, whether it is a breakfast in the morning or a hug to comfort. I am so proud of the hard work done to foster this collective approach within our school community – we are a family at SJBKE! If COVID 19 has taught us anything, it is that you never really understand the significance of your work until it is tested by adversity.

When schools were closed in March, our staff were upset that we did not get to say good-bye to our students, to provide comfort and explain why schools were closing. We were honestly devastated, and immediately began to worry for our families who struggle with food insecurities, mental health, and overall lack of support. We began to focus on what we could do to support the situation. Working with community groups, such as Inner-City Youth Ministry and P.U.L.S.E., we offered all the food we had in our building and supplies such as a refrigerator and other hardware in support of the Saint John Emergency Food Program. Several staff members and I volunteered for this initiative packing bags or delivering food.

All our teachers reached out to students and the community – the focus was on connectivity and mental well-being; these calls were an anchor for many of our families who yearned to hear a familiar voice who would listen and offer support, especially for those who were struggling. Recognizing the impact on neighborhood well-being, one of our community partners offered to provide a pizza dinner to 5-6 families every weekend during the spring- these “Sunshine Visits” were most welcome.

Simple acts of kindness – showing compassion, providing support and understanding- did not go unnoticed, for our students and families deeply missed us as well. They left notes, posters, and pictures on the front door of the school to show how much they appreciated and cared for us! They touched our hearts and, in so doing, solidified the importance of our roles in these unprecedented times.



**Heather Bell-Williams**  
**Milltown Elementary School**



I was tidying my office this week and came upon an initiative started with staff in the fall of 2019 – a gratitude jar. I opened the jar and looked through the assorted scraps of paper – so many of the things now seemed so irrelevant. I realized that I have lost access to many of the things that fill my gratitude jar. I am, however, grateful for the opportunities that our school has had to respond to some of the economic disparities in our community as well as address the short term and long-term need for hope.

It was not long into our lockdown before the admin team realized that this was turning into a marathon, and most definitely was not a sprint where we would finish fast and strong! Like our academic and behavioral interventions, our economic interventions were structured as tiered levels of support. Tier one is available to all members of the group, tier 2 is available for a few less folks and tier 3 is accessed in specific and unique situations. Immediately, we were able to make announcements that families could access financial assistance and/or extra food (tier 1) and regular meetings were convened of community resource agencies and out of that

came school supply purchasing and delivery to families who were not able to access the online learning (tier 2). While we did not always feel a powerful sense of gratitude in those challenging times, wanting to help brought hope to all concerned.

As we wade through these long phases of pandemic recovery, I am learning first-hand something that I had known in theory: trauma changes people. I have always known the theory of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how traumatic events change the brain. I quickly came to realize that, while adults can change quickly when we must but, when those changes are traumatic, our adult brain chemistry (like that of a child's) is modified. Our adult downstairs brains get locked into that constant state of overdrive. I recall trying to read and not being able to focus or being unable to remember what I wanted to do.

I have worried about the long-term effects of the changes caused by trauma. We know that ACEs increase the likelihood of children having behaviour, attendance, academic and/or long-term health problems. As we learn to interact with one another in these ever-evolving times, let's remember that trauma changes us and let's be patient with one another as we try to learn together. Most importantly, may we as educators remember long after this pandemic that trauma changes kids' brains. May we always be hopeful - hopeful in our ability to care for one another and hopeful that we will one day learn and work together in a new context, albeit changed by our collective experiences of the last 12 months.

**Thomas McCabe**  
**Millerton School**

The return to school in September brought with it many obstacles and our staff looked at resources to help our students deal with the challenges of being in school during a pandemic, we turned to our strengths. We are a community school located in Derby, on the Miramichi River, in a small rural area surrounded by nature. So, we took them outside. Science classes, phys-ed classes, literacy classes and Guidance sessions are frequently held on our nature path and in our outdoor classroom area. The opportunity for the students to interact with wildlife and learn more about the environment that surrounds them has become our most useful tool in our efforts to cultivate our student's mental health. Classes cooked outside, built shelters, learned to classify trees and more and more began to identify with nature. With winter comes snowshoeing and the building of quinzhees. In the spring we will tap maple trees and bottle syrup. We feed birds, monitor weather, conduct nature surveys, write stories and paint pictures. Our students, in a time of uncertainty, have shown resilience. I am proud to be a part of a staff that works so hard to meet student needs.

A lesson that I have learned from the challenges of this year has been the value of peer support and the strength of team-based planning. Teaching is a profession that is both rewarding and exhausting. Being aware of this, we worked to find ways to manage our out-of-class meeting times in a way that would maximize effectiveness and encourage a peer support network. In previous years, our schedule was made to allow grade-based meetings at the beginning of the day, K-4 teachers met one week, 5-8 teachers the

other, and educational assistants on Fridays. These meetings allowed for ESST conferences, PLC time, school improvement planning and review. More importantly, it was an opportunity for colleague connectivity. This time allowed for the occurrence of peer support and team-based problem solving.



This year the team-based meeting time was not feasible. At present, our meetings are at the end of the day, and take place virtually or in a small group setting. We are struggling to maintain our connectivity. A strength that our staff had developed and enriched through our previous meeting format is being lost. Ideas, struggles, and laughs were shared, support was given and the building culture blossomed. Staff felt connected and informed in a way that cannot be replicated through email. They saw the results of their input and felt as though they shaped the direction in which our school was headed. Relationships, relationships, relationships. These relationships are those with our students, our peers, and our school community. Despite our efforts to maintain those relationships, the reality of this year has strained the connection that we have worked so hard to build. Personally, I have learned that connectivity and feeling valued are key to success in a school setting.

**Jennifer Carhart**  
**Princess Elizabeth School**

As I sit and reflect on the year 2020, like most, I am feeling overwhelmed by the marathon we've run together. From March 13th onward the job of educators has been forever changed, through it all we have weathered, adapted, adjusted and persevered for the love of our jobs and passion for education. As the leader of my school, I have learned so very many lessons over the course of this pandemic, but the most important continues to be the simplest of all- relationships. This pandemic has highlighted that each and every one of us carries a suitcase of baggage, some days heavier than others. As the school leader, I had to be virtually aware of all these loads and make sure that our teams are set up to continually support, listen and be patient. My biggest lesson through it all has been time. Everything takes time. I/we need to slow down to give everyone time to process, time to reflect, time to adjust and time to prepare. It is ok. I have learned that



my leadership has to be shared and my lead has to come from my staff. Their jobs have changed at such a rapid pace that I need to be tuned into their needs and ensure they have all the supports they require. I've been forever changed by the reality that we all need time, flexibility and support to work through this together. Fortunately, I am blessed to work with an incredible staff who do these things no matter what.

As a school we recognize that the pandemic has created incredible hardships for so many and as a group we came together to ensure that we remain connected to our community, that we support our community, that we listen to our community and that we respond to our community's needs. We were able to accomplish this by reaching out weekly, sending videos and emails, providing information and resources, making sure families are aware of the supports available to them in our community. Building connections and relationships, are aspects that my staff has done an incredible job with. Our staff continues to go above and beyond to make sure that every family has timely response, has a 'view' into their classrooms, has opportunities to pop in virtually and above all, our staff has made sure that our families know we love their children and that together we are a community of learners. As a family, together, we support one another.

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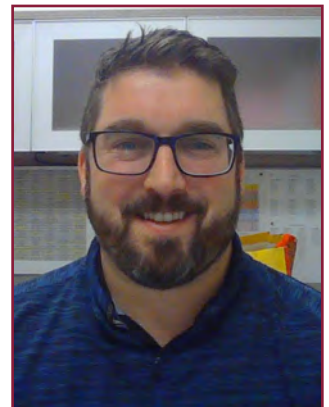
**Ryan Johnston**  
**Harrison Trimble High School**

In such an unprecedented year, there has been numerous actions and items that never had to be tackled in Education before. Aside from how much time, effort, preparation, and energy went into just getting the physical space prepared for the outside world, we still needed to tackle the new technological world for our high school educators and students. The hybrid learning of at-home and at-school learning was something everyone involved with had to learn overnight.

When I think about our first term, this topic area is where I feel our school responded extremely well and certainly made a priority. It started with getting tech needs in front of all our students and teachers. This certainly was not an easy task as every school had the same needs during this time.

Once these needs were met, it was creating intervention groups to allow students to learn how to learn. Our school created intervention groups that had admin, guidance, resource, and classroom teachers who helped show struggling learners how to be a student at-home. There were numerous topics covered, but we initially started with how the online learning works, use of all technology available, how to set up an at-home workspace, daily goal setting, creating breaks from screen time, online etiquette, and healthy habits to name a few.

As a province, we had asked all high school students, who were all coming off their least academic school year and asking them to be a professional student at home without any learning on how to do this. We felt that within our intervention, they could at least start to get a handle on what their own responsibilities should be at home. It certainly was not perfect, but showed progress and all the students felt it was worth the time invested.



In the end, the major lesson I have learned from this very complicated year is that people are resilient. No matter what comes our way in the future, people will come together, collaborate, and find a way to succeed. I have seen it in all aspects of school life - from our custodians, to our support staff, teachers, admin, community, parents and especially our students. Everyone has had to change, work differently and constantly adapt. They have and we all will be stronger for this because we are doing this together.

Once again, I would like to thank the school leaders who were able to put a few thoughts together. If I reached out to you, but the busyness of your world did not permit the time required to sit, think and write, know that I understand and share that, if you still have interest, I would welcome further stories that highlight this unorthodox reality you face. The Leadership Corner will continue to be a space for school leaders to network and share their knowledge and practices that serve to improve the lives of

teachers, students and communities. Look after yourself, take time to breath and search for the positives in the day. Hopefully soon the pandemic will no longer cloud our vision and monopolize our existence. Until then, take pride in the incredible way in which you are leading.

*Tina*

# If Conflict Arises...Part II



Kim McKay,  
NBTA Staff Officer

The November edition of my POINT article focused on the inevitability of conflict and the roles that a person may adopt with respect to conflict: villain; victim; rescuer (Fierce, Inc.®). This article continues with the theme of conflict by sharing the 60 Second Opening Statement (Fierce, Inc.®).

**Conflict Scenario:** An NBTA Branch President has concerns about the communication practices of one of the NBTA School Reps.

## 60 Second Opening Statement®

**1. Name the Issue.**

As Branch President, I want to talk with you about your lack of consistency and timeliness in sharing branch communications and information with your school.

**2. Select a specific example that illustrates the behavior or situation I want to change.**

Your school did not have any teachers attend the early career teacher conference as the registration information was not forwarded. Teachers at your school were upset that the Branch could not consider their resolutions since they were not submitted by the deadline.

**3. Describe my emotions around this issue.**

I am concerned that your teachers are not being given the opportunity to fully engage with their professional association due to lack of communication. I am also frustrated with the inconsistent sharing of information.

**4. Clarify why this is important - what is at stake to gain or lose for me, for others, for the team, or for the organization.**

I believe that the reputation of the branch is at stake. If this issue is not resolved the Branch Executive may need to request your school to select a new School Rep.

**5. Identify my contribution(s) to this problem.**

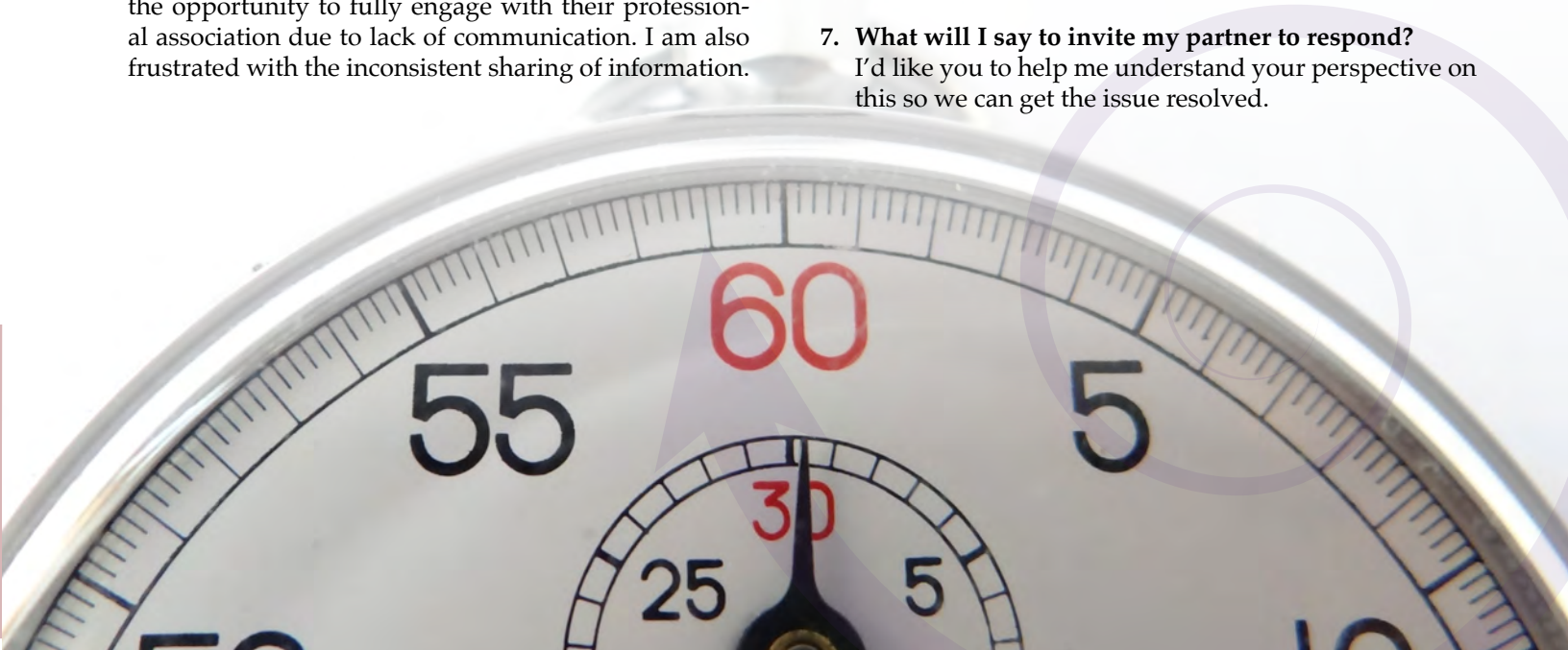
I realize I may have contributed to this problem by not expressing my concerns earlier and letting the situation escalate.

**6. How will I state my wish to resolve this issue?**

I truly wish to clear up the issues around sharing branch communications at your school.

**7. What will I say to invite my partner to respond?**

I'd like you to help me understand your perspective on this so we can get the issue resolved.



# Upcoming Professional Learning Opportunities



## Conversations Worth Having: Appreciative Coaching Conversations for New Brunswick School Leaders

*"We are living in challenging times, many of us juggle stress, concerns, and challenges daily. We can move forward in ways that offer renewal, reinvention, and resiliency simply by changing our conversations."*

These 4-weekly Zoom sessions serve as an opportunity for you to practice generative questions and positive framing on issues and concerns you are currently experiencing. You do not need to attend all 4 sessions to benefit from this virtual series. We will use the work of Jacqueline Stavros and Cheri Torres as inspiration for our time together. Register by contacting [judy.deveau@nbta.ca](mailto:judy.deveau@nbta.ca)

**Target Audience:** K-12 Principals & Vice Principals

**When:** Weekly starting Thursday, March 11 to Thursday, April 1, 2021 from 4:15 pm to 5:15 pm

Limited seats available!



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May 2-4, 2021

## Rivers of Change: Trans Canada Trends in Education Conference

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[www.capsle.ca](http://www.capsle.ca)



## DSS 2021 Developing Successful Schools Conference

July 12-15, 2021  
(Tentatively)

"This was an extremely practical session that will support our work with teachers and leads. Networking opportunities were very productive and I learned a lot from around Atlantic Canada."

— DSS Attendee

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# CONTACT -2021-

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**Hosted by NSTU**



# ATTENTION TEACHERS!

## Are YOU eligible for a PAY RAISE?

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### Apply to have previous work experience count!

If you are a new teacher who has previous work experience that is related to teaching, you may apply to the Office of Teacher Certification to have it considered for an increase on your salary grid. The form you need is available from the NBTA website [www.nbta.ca](http://www.nbta.ca). Click on the Certification button and download the form called **Application for Work-Related Experience for Salary Purposes**. You should also contact your district office to ensure that all supply teaching experience has been credited.

**March 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline to have the increase back-dated to January 2, 2021.**

Are you a teacher who has **COMPLETED COURSE WORK** towards a certification upgrade?

### Don't forget to apply for your certification increase!

The form you need is available from the NBTA website [www.nbta.ca](http://www.nbta.ca). Click the Certification button and look for the Application for Upgrading Teacher Certification Level at the bottom of the page with other forms.

**March 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline to have the increase back-dated to January 2, 2021.**

**Don't forget to include the evaluation fee!**



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# The Positive Workplace Framework for New Brunswick Schools

Darla Day, Oromocto High School  
Joanne McDonald, Oromocto High School  
Bill Morrison, University of New Brunswick  
Patricia Peterson, University of New Brunswick

*“Current research underscores the importance of creating workplace cultures that foster the psychological health and wellness of employees within their team and work environments. Healthy workplaces support well-being, are psychologically safe, and provide the basis for effective team functioning. Organizations can be proactive by taking targeted actions to safeguard the well-being of employees and ensuring the creation of positive and healthy workplace cultures.”*

*Dr. Patricia Peterson and Dr. Bill Morrison*

## Overview of the Positive Workplace Framework

The Positive Workplace Framework (PWF) is an evidence-based positive psychology approach for optimizing workplace environments that contribute to team well-being and engagement. The three key components of the PWF are:

- The *Mental Fitness and Resiliency Inventory* (MFRI), a validated online measure that provides schools with an automated report related to the integration of mental fitness and resiliency practices in the school environment, as well as an overall Well-being Index (WBI) (Peterson, Morrison et al., 2019)
- *Train-the-trainer* asynchronous modules and interactive online sessions that equip district and school champions to promote and embed mental fitness and resiliency practices in their personal and team interactions
- *Online professional learning resources* that can be accessed and applied to develop and carry out strategic plans to promote healthy and effective team dynamics in school environments

Current system level research indicates that within workplaces, the PWF has been associated with reduced levels of staff absenteeism over a 3-to-5-year period and has contributed to enhanced performance outcomes related to strategic organizational goals (Laurie, Morrison, Peterson & Bolaños Gramajo, In press, 2020).

## The PWF at Oromocto High School

Over the past six years, Oromocto High School (OHS) has been actively involved with the *Positive Workplace Framework* (PWF) initiative. The *Positive Mental Fitness* (PMF) Committee at OHS has worked closely in partnership with the program researchers and creators at the University of New Brunswick, the school district (Anglophone West School District), and the Oromocto Education Center Public Health Nurses to engage in professional learning strategies that promote positive school culture and well-being. Originally, OHS had committed to completing a three-year pilot program, but has since extended its positive mental health practices indefinitely and has embedded them in its School Plan. The school’s PMF Committee has taken a strengths-based approach with the long-range goals of increased relatedness, competency, autonomy-support, engagement, team functioning and resiliency. OHS sees the value in these practices

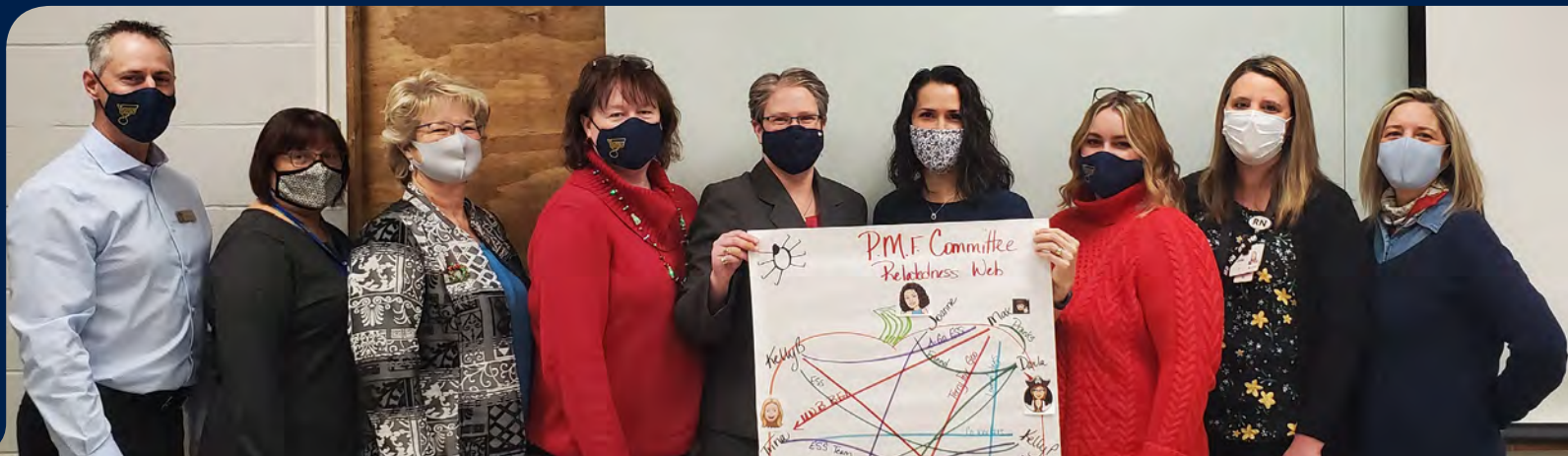
as there is a strong link between the mental health of school staff and student learning and success—healthy teachers better support student achievement.

OHS has administered the MFRI on an annual basis to track outcomes related to mental fitness and resiliency practices within the school environment. Each year, MFRI results are assessed and reported, informing direction for professional learning by showing staff where they are doing well, and where they have room to grow. For example, after reviewing annual MFRI results, the school has designed activities that focus on specific resiliency assets, such as emotional intelligence and positive communication. Each year, the committee has tailored the online PWF resources and created new, unique resources to meet the school’s needs.

## The PWF in Practice at OHS

One of the things that the PMF Committee has discovered along the way is that their staff loves to connect with each other and really enjoys some rivalry! With this in mind, the committee set out to create activities that would help staff members engage in the tenets of positive mental health in a relationship-building, hands-on, and sometimes competitive way. They created and/or adapted activities from the PWF online platform that provided the opportunity for people to get to know each other (relatedness), to show appreciation and recognition (competency), and to engage in group problem-solving (autonomy-support). Some activities included “fierce” competition, with staff members showing their leadership skills and having to work as a team, while others gave participants a chance to demonstrate their gratitude toward each other in creative ways.

In one classic team-building activity, staff members were randomly assigned to teams and were given a bag filled with various items, including feathers, straws, felt, tissue paper, popsicle sticks, etc. They were then allotted 15 minutes to come up with the perfect house that would protect an egg when dropped from a height of two metres. Each group battled against one other group that was also building its house quickly and quietly in the same room, trying to keep its design a secret. This activity required teams to communicate and to problem-solve against the clock with their competitors close-by. Bragging rights were on the line!



*Oromocto High School PMF Committee from left to right: Kevin Inch, Kelly Breen, Kelly Pryor, Maxine MacConnell, Darla Day, Joanne McDonald, Carri Gray, Julie Carr, Trina Kokoski. Missing: Judy Piers-Kavanaugh*

Another popular activity provided staff members with the opportunity to design and to create a card of appreciation for another staff member. Cards were crafted on the spot and delivered directly in the session or at a later time. Participants had access to paper (plain or colored), pencil crayons, markers, stickers, glitter and glue. This activity tapped into the staff's deep gratitude for each other, causing people to think about what others mean to them and how they have enriched their lives. However, the real power came in sharing and expressing that appreciation openly. Participants came away from this Professional Learning activity feeling cared for and deeply valued. In fact, it has been so popular that the school has done a variation of this activity a couple of times. While each hands-on activity had targeted, positive mental fitness goals, the PMF Committee found that the best ones invoked a sense of community, caused people to rise to a challenge, and incited a spirit of fun among staff members.

### **PWF Expansion**

The Positive Workplace Framework is now available to all schools in New Brunswick. During the challenging days of Covid-19, staff members have an even greater need to engage with their schools and with each other. The PWF provides a structured yet flexible suite of resources that supports schools in assessing their mental fitness, resiliency and positive leadership practices, and in embedding environmental practices that promote well-being and engagement. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Educational Support Services, can connect schools with access to all PWF resources, as well as to opportunities for asynchronous, online training modules or Zoom Professional Learning sessions to equip positive workplace champions in each school. In addition, each school is invited to complete the online Mental Fitness and Resiliency Inventory (MFRI), resulting in a personalized school report to help develop plans for expanding positive workplace practices. For access to the PWF, please contact Catherine Blaney in ASD-W (Catherine.blaney@nbed.nb.ca), Andrew Culberson (Andrew.Culberson@gnb.ca), Tammy Strong (Tammy.Strong@gnb.ca), or Patti Peterson (plp@unb.ca).

### **About the Authors**

*Darla Day has spent the majority of her career at Oromocto High School. She has been a Vice-Principal for the past 12 years after having been a teacher and an SPR at OHS. Darla is a PMF committee member and the administrative leader who oversees the Positive Mental Fitness Committee.*

*Joanne McDonald is a mid-career teacher who has taught in both New Brunswick and Ontario. She has been a classroom teacher at Oromocto High School for the past 8 years and is the Chair of the Positive Mental Fitness Committee.*

*Bill Morrison is a Clinical Psychologist and a Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of New Brunswick. Dr. Morrison has had extensive experience in the development and implementation of health and educational services for children and adults across Canada.*

*Patricia Peterson is an Assoc. Professor (Exceptional Learners) in UNB's Faculty of Education. As Co-Executive Director of the University of New Brunswick's Health and Education Research Group, she leads several initiatives related to educational program evaluation, student wellness, mental fitness and comprehensive school health.*



*OHS PMF Activity from left to right: Carri Gray, Kelly Pryor, Joanne McDonald, Trina Kokoski*

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# Choose Happiness

Lisa Calhoun, Teacher Counsellor



How can we be happier in 2021? Things have been really tough over the last year and we're still in difficult and uncertain times. Especially now, with everything and everyone trying to find their way in the new normal that is COVID-19, you may feel like you just need something to lift your spirits or ways to add more joy and positivity to your life.

Happiness isn't created by some "thing" or by some "one". Happiness comes from within - it is an inside job. Sometimes we lose our connection to that "happiness element" because of stress, worries, and our everyday obligations.

I'm encouraging everyone to focus on small daily actions to create more happiness for yourself and others. We can't change the situation, but we can choose how we respond. Let's all show a little kindness and respond positively whenever possible. Below are some ideas that you can try out to add more happiness to your life.

- **What in the past just lit you up or brought you joy?** Pause and really reflect on that question. Bring a little of that into your 2021. For me, I'm going to dance and sing like nobody's watching. That last part should be easy with our COVID restrictions 😊 Do something that speaks to your soul!
- **Pick "your" word for 2021.** Set an intention, then choose a word that symbolizes your intention. Shine. Dream. Forgive. Simplify. Dare. Awe. Cherish. Bloom. Check out January's "Words of Wellness" for some other great ideas. Words can be very powerful and can build us up, so choose a word that speaks to you. My word for the year is "Breathe". I have posted my word in my office as well as at home and will intentionally build more breathwork into my days. I recently heard this quote and it spoke to me, "As long as I have breath, my mission is not complete!"
- **Set an intention to do just one positive thing each month.** 30-day practices are about trying something new, different, fun, or even crazy every day for 30 days. These practices help you to do something every single day, even if that something

is small. This isn't about doing challenging things necessarily, just do things that bring you JOY. It might be walking in nature for 5-10 minutes each day for 30 days, taking 2 minutes to breathe in the morning, drinking an extra glass of water, sending a positive text or email to family members, friends, or colleagues, or taking 2 minutes to journal one positive thing that happened in the last 24 hours. When we shape each day a little bit toward the good, we learn that we matter to ourselves, that our days are significant and we can change our lives by changing our days. Think about it: if you do one new thing each day for 30 days, at the end of 2021, you'll have cultivated lots of new happy habits.

- **Think of ways to declutter your life, both mentally and physically.** Start small in one corner of your classroom/office/home. The process of letting go of "things" frees up more physical space, but also more mental space. You may want to try guided meditation as a way to declutter the mind as well. If your mind is always racing, give yourself the gift of slowing down and focusing on your body and your breath for a few minutes each day. Check out "Great Meditation" and the "The Mindful Movement" on YouTube.
- **Create a happiness jar.** Grab a container or jar and each day in 2021, write down one positive thing that happened that day. You can ALWAYS find one thing. Then, when 2021 is over, you'll have lots of happy things to look back on.
- **Practice gratitude.** Spend a few minutes a day scanning the world for three new things you're grateful for. The reason why that's powerful is you're training your brain to scan the world in a new pattern, you're scanning for positives, instead of scanning for threats. Move from the general to the specific to really reflect and grow the positive experience. Instead of saying, "I'm grateful for my dog Lexie" I could say "I'm grateful for my dog Lexie because she met me at the door today bringing me back to the present and filling my heart with joy." This is a great practice and research has shown it adds to our wellbeing. Get yourself a nice journal and at the end of the day as part of a healthy bedtime routine, write

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# Well-Being: It's within your reach...



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NB Teacher Wellness

down 1-3 things that you are grateful for. I've been doing this for a few years now and it is a wonderful way to add happiness and wellbeing to your life.

Happiness is much more than feeling good. Besides experiencing positive emotions such as satisfaction or contentment, we are happy when we find meaning and purpose. It is not a state of being, but a process of becoming. Life can be mundane and full of stress, but it can also be fulfilling and uplifting! Oftentimes, it's the subtle choices and distinctions we make throughout the day that decide which one it's going to be for us. Whatever is going on in the world, how we respond is completely up to us.

A good example of this comes from my 75 year old stepdad Bob. The other day he was a bit frustrated and bored with all of the COVID restrictions. He and my mom live in Upper Blackville and he had run out of projects that day, so he told mom he was going to Doaktown for a drive. On his way back he saw a young "fella" on the side of the road and it looked like he may need some help. He stopped, and indeed the young man had a flat tire and was grateful for the helping hand as he had never changed a tire. As it turns out, the young man was a first year teacher from Miramichi. I'm sure my stepdad talked his ear off as they were changing the tire, and I know he would have told him, "Teachers don't make enough money for what they have to do today, especially during COVID! I could never do what you do!" When Bob returned home a bit later, mom said he was beaming. His spirit and his energy had completely changed and he was uplifted.

Happiness is internal - feeling good about yourself, having close relationships, and making the world a better place. The path to happiness is possible, we just need to practice it. Let's all be practitioners of happiness in 2021 and commit to increasing happiness and decreasing unhappiness. Happy acts are small things with a big impact! Sharing your happiness is so important. I Choose Happiness - will you join me?

## Happiness resources to check out:

"The Science of Well-Being"  
a free on-line course offered by Dr. Laurie Santos

[www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)

free app with daily reminders, monthly calendars, podcast

[www.solveforhappy.com](http://www.solveforhappy.com)

[www.thehowofhappiness.com](http://www.thehowofhappiness.com)

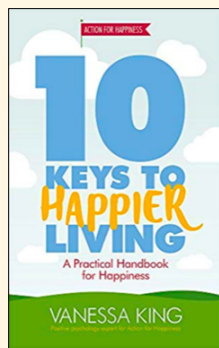
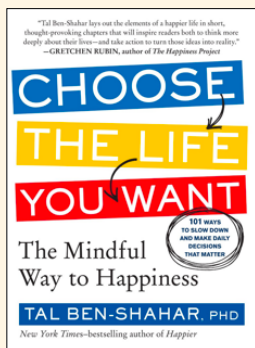
(click on the Discover Happiness tab)

The Happiness Lab podcast

Ted Talk by Shawn Achor  
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(worth the 12 minutes - funny and informative)

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made, it comes  
from your own  
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<b>CRISIS RESPONSE PLANNING</b>	March 10
<b>PEER SUPPORT</b> —Equipping the Natural Helper	March 18
<b>ANXIETY IN CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH</b> —Practical Intervention Strategies	March 27
<b>RESTORATIVE JUSTICE</b> —Facilitating Dialogue	April 6-8
<b>SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING</b> —A Whole School Approach	April 13
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## What happens when you withdraw from a registered savings plan?

by Sam Drummond, Member Service Representative, NBTA Credit Union

In the case of an RRSP, outside of a couple of specific situations, the money you take out will be treated like income—which means you'll need to pay taxes on it. It's also important to keep in mind that once you take money out of your RRSP, you will not get that contribution room back at a later date.

When you take money out of a TFSA, you don't have to worry about paying taxes on it—the same goes for any interest or returns you might have earned on the money inside the account. Once you take money out of your TFSA, you will get your original contribution room back, but not until the following calendar year.

When it comes to taking money out of an RESP, it gets a little more complicated. Withdrawals are divided into two categories: Post-Secondary Education (PSE) payments and Education Assistance Payments (EAP). PSE payments are not taxable because it's the money you invested in the RESP in the first place, which was not tax-exempt. EAP funds are comprised of grants, bonds, or accumulated income and are taxable—but the tax is paid by the student using the funds.



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