



# Exceptional News!

Student Support Services Division  
Department of Education

Newsletter

May 2014

## Conference in Halifax for Teachers for the Blind/Visually Impaired

On May 4-7 in Halifax NS, APSEA and CNIB presented *Seeing Beyond the Horizon: the 2014 Canadian Conference for Educators, Parents and Professionals of Children and Youth who are Blind or Partially Sighted*.

The Itinerants for the Blind/Visually Impaired participated in this conference which offered a wide variety of informative and innovative workshops for parents, educators and professionals who work with children and youth living with vision loss.

the University of Ottawa and Anita Bernstein from VOICE Ontario will impart their knowledge of effective strategies and best practices for working with students with hearing loss.



## Professional Development in St. John's for Teachers for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing

On May 14-16, 2014, the Department of Education will be hosting a three day conference in Listening and Spoken Language Skills for Itinerant Teachers for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Dr. Elizabeth Fitzpatrick from

## Assistive Technology

May 15, 2014 is the deadline for applications for assistive technology for deployment by September 2014. Please use the newest application form available at [www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/assistive\\_tech.html](http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/assistive_tech.html)

Note also the guidelines for application and the flow chart of the application process. Teachers are reminded that a record of a 30 day in-school trial of the requested device or software is to accompany each application.

There is a minimum eligibility of \$200 cost *per individual item* (before tax and shipping charges). Bundling of items for a total above

this amount will not be accepted. In other words, a switch which costs \$79 will not be covered - neither will an application for three such switches even if their combined cost is \$237.



### **Alternate Format Materials**

May 15, 2014 is the deadline to apply for alternate format materials for September 2014 provision. Applications received after that date will be processed as resources permit. Please use the updated forms available on [www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/student-support/applications.html](http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/student-support/applications.html) Please notice that there are now two versions of the application – one for students who have had AFM resources previously, and one for students new to AFM.

### **Professional Learning Dates for Guidance Counsellors and Educational Psychologists**

During the month of May, Guidance Counsellors and Educational Psychologists will receive three days of professional learning on a number of key documents released by the Department of Education. These sessions will provide an overview of the Standards of Practice for Guidance Counsellors and Educational Psychologists, the Comprehensive Assessment Guidelines, the revised definitions for exceptionalities, the Service Delivery Model and the Safe and Caring Schools Policy.

Professional Learning Schedule:

St. John's area - May 13, 14, 15  
Bay Roberts - May 20, 21, 22  
Gander & Happy Valley-Goose Bay -  
May 27, 28, 29

### **Safe and Caring Schools**

In May 2014 the Department of Education is providing an overview of the Safe and Caring Schools Policy for all Guidance Counsellors and Educational Psychologists across the province. Topics include school development and policy implementation, inclusive education, social-emotional learning, bullying intervention, positive behaviour supports, nonviolent crisis intervention, creating a code of conduct, teaching digital citizenship and the role of guidance counsellors and educational psychologists in supporting safe and caring schools initiatives through their individualized work plans. To date, administrators, program specialists, senior educational officers and executive district staff have already received professional learning on the revised policy.

### **Great Things Happening in Western Region with Social Thinking Groups**

In the spring of 2013, Allison Stark, a Speech-Language Pathologist in the western region of NLESD, attended a two day conference entitled "Social Thinking" with Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke in St. John's NL. This conference introduced innovative ways to teach children how to think and act in social situations.

With these great new strategies in hand, Allison returned from this workshop motivated to collaborate with teachers to develop Social Language groups within her assigned schools. The purpose of these groups is to focus on ways for socially challenged children to be able to interact with their peers in an appropriate manner. Allison currently leads five social thinking groups in three schools targeting students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, which meet on a weekly basis.

The groups range from 3-7 students and are led in conjunction with an Instructional Resource Teacher. The *Incredible Flexible You* and *Superflex* programs are valuable resources to the groups, while her older students benefit from *You Are a Social*



*Detective*, and various YouTube videos. The students have become excited about this new way of thinking, and enjoy the group immensely. The success of the program motivated Allison and IRT, Jana Young, to create their own YouTube channel to house school-developed Social Language videos. The group members, including the school administration team, use the videos to assist in dealing with the children's challenges.



According to Allison, the involvement of the IRT and the support of school administration have been critical to the success of these groups. It is important that everyone involved with the children become familiar with the terminology and strategies. This is vital so that follow up can occur in natural situations to encourage student carryover and use of appropriate social behavior. Parents have been invited along as well to give them the

opportunity to implement these skills in the home environment.



## Graduating Student Awards

April 4, 2014 was the deadline for graduating students to submit applications for the Safe and Caring Schools Graduating Student Awards. The award recognizes students who have taken lead roles in promoting Safe and Caring School initiatives in their school communities. Winners receive a tuition voucher for five hundred dollars, which can be used to financially support their post-secondary learning. Each year, fifteen students are selected from across the province for the award. This year's winners will be announced in early June.

# Gifted Education

## Gifted Education: Suggested Websites

Teachers frequently ask about resources to extend the learning of students who are particularly able or those who have been identified as Gifted and Talented. It is important to realize that students who are gifted and talented have strengths and

interests in many areas. What is a favourite for one might not be of interest to another.

The following sites might be worth exploring:

### Rice University-Centre for Technology in Teaching and in Learning Web Adventures

<http://webadventures.rice.edu/index.html>

This has information for educators and quizzes and games for students. Topics include Medical Mysteries, Reconstructors, CSI: The Experience, Forensic Scientists, Virtual Clinical Trials, and Careers in Science.

Some of these games are quite lengthy-consider for elementary level or higher.

### Word Sandwich

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

The aim of this game is to guess a 5 letter word. If your guess is alphabetically before the mystery word, your guess will float to the top. If your guess comes after the mystery word, it will sink to the bottom. Players get five guesses per round and earn bonus points for guessing the word quickly. While players do not interact with others online, they can compare their scores with players from all over the world.



### Scholastic Author Interviews

[www.scholastic.com/kids/stacks/videos/#authors-say-hello](http://www.scholastic.com/kids/stacks/videos/#authors-say-hello)

The Scholastic website has many resources including interviews with authors. Browse the *Authors Say Hello* Section to see graphic artist Kazu Kibuishi (Amulet) share his notebooks, watch an interview with J.K. Rowling, Gordon Korman, Rick Riordan, or Walter Wick. Click on *Full Author Interviews* to hear from Blue Balliett, Sid Fleischman and others. They answer questions about their writing process, where they get their ideas, and how they name their characters. This could be a great resource for a talented writer.



### Tying Knots

[www.realknots.com/index.htm](http://www.realknots.com/index.htm)

This site has an alphabetical index of knots with instructions on their tying and usage. The home page also contains links to climbing, fishing, math and art connections through knots.



### Free Educational Movies for Kids

[www.kidsknowit.com/interactive-educational-movies/index.php](http://www.kidsknowit.com/interactive-educational-movies/index.php)

This site started as an elementary teacher's website and contains animated videos approximately one minute long. Many topics are science-related, including volcanos, biomes, and fossils, although there are some on other topics such as pronouns and absolute value.

## Differentiation Instruction Strategy

### List, Sort, and Label

This activity is very useful for introducing a topic in order to assess prior knowledge or to summarize near the completion of instruction. It can be very easily tiered to meet the needs of a variety of learners.

#### Process:

- A deck of cards is created with terms related to a specific topic.
- Small groups of students sort through the deck of cards and put the terms into categories.
- Then the small group creates a title for the overall topic as well as the sub categories.

The list can be teacher generated if it is used at the beginning of the study of a particular topic, or student generated by maintaining a list of terminology encountered during a period of study on a topic. The difficulty of the sorting and labeling can be adjusted by providing labels to students who struggle in order to make their task one of differentiating between a limited number of options, or by allowing more freewheeling and open-ended debate among a group of more able learners who can explore the nuances and interconnection of the terms. The process of interacting, finding connections and justifying choices is at the heart of this activity. The logic employed and the interaction between students is invaluable. The result of separating out into piles is secondary.

This could be useful in a study of a civilization or time period with words relating to geography, religious beliefs, key figures, products and trade, governance, cause and effect events, etc. all needing to be evaluated and sorted. It could be used with foreign language vocabulary words which might lend themselves to sorting by gender, number, pronunciation patterns, meaning, etymology, etc. The benefit is in the consideration of the word and characteristics just as much as in

following whatever sorting system the students ultimately agree to adopt.



**Source: This strategy was shared by LeAnn Nickelson at Staff Development for Educators (SDE) sessions on Differentiated Instruction**

### Working Together to Support Student Achievement: Primary Reading and Writing

The “Working Together to Support Student Achievement: Primary Reading and Writing” initiative will be piloted in 15 schools of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) in 2014-15. It is a joint initiative of the NLESD and the Department of Education’s Student Support Services Division, Program Development Division, Evaluation & Research Division, and Early Childhood Learning Division.

The “Working Together” initiative provides professional learning on an inclusive and preventative service delivery framework that focuses on the learning and teaching of reading and writing in primary school. Regional interdisciplinary implementation teams are tasked with the management of professional learning. Teacher in-service and other learning in pilot schools will be facilitated by specialists from the implementation teams.

Pilot schools will be contacted by members of their regional implementation team with details on their involvement in the initiative.

**Working Together to Support Student Achievement: Primary Reading and Writing**



Western Region Implementation Team; Top Row (L-R): George Keeping, Darlene Smith-Osmond, and Dan Smith; Bottom Row (L-R): June Abbott, Lois Burden, and Lisa Wheeler



Eastern Urban Region Implementation Team; Top Row (L-R): Deborah Toope, Karen Yetman, and Gillian Blackmore; Bottom Row (L-R): Trudy Porter and Lynette Coish; Absent from Picture: Deanna Ward and Janice McKay.



Central Region Implementation Team; Top Row (L-R): Nicole Kelly and Denise Penney; Bottom Row (L-R): Patti Winsor, Bronson Collins, and Dennis Barrow

The table below identifies the members of the regional implementation teams.

	<b>Labrador Region</b>	<b>Western Region</b>	<b>Central Region</b>	<b>Eastern Rural Region</b>	<b>Eastern Urban Region</b>	
<b>Executive Sponsor</b>	Fiona Frawley, AD of Education – Programs	George Keeping, AD of Education - Programs	Bronson Collins, AD of Education - Programs	Lucy Warren, AD of Education – Programs		
<b>Implementation Team</b>	Wendy Marsh, Program Specialist – Curriculum; Faron Sheppard, Program Specialist – Student Support Services; Desmond Sellars, Senior Education Officer – Programs; Janet Wiseman, Literacy Numeracy Support; Jenna Buckle, Itinerant for Inclusive Education	Lois Burden, Program Specialist – Curriculum; June Abbott, Program Specialist- Curriculum; Dan Smith, Program Specialist- Student Support Services; Lisa Wheeler, Program Specialist- Student Support Services; Darlene Smith– Osmond, Program Specialist- Curriculum	Patti Winsor, Program Specialist – Student Support Services; Denise Penney, Program Specialist- Student Support Services; Nicole Kelly, Program Specialist- Curriculum; Dennis Barrow, Program Specialist- Curriculum	Mary Lerner-Pardy, Program Specialist - Student Support Services; Alice Bridgeman, Program Specialist – Curriculum; David Bishop, Program Specialist – Student Support Services; Colleen Scott, Program Specialist – Curriculum and Student Support Services; Dan O’Brien, Program Specialist - Curriculum	Trudy Porter, Program Specialist – Curriculum; Karen Yetman, Program Specialist – Curriculum; Lynette Coish, Itinerant for Student Support Services; Deanna Ward, Itinerant for Student Support Services; Gillian Blackmore, Program Specialist – Curriculum; Janice McKay, Itinerant for Student Support Services; Deborah Toope, Program Specialist - Curriculum	

## Feedback

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Please share your thoughts regarding this newsletter including any suggestions for future articles. Our hope is to facilitate better communication with all teachers throughout the province.

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