



# Exceptional News!

**Student Support Services Division  
Department of Education**

**Newsletter**

**November 2011**

## **Professional Learning for Teachers of Students with Autism**

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The Department of Education hosted a second Summer Institute for Autism on August 1 and 2, 2011 for 200 participants including educators and parents. Elizabeth Mitchell and Jennifer Krumins from the Geneva Centre for Autism presented on Positive Behaviour Supports and ABA Techniques in the Classroom. The positive feedback for the two days was overwhelming. For more information on ASD from the Geneva Center for Autism, connect to the following link:

<http://www.autism.net/>

On October 12 and 13, 2011, educators from each school district attended two days of professional development on "Context Blindness" by Dr. Peter Vermeulen from Belgium. He was accompanied by Geneva Center's Elizabeth Mitchell for the training. Dr. Vermeulen discussed how critical it is for students on the Autism spectrum to be taught how to pay attention to details in any given context. Students on the spectrum need as many real life situations as possible to teach them how to react to different scenarios. He also pointed out that the more we can teach in a real context, the more meaning a student with ASD can attach to it. Dr. Vermeulen points out that "understanding context blindness leads to a better understanding of ASD." For more

information on the topic connect to this link:  
[www.autism.net/services/services-for-youth-and-adults/pdp/additional-resources/1934-context-blindness.html](http://www.autism.net/services/services-for-youth-and-adults/pdp/additional-resources/1934-context-blindness.html)



## **Professional Learning for Teachers of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)**

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Teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing gathered in St. John's on September 28, 29 and 30, 2011 to participate in professional development opportunities hosted by the Department of Education and CHHA-NL on topics such as assessment and audiograms, speech acoustics-classroom listening environments, AVT Education certification process, IEP goal writing, criteria for service delivery-(caseload management), sources of stress for DHH students and how to foster social skill development. Teachers also had the opportunity to dialogue on what is working well how to move forward to enhance services for the DHH population. A working committee has been established to review current practices.



## Differentiated Instruction Strategy

### **WebQuests**

A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented online tool for learning. It is a classroom-based lesson in which most or all of the information that students explore and evaluate comes from the World Wide Web. They can be as short as a single class period or as long as a unit. Webquests usually involve group work, with students taking on specific roles or perspectives and are built around resources that are preselected by the teacher. Students spend their time USING information, not LOOKING for it.

WebQuests are not designed to teach raw facts, simple procedures or definitions. They are useful in obtaining multiple points of view, weighing reliability of data sources, and critical-thinking and analysis skills. When tiered by sending students to different websites or resources according to ability, readiness or interest, they respond to student learning preferences and needs.

### **Six components of a WebQuest:**

#### **Introduction:**

The introduction section provides background information and motivational scenarios like giving students roles to play: "You are an underwater research scientist," or "You are an astronaut planning a trip to the moon." It also provides students with an overview of the learning goals.

#### **Task:**

The task is a formal description of what students will have accomplished by the end of the WebQuest.

First, the teacher finds resources for a particular topic on the Web. Then he or she devises an activity for the students incorporating the information from the various sites.

Students can be asked to publish their findings on a web site, collaborate in an online research initiative with another site or institution, or create a multimedia presentation on a particular aspect of their research. The task should be visually and aesthetically appealing, inherently important (global warming, acid rain, etc.) and fun for the students.

#### **Process:**

This is a description of the steps learners should go through in accomplishing the task, with links embedded in each step.

#### **Resources:**

This section of the WebQuest consists of a list of the resources (bookmarked Websites, print resources, etc.) that students will need to complete the task.

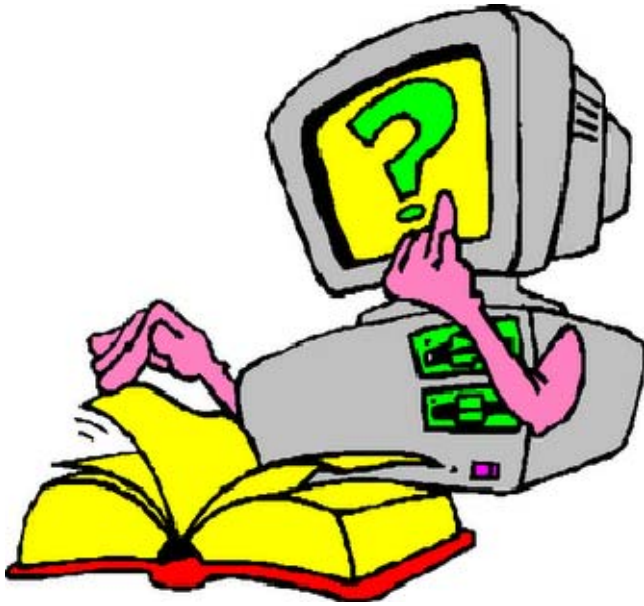
In older WebQuests, the resources are listed in a section of their own. More recent WebQuests have the resources embedded within the Process section, to be accessed at the appropriate time.

#### **Evaluation:**

Each WebQuest needs a **rubric** for evaluating students' work. The standards should be fair, clear, consistent, and specific to the tasks set.

#### **Conclusion:**

This step allows for reflection by the students and summation by the teacher. During the concluding section of a WebQuest, students are encouraged to suggest ways of doing things differently to improve the lesson and to discuss possible extensions and applications.



Most Webquests require some reading ability and so care must be taken in designing a Webquest for students in Grade 2 or lower or for students who have challenges in reading. Paired readers or highly visual websites may help in these situations.

For help in developing Webquests and samples of existing Webquests visit:

### **A WebQuest About WebQuests**

[www.webquest.org/index-resources.php](http://www.webquest.org/index-resources.php)

Choose the icon *A Webquest about Webquests* and select your interest area in order to experience the format.

### **San Diego City Schools**

<http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/>

The Triton Project features examples of teacher designed WebQuests.

This article is largely based on information from Thirteen Ed online

[www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/webquests](http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/webquests)

## **Alternate Format Materials**

To date we have processed more than 1 400 student applications. For any new applications, please make sure that all

necessary information is filled out along with the original signatures and the order form. **It is most important that you tick one box in both Part 1 and Part 2 of Section A.** Missing information will delay the student's access to needed resources.

You can send an application any time throughout the school year as a student gets diagnosed but the major deadline is May 15 2012 for the new school year of 2012-2013.

If you need to have extra resources added to or deleted from a student's list, please email [jewelcousens@gov.nl.ca](mailto:jewelcousens@gov.nl.ca) with all the details.



As of September 2011, the Department of Education will charge schools for Alternate Format Materials that are damaged or not returned. Charges are \$10 per CD that the Department copied or replacement costs for commercially produced CDs (eg. *Shiloh*).

Did you know that Etext:PDF files can be used with many text-to-voice software such as Word Q/Speak Q, Kurzweil, Dragon Speaking Naturally and others to have the text read aloud as the students watches onscreen? Adobe Reader, version 9 and above, also has a read-aloud feature. This can be toggled by clicking on **View** on the top toolbar and then clicking on **Read Aloud** on the drop down box.

Some of the new novels added include: *Among the Hidden, Cay, Charlie & the Chocolate Factory, Crash, Frindle, Frozen Fire, Homeless Bird, hunger Games, Island of the Blue Dolphin, Milkweed, Mud City, Owls in the*

*City, Parvanna's Journey, Single Shard, and Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.*

You may search online by title to see if we have a resource your student needs. Go to <https://cmf.gov.nl.ca> and click on **Browse Content** on the left side.

If there are resources that your students require but which are not on the list, please contact Jewel Cousens (729-6953 [jewelcousens@gov.nl.ca](mailto:jewelcousens@gov.nl.ca)) with the details of author, title, publisher, publishing date and ISBN as it may be available through Interlibrary Loan.



## **Safe and Caring Schools**

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### **A School-Wide Approach - Positive Behaviour Support**

School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SW-PBS) is an effective, efficient and consistent practice for implementing a school's code of conduct. As well, it provides consistent school-wide and school-based guidelines for responding to student behaviour.

Safe and Caring Schools Policy, Department of Education, 2006

The practice of SW-PBS allows for:

- input from the entire school community;
- the development of clear, consistent behavioural expectations;
- the teaching, practising and modelling of expected behaviours;
- acknowledgment of positive behaviours;
- a consistent, non-judgmental response to inappropriate behaviours;
- a continuum of support to meet the needs of all students;

- the collection and analysis of data to determine the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the procedures; and,
- consistent and ongoing school-wide evaluation and decision-making for maintaining the practice.

**Primary Prevention** will usually result in approximately 80 percent of the student body meeting behavioural expectations. Primary prevention involves: clearly defining student expectations in all settings; teaching/modelling/practising these expectations for all students, in all settings; acknowledging expected behaviours using a school-wide practice; consistently responding to inappropriate behaviours; and collecting appropriate data for active team-based decision making.

**Secondary Prevention** usually entails identifying the approximate 20 percent of the student body that require additional support to meet behavioural expectations. Different needs may be identified for individuals or small groups of students. A plan would be used to meet student need. This may entail: skill training; problem solving; re-teaching and practising; acknowledgements and feedback; as well as other forms of support.

Effective practice of SW-PBS usually results in 75 percent of the students requiring secondary level supports, (equal to 15 percent of the whole student population) successfully meeting student expectations. Secondary supports should be short-term supports.

**Tertiary Prevention** is specialized individual support. SW-PBS suggests that for the approximate 5 percent of the student body that are not successfully meeting student expectations with the primary and secondary supports, individual plans should be developed to meet their individual needs. This support is usually provided through the individual program planning process which results in an individual educational plan (IEP). Tertiary support is long-term. It may include: skill

development; a functional behaviour analysis; a behaviour management plan; programming changes; etc.

For further information or training please contact your S&CS itinerant or [bernieottenheimer@gov.nl.ca](mailto:bernieottenheimer@gov.nl.ca).

### Safe & Caring Schools Contest Special Project Awards

Do you have a fantastic idea to promote  
Safe and Caring Schools  
in your school or community?

The Provincial Advisory Committee for Safe  
and Caring Schools  
has \$500 to award to each of 40 bright  
ideas across the province.



Be a Bright Idea.

This contest is open to district, school and  
student groups.

Applications are available through your  
district office  
as well as on  
the Department of Education website  
[www.gov.nl.ca/edu/](http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/)

Application deadline is November 25, 2011



## 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.

Contact us at:

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# Did You Know. . .

- ♦ Atlantic Canada is facing a critical shortage of trained itinerant teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) and students who are blind or visually impaired (BVI).
  
- ♦ Mount Saint Vincent University offers a Master of Education degree in Educational Psychology in two concentrations:
  - Education of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
  - Education of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired
  
- ♦ The next cohort begins April 2012
  
- ♦ Deadline for applications is December 15, 2011.

**For Further Information:**  
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[www.msvu.ca](http://www.msvu.ca)