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Photo: PEITF Education Forum attracts hundreds.

Make Your Life Spectacular!

Dear Teachers, I'm sitting in my office at Federation House thinking about the last four years. Where has the time gone? One election for President, acclaimed second time around and now out I go, like the garbage we place at the end of the curb. The can is full, but it's not waste, so don't throw me out yet!!! My can is full of educational memories, professional discussions, new and renewed friendships, different partnerships and enhanced experiences to take with me into whatever journey I might undertake now!

Thanks to you, Island teachers, for allowing me this opportunity to serve the teachers of Prince Edward Island. It has been an honour and a privilege to work on your behalf. You are a group of dedicated, engaged and motivated professionals. Without you, the Federation would not be as strong as we like to believe we are. A special thanks goes out to all Executive members, Board of Governor reps, Coordinators, Assistant Coordinators and PEITF committee members for your continued support in my role as President. The relationships fostered through this position will be remembered for a long time.



Thank you to the PEITF Executive.

We have different experiences in life, and these two terms as President were exactly that, a wonderful experience. Life is a journey, not a destination, and I am thankful that I have been chosen to be part of this journey for Island teachers. I have experienced many different roles in the educational field, and outside of the teaching profession but this experience as President has enhanced my professional and personal life.

Like stated by Robin Williams: "Make your life SPECTACULAR...I sure did." Teachers, that's what I like to believe that we are as Teachers...spectacular. We do amazing things in this profession, yet we don't get all the fame and glory that should go with our profession. Often, we feel undervalued and under appreciated, but regardless, we know we are making a difference in the lives of the ones we teach. Remain positive and you will experience the benefits of being a spectacular teacher.



Gilles Arsenault

“Life is a journey, not a destination, and I am thankful that I have been chosen to be part of this journey for Island teachers.”

To PEITF professional staff: Shaun, Patrick, Michel and Chad a simple thank you! To Sheila, Marion and Lisa...you are Spectacular! I will miss our daily encounters and our professional and not so professional discussions.

We are in the midst of negotiating a new contract, creating relationships with a new government and dealing with different educational issues. And although I may be leaving the office, I am reassured knowing that I am leaving you in capable hands with Bethany MacLeod at the head of our professional organization.

Best of luck to Bethany and all teachers and remember, as much as you will want to be spectacular, it is never possible to be that in the eyes of all. Be yourself and do the best you can!

To all teachers, may you have a SPECTACULAR summer!

Take care!

by Gilles Arsenault

The Home Stretch



After much thought and hand wringing, my wife and I decided to try to sell our home. The preparations for the listing have been intense, touching up paint scratches, tidying the yard, and giving the place an extra bit of cleaning in hopes that it will impress. The fear; however, is always that you have missed something, overlooked something or didn't get a chance to get something done. In a way, this process reminds me of June in schools.

This time of year is always exhausting. Teachers are pressing to tie up bits of curriculum, encouraging students to focus on their studies for one final push, and capturing a student's progress through filling out report cards. On top of this, there is graduation planning, school field trips and common assessments to be completed; all the while battling the constant "can we have class outside" requests.

I was invited to the EATA day, May 1st to talk about what we have been doing around the public relations campaign. This year's PR campaign was an attempt to bridge both the challenges that teachers face with the positive impact teachers have in the lives of their students. One side of the campaign intended to

demonstrate that teachers work in classrooms where every student has individual needs and challenges. While some may be minor in scope in comparison to others, every student has a backstory which makes them unique. The goal is to demonstrate that teachers make a difference in the lives of these students.

The PEITF Public Relations Committee also worked to create a script for television and radio, which captures the finer points of what teachers do which far too often go unreported. The ad focuses on how teachers encourage and foster not only academic success but also personal growth in their students. The ad is an example of how teachers do not only teach curriculum; Teachers teach children.

Most of us are where we are because of a teacher. The fact that I am writing this is a direct result of a teacher fostering in me a love of writing. It really does not take much but often the little things teachers do can make a huge difference. It could be words of praise during or outside of class, a positive phone call home or a gentle push to encourage a student to pursue their talents further. For me, it was a small note of praise on a free write poem written in Grade 11 English that sparked an interest to further explore writing and ultimately led to me to become an English teacher. Thank you Ms. Saunders. (I really should have done that long ago!)

Teachers, far too often, are not thanked personally for the work they do; it's just the nature of our clientele. We have plenty of assessments which measure reading, math, writing, or science, but there is no assessment that can measure true impact that teachers have on students. Your work will resonate with students long after they have forgotten their score on their grade-six math assessment and that's what we want the public to remember. Teachers make a difference.

Your classroom, like a home, is a place where children are nurtured, cared for, guided, and supported. Teachers create memories for students and inspire our youth all the while ensuring we are looking out for the best interest of all students. And, just like any home, the lessons learned and memories made within its walls will linger for a lifetime. Now, back to my to-do list!

Take care and recharge this summer; you've earned it.

by Chad Gallant



PEITF
Newsletter

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The Teachers' Guide to Summer Break

Here are some ideas and guidelines that are aimed at helping teachers have some fun and relaxation during their summer break.

1. Decompress.

The concept of spare time is a foreign one for teachers. When summer arrives, teachers often need a couple of weeks to adjust and to realize that they are NOT behind on grading homework.

2. Pamper Yourself.

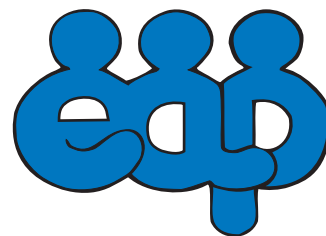
Even though the idea of relaxation may be harder for some than others, it is still important that teachers take time in the summer for things that they truly enjoy doing - not things they have to do. There are a multitude of things that can provide an escape, from attending to a garden, to getting a massage, to going to the beach. Stepping away from school will help you become a better teacher.

3. Reflect.

Speaking of stepping away, summer time also provides the important opportunity to look back at the highs and lows of the previous school year. Examine the lows and critically think about what you could do to avoid these situations in the next year, but focus mainly on the highs so that you can cultivate a positive attitude within your subconscious about the upcoming school year.

4. Inspire Yourself.

Another helpful way to rekindle positive feelings about your job as a teacher is to rediscover why you became one in the first place. Who doesn't lose sight of a few things during hectic times?



5. Reconnect.

As you are busy yourself over the summer, take this opportunity to reconnect with friends - ask them about their lives and show them that even when times get busy, you still value their friendships.

6. Create Family Time.

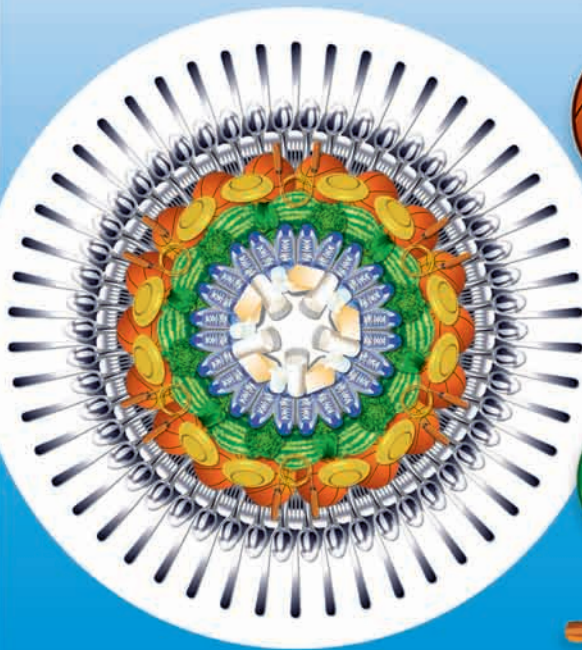
Just as maintaining healthy friendships is important, even more so is giving your all to your family. If you have kids, as a teacher, you realize that staying involved in what is going on in your children's lives is of the highest importance. Use the summer as an opportunity for bonding by planning family adventures that will further development while preventing summer learning loss. Make sure you also show your spouse how thankful you are for their support and patience - let them know you haven't forgotten how understanding they were when you spent all those long nights conducting parent-teacher meetings and grading papers.

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PEI Students Excelling

I have heard many times from people who think there are huge problems with the education system on PEI and that they know all the answers. There is one answer, and that is household income. A few years ago when the 2011 PISA results came out, I compared the results of PISA with household income, and the charts moved almost in perfect unison. Alberta, Ontario, and BC remained at the top and PEI, NB, and NFLD towards the bottom in both categories. With only a few outliers (Manitoba and Saskatchewan), it is easy to see why some provinces do better in testing than others. Of course, there are more factors than household income, but I would argue it is the greatest factor in achieving success, and it is not in teacher's control.

Time and time again, media and politicians remind Islanders of PEI's ranking on PISA tests. The message being sent to the public through these messages is that Island students are not high achievers. What is given less attention, unfortunately, are the many students who are very high achievers and have been educated in Island schools.

One way (but not the only way) to judge how some of our students compare is through the IB program. In the IB program, students can go through the full PEI education system and then enroll in IB for grades 11 and 12. Once in IB, students' tests get sent for review by an independent board for marking. To show how difficult the test can be, of the 135,045 most recent students who wrote the tests, only 208 of these received a perfect score. The test is based on cumulative learning through the IB program and all their learning from prior schooling.

Emily Pass was a student at Charlottetown Rural, who went through the PEI education system and then wrote her final IB test last year. As was reported by CBC, Emily achieved a perfect score, an outstanding accomplishment indeed. Emily is now at Waterloo on a \$60,000 Schulich Leader Scholarship studying physics and astronomy.

Island students who attend the prestigious Pearson College in B.C. have also been very successful when compared to the best of the best. Taylor Arsenaault of Evangeline and Dominique Arsenaault of Bluefield are two of those students. Both students, educated on PEI, are at Pearson and are achieving at high levels

in an environment that rewards being well-rounded students and leaders.

A few other Island students are also on the path to being world leaders; attending New York University Abu Dhabi. To the very best students in the world, NYUAD provides full scholarships plus expenses after an extraordinary selective admissions process. Island students Lucas Olscamp from Bluefield and Alex Matters from Colonel Gray are attending this top university on scholarship. At the last Commencement Ceremony where only 133 students from 49 countries around the globe graduated, Bill Clinton gave the keynote address. These future world leaders came through the PEI education system.

Another example of our best thriving is Alexander MacKay. The former Canada Games triathlete was a top student at Colonel Gray. Alexander enrolled at Pearson and is projected to finish this year with a near perfect IB score.

When Alexander was deciding which University to attend after Pearson, schools from around the world would fly him to their campuses while doing do their best to try and convince him to attend. They know how bright his future is, and they want to be part of it. Alexander has decided to attend NYUAD as well. Professors at Pearson College commented on Alexander's academic preparedness and credited his high school teachers in PEI. Alexander was reportedly quick to recognize the effects of his entire Island schooling experience: "My teachers at the Gray were great, but I also attribute a lot of my academic success to the strong influences of all my teachers from a very young age until now."

These are just a few of many examples of our students who continue to thrive. Our system and our teachers are world-class, and we are doing a tremendous job of preparing our students to be future leaders; we hear examples of it every day. Teachers on PEI are some of the most educated and dedicated in the country, and I am confident we will continue to produce students like these in the future.



Patrick MacFadyen
Deputy General Secretary

by Patrick MacFadyen



Shaun MacCormac

Thoughts and Comments from the General Secretary

Another school year is coming to an end, and you will soon have a well-deserved break to re-energize, re-group, and spend some quality time with your family. I hope you have had a rewarding year with enough smiles and laughs to

make you want to come back! Congratulations to those of you who are retiring from the profession, and I wish you all the best in this new phase of your life.

It has been another interesting year, although they all seem that way in education. An unexpected provincial election has caused some uncertainty and, at the time that I am writing this article, there are some things that we know and many that we do not. We know that the Honourable Hal Perry is now the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. The President and I have yet to sit down with Minister Perry, but we are looking forward to speaking with him regarding the strengths and challenges of our education system. We also know that Susan Willis, principal of Charlottetown Rural High School, will become the Deputy Minister starting July 2nd. The Federation is pleased that Premier Wade MacLauchlan has appointed an Island educator, as well respected as Ms. Willis, to the Deputy position. We look forward to working with her and Minister Perry.

“The Throne Speech offered very little as well in terms of the direction the government will take in education.”

Unfortunately, that is about all that we know right now. At press time, the provincial budget has not been released, and there was very little about education in the platform of the Liberal Party during the election campaign. The Throne Speech offered very little as well in terms of the direction the government will take in education. Given that, it is unlikely that there will be much in the budget that will help teachers with the many

challenges that they face, and teachers will continue to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond the education of students. I hope I'm wrong, but as long as the focus of government is on balancing the budget, our education system will continue to suffer and teachers will continue to experience, and be responsible for, students who need more supports than teachers are trained to offer. It is little wonder why the stress level of teachers continues to increase. Island families living in poverty, students with mental health issues and the growing number of students with special needs are problems that can't wait for a balanced budget.

I will try to remain optimistic that this government will take positive steps forward in education. A well thought out plan would be a great start. There is already a foundation to begin in the form of the recommendations still remaining from the 2005 Task Force on Student Achievement, with one of those recommendations being the implementation of a staffing model. Gar Andrew's report on the same topic is also on a shelf somewhere in the Department of Education. A staffing model would go a long way in helping provide needed resources into schools.

Of course, that is only a part of what is needed. Hopefully, the Premier will soon form and listen to the “district advisory councils” that are mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. Any helpful input those councils could give would be greatly appreciated by teachers, but will only be useful if the input is followed by action. The Premier certainly has his work cut out for him. Island teachers are waiting.

Be good to yourselves and to each other and have a great summer.



Thank you to the PEITF Economic Welfare Committee.

by Shaun MacCormac



THANK YOU GILLES

THE EXECUTIVE AND STAFF OF THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND TEACHERS' FEDERATION WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A SINCERE "THANK YOU" TO PRESIDENT GILLES ARSENAULT FOR HIS TIME SERVING THE TEACHERS OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND. GILLES HAS BEEN A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS. HIS POSITIVE ATTITUDE, PATIENT NATURE AND ABILITY TO ANALYZE SITUATIONS HAS ALLOWED HIM TO EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF TEACHERS.

WE WILL MISS YOU!



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