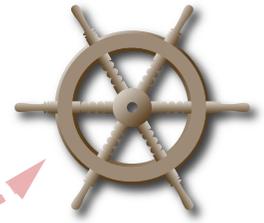




# Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## Association of Supervision & Curriculum Development Conference Highlights

by Betty-Jean Aucoin, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development

While teachers were on March Break enjoying their well-deserved vacation with family and friends, I was attending the Association of Supervision & Curriculum Development Annual conference in Chicago. I was joined on this educational venture by Meg Ferguson, president of Halifax County Local. Throughout the week, we had many opportunities to attend excellent sessions supporting us to learn, teach and lead. One of the highlights of the conference was hearing and seeing Maya Angelou in person. On the morning of St. Patrick's Day, Meg and I took in her inspirational presentation where she honoured all educators by recounting tales of teachers and others who had made a difference in her life. She lauded teachers who "recognize the possible" in all of their students and described caring educators as "Rainbows in the Clouds."

This powerful speech reminded me again of the power we hold as teachers. We do have the power to educate all children and support them in becoming successful women and men. I have had many "rainbows" in my life as a student within our public schools, universities and now working with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

Another highlight of my trip was to participate in a *Professional Capital* session with Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan. Prior to my departure, I took the time to read *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*. Renowned educators Hargreaves and Fullan collaborated on writing a book discussing that the future of learning depends absolutely on the future of teaching. This book speaks out against policies that do not support teaching and learning and policies that exclude the voices of teachers. This book is powerful in combatting the tired arguments and stereotypes of teaching, and places leadership at the doorsteps of teachers, administrators, school boards, Departments of Education and teacher unions.

This session reinforced a lot of my present thinking and actions. Fullan and Hargreaves advocate for teacher organizations removing themselves from a defensive stance and develop with partners and teachers two way communications where exchange of information is open and influence is mutual. The NSTU has been successful in maintaining a relationship with our partners in education and continue to advocate that teachers' voices are present in the development of curriculum, assessments, professional development and policies related to education.

In their session they spoke for the necessity of unions to engage staff and members in pulling when we can, pushing when we have to and nudging always. It is an important reminder for all of us to move forward in

pulling in our politicians, partners, parents and community into the ongoing goal to have professional voices of educators lead public education. When pull does not work, we must be willing to push back those who wish to put teachers and public education at peril. We must push back with knowledge, experience, confidence and energy. So too, we must always be present to nudge others in moving forward celebrating the successes of our public schools and community college education and rising to the task united to meet our challenges.

Space restrictions allows me the opportunity to only discuss two of many wonderful sessions and keynotes I attended. ASCD Conference 2013, gave me the opportunity to fill my tool box for future presentations, networking opportunities, to hear from colleagues around the world and a chance to get to know a fellow rainbow in the cloud, Meg Ferguson, while participating in much learning, much laughter and much fun!

As we flew back to Nova Scotia, I read other works by Maya Angelou. Her quotes and many poems speak to the necessity that we as teachers and members of the NSTU know who we are, where we are going and how our actions can support public education. "The bird does not sing because it has answers, the bird sings because it has a song." Our 10,000 voices together in harmony should sing a song representative of what we all aspire for all Nova Scotians; democracy, voice, education, equality and success.



NSTU executive staff officer Betty-Jean Aucoin is pictured with leading education academic Andy Hargreaves.

[From *The Teacher*, May 13, 2013, Volume 51 Number 13, page 6 © NSTU 2013]