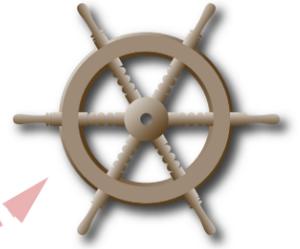




# Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## Supporting substitute teachers

by Mark MacPhee, Executive Staff Officer, Member Services

On November 22 and 23, 2013 the Nova Scotia Teachers Union hosted its annual Substitute Liaison Conference. This conference offers valuable professional development for both Local substitute liaisons and for substitute teachers who are in attendance representing their NSTU Locals. This year's conference offered a variety of sessions which included: *The Qualities of a Good Substitute*, *The Substitute Teacher's Took Kit*, *The Role of the Substitute Liaison*, *Navigating AESOP*, and *Johnson Inc. Insurance Benefits*.

Our public schools could not operate successfully without the valuable contributions made by substitute teachers. Substitutes are hired into a role which changes every day to support schools and the work of teachers who are required to be away from their regular duties. Substitute teachers are called upon to build rapport with students and engage students in learning on very short notice. This is not an easy task yet it's done successfully to the benefit of both students and teachers.

Since substitute teachers and Local substitute liaisons—many of whom are permanent teachers—took part in the conference, the emerging topic of conversation was around preparedness. Both the teacher who is going to be absent and the substitute teacher who is going to be called discussed how being prepared was beneficial to them and to the students. Here are a few helpful tips which were shared:

As the teacher who is going to be absent it is helpful to your substitute to have in your classroom a Substitute Binder, which includes:

- ◆ A schedule, class lists, seating plans, emergency protocols, login information for PowerSchool and your computer.
- ◆ A lesson plan which outlines the lessons and the materials needed.
- ◆ A contact name of a staff person and/or student who could provide assistance if necessary.
- ◆ A resource/learning centre schedule and the names of any program assistants that will be present in class with students.
- ◆ An emergency lesson plan, which can be used with your classes if needed.

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- ◆ Your desk should also be organized with materials needed for the day. It's also important to refresh your Substitute Binder each semester or as information changes.

As a substitute teacher, here are a few tips for materials you would include in a "Sub Tub" which you would bring with you from school to school:

- ◆ A white board marker (in case you can't find the teacher's).
- ◆ Writing implements, paper and other school supplies you anticipate needing.
- ◆ An emergency lesson plan or activity that can be used if needed.
- ◆ Some learning strategy centered games, which could be used if needed.
- ◆ A business card, which you can provide to the school's administrator, which has your qualifications and contact information.
- ◆ Your "Sub Tub" should include wearing professional attire, which will assist you in being viewed as the teacher in charge of that classroom.

- ◆ Ensure you familiarize yourself with directions to get to the school. Arrive early so you can get settled and acquainted before the school day is set to begin.

The topic of being prepared goes beyond teachers as well to school administrators. Substitute teachers shared tips on things administrators often do to make their day run more smoothly:

- ◆ Greets me and makes me feel welcome in the school.
- ◆ Provides me a staff handbook or any relevant information needed e.g., emergency procedures, fire drills etc.
- ◆ Has keys to the classroom ready or walks with me to the classroom and unlocks the door.
- ◆ Makes sure I have everything I need before leaving me at the classroom.
- ◆ Let's me know if there are going to be any scheduled disruptions during the day such as a fire drill, assembly or guest speaker.
- ◆ Provides me with both positive and constructive feedback.



Halifax County Local president Meg Ferguson is shown with executive staff officer Mark MacPhee and Halifax Regional School Board substitute teachers Bev MacLean and Kevin Hull. Ferguson, MacLean and Hull provided a presentation for the annual Substitute Liaison conference on November 22 and 23.

Having some of these items prepared in advance will benefit the teacher who has a last minute absence and the substitute teacher who receives the early morning phone call asking if they teach for the day.

Local Substitute Liaisons also discussed the importance of being prepared and reaching out to substitutes to ensure they know they are a valued part of the NSTU. Liaisons took part in a workshop on their roles and responsibilities. The responsibilities of the Local Liaisons are:

- ◆ To ensure relevant information is brought to the attention of substitute teachers.
- ◆ To ensure Substitute Teacher Information Meetings are offered in compliance with NSTU policy.
- ◆ To organize one Professional Development/In-Service session to be held on an annual basis for substitute teachers in their Local.
- ◆ To monitor usage of the classroom information for Substitute Teacher forms.
- ◆ To report to the Substitute Teacher committee.
- ◆ To bring forth any minutes or report from local or Regional Substitute Committees in compliance with NSTU operational procedures.

The liaison's role is vital in reaching members in schools and engaging members in activities at the local level. School reps can

also reach out to substitutes by directing them to the school NSTU bulletin board where they can get important information and notices about activities going on at the local level or contact/information workshops being offered.

This year's provincial Substitute Teacher Committee is comprised of Chair Rae Brown (Dartmouth); Natalie Doroshenko (Colchester-East Hants); Alison Egelhoff (Halifax County); Scott Hagell (Colchester-East Hants); Sara Lockerby (Colchester-East Hants); and provincial executive liaison Ben Sichel. Members of this year's and last year's committee—Chair Peter Day, (Cape Breton District); Rae Brown, (Dartmouth); Bonnie Mahaney, (Shelburne); Laurie Marshall, (Kings); Sandra Mitchell, (Lunenburg County); and Kathy Kerr, (provincial executive liaison)—played a vital role in planning the conference. This year's committee members have been busy contacting Substitute Liaisons at NSTU Locals across the province to offer support and gather feedback and concerns from substitute's teachers. At its second meeting of the school year, Substitute Teacher Committee members prepared and submitted four resolutions to Annual Council for consideration. The committee looks forward to continued feedback and support from substitute teachers and substitute liaison as we continue to support substitute teachers.