



Appalachian Teachers' Association



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What's Inside...

Be Well in 2017	2
Presentation to the Public Consultation on Educational Success	5
Links of Interest	7

Snow today... gone tomorrow!



Dates to keep in mind

March 15 • All applications for leaves of absence without salary, or any extension thereof, must be submitted in writing to the Director of Human Resources. Applications for leave of absence without pay for a complete school year must be submitted prior to March 15 of the preceding year.

April 1 • The Principal shall provide each teacher in the school, including those on leave of absence with or without salary, with a form upon which the teacher may indicate their preference for assignment and/or transfer for the following school year.

April 30 • Vacancy list of receiving school(s) in the event of school closure • List of transfers effected due to school closure • List of Excess at the Board level (clause 5-3.11) • List of Excess Teachers at the school level • List of known vacancies/anticipated staff needs

Welcome to 2017! Well, this might not be the winter that skiers and snowboarders dream of, but it's the one we've got. Tennis anyone?

President's Prose



A year ago at this time we had just concluded the negotiation of the Collective Agreement, and the Christmas break was a most welcome respite. This year we are just about to begin our local negotiations. Thanks to your participation in the consultation process, we have a clear vision of your priorities.

I would like to wish each of you a healthy and productive 2017. Please remember that we are here to serve you; questions and comments are always welcome!

Cheers,



Nature's popsicle!

Standing Committees

ATA Committees

- Executive
- New Teachers

QPAT Committees

- Membership Plans
- Finance and Budget
- New Teachers
- Human Rights/Social Justice
- Adult Education
- Vocational Education
- Nominations

ETSB Committees

- Teacher Advisory
- Health and Safety
- Labour Relations
- Special Education
- Special Education Advisory
- Central Professional Improvement

Be Well in 2017!

Health is Big Business. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the total health expenditure for 2016 was expected to reach \$228 billion dollars (or \$6,299 per person), representing roughly 11% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP), and is expected to increase by 2.7% next year, resulting in a budget shortfall. This amount, of course, does not include the amount that individuals spend on private insurance or services, or on medication.

Certainly, QPAT has been taking a hard look at our own insurance plan over the past several years and trying to find ways reduce costs, such as moving to generic drugs. We will definitely be facing challenges in the future as biologic drugs and therapies become the gold standard of treatment.

Money and price tags are just one part of the equation, though. There's a whole other aspect that needs to be explored. At the bottom line, it's really about the humans who need the services and who experience the pain and suffering. How can we marry the two ends so they meet in the middle? Well, that's what this article is all about. Read on - but if you want to skip the print (but don't!), head to the end of the article and you'll find lots of helpful links!

Teachers and Stress and Depression

There is no doubt that teaching is a highly stressful occupation. Some researchers put in the top three most stressful jobs, others rank it somewhere around #10. It's also ranked between #4-6 of jobs that have a high rate of depression. So what can we do to help ourselves stay well and reduce our health-care costs? Well, it requires a two-pronged approach!

The Benefits of Physical Activity

We all know that physical activity is good for us, but we may not know just how good it is, or how much we need. According to the Mayo Clinic, here are the benefits of physical activity:

- control your weight
- reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease
- reduce your risk of type 2 Diabetes and metabolic syndrome (increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels)
- reduce your risk of some cancers
- strengthen your bones and muscles
- improve your mental health and mood

How much exercise is needed, though, and what kind does it need to be? The consensus seems to be that we need 30 minutes of moderately intense activity 5 times a week and two 15 to 20 minute sessions of some kind of strength training.

The opinions on what kind of exercise is best, though, are wildly divergent. Walking, running, swimming, biking and dancing seem to be among the top choices, with walking being seen as the most accessible form of exercise. Really, though, the best exercise for you is the one you are willing to commit to sustaining. Research says that a 30-minute X 5-days exercise habit not only reduces mortality from any cause by 20%, but also contributes to a higher quality of life. So, it's not so much what you do that matters, but that you do it consistently.

...continued on page 3

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www.ataunion.org

Have you got a burning question you'd like to ask the School Board? Megan attends every meeting. Drop her an email and let her know you'll be coming along!

January 24

February 21

March 28

April 25

May 23

June 27

...continued from page 2

A Sound Mind in a Healthy Body...

Currently, 41% of the costs of our health insurance plan is associated with mental health. While there is no doubt that physical activity is essential for good health, we also need to take care of our minds. Sometimes we can get a “two-fer” and combine what is good for our bodies with what is also good for our minds.

The Nature Connection – Never heard of Nature Deficit Disorder? Now you have!

There is a large and ever-increasing body of research on how being in nature benefits our mental health, including helping to alleviate anxiety and depression and reduce anger and sadness. There are also several bio-markers that are improved, such as a reduction in cortisol levels.

You don't have to be “active” in nature in order to get these benefits; they will accrue even if you're simply sitting still enjoying the view. However, when you combine activity and nature, you get the two-fer mentioned above. So, save some money on that gym membership and take your exercise to the great outdoors!

Other Ways to Nurture Your Mind and Body

There are several ages-old practices that pack a punch when it comes to dealing with stress, in particular yoga and meditation. Yoga has many benefits for your body, including the reduction of chronic pain. Meditation and the meditative aspect of yoga can help reduce stress and improve mental clarity, and – bonus! - meditation can be done anywhere and at any time.

Dealing with a Teacher's Reality

No doubt about it, there are lots of ways that we can help ourselves feel better, physically and mentally. But what about coping with the specifics of all those myriad of situations that a teacher has to deal with? That's where Starling Minds comes in.

To quote from the site's home page, “Starling is an online preventative mental health program...” that was created specifically for teachers, but that a teacher's family can also use. If you haven't registered yet, do yourself a favor and get signed up. Whether struggling or not, we can all use a little help in understanding ourselves and our reactions and learn how we might see things in a different way.

The program is provided to you courtesy of QPAT, and has nothing to do with the school board. The service is completely confidential - you can even use a pseudonym when you register. Go to www.starlingminds.com and use the certificate number on your Industrial Alliance card to register.

...continued on page 4

...continued from page 3

Get Going!

Whatever it is that you choose to do, just do it! Join a walking group at your school – or start one. Create a yoga group and meet at the end of the school day; you can use a yoga video to guide your practice. Use a meditation app to learn the basics of meditation. Value yourself and those you love by loving and caring for yourself – something that teachers find hard to do!

Be Well in 2017!



Useful Links

Health and wellness

<https://www.wellandgood.com/fitness-wellness-trends/>
<https://www.ccohs.ca/topics/wellness/> - Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
<http://www.besthealthmag.ca/best-you/wellness/> From Reader's Digest
<http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/news/wellness/> Wellness topics from 2013 to 2017
<https://mindyourmind.ca/wellness> - strategies

Nature and wellness

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing/environment/nature-and-us/how-does-nature-impact-our-wellbeing>
<http://www.ecowatch.com/david-suzuki-how-nature-benefits-human-health-1882090807.html>
<http://ontario.cmha.ca/news/the-nurture-of-nature-the-health-benefits-of-nature/#.WHdDQ5MrKR8>
http://www.mindingourbodies.ca/about_the_project/literature_reviews/the_nurture_of_nature

Yoga and Meditation

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kayla-matthews/9-great-yoga-youtube-channels_b_6737360.html
<http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/a-z/yoga-workouts> - basic information
<http://www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic-health/about-your-health/health-conditions-library/general-health/Pages/yoga.aspx>
<http://heavy.com/tech/2015/09/top-5-best-free-meditation-relaxation-yoga-apps-for-iphone-android/>
<https://www.wellandgood.com/good-advice/apps-for-meditation/>

Public Consultation on Educational Success November 2016

In November, Megan and a group of teachers made a presentation at the Public Consultation on Educational Success. Here is what she had to say.

Introduction

Bonjour et merci de m'avoir accordé ce temps pour vous parler. Mon nom est Megan Seline. Je suis le Président de l'Association des Enseignantes et Enseignants Appalaches.

Hello and thank you for the opportunity to participate at this regional forum for Public Consultation on Educational Success.

My name is Megan Seline. I am the President for the Appalachian Teachers' Association representing and supporting approximately 600 teachers in the youth, adult and vocational training sectors at the Eastern Townships School Board. Before becoming president I taught in the youth sector, secondary level for 20 years.

In the Eastern Townships School Board there are 19 elementary schools, 3 secondary schools, 2 adult centres and 2 vocational training centers. When I visit all the schools and centres my car odometer logs 2500 km.

Today, I will identify the priorities and ideas of the Appalachian Teachers' Association to ensure educational success in Québec with particular attention to this region's milieu.

Regarding the broad areas of intervention I will focus:

First, All Students Achieving Their Full Potential

Specifically:

Intervention starting in early childhood

A response adapted to students with specific needs

Quality of teaching and pedagogical practices

And second, A Favourable Context For Student Learning, Personal Development And Success

Specifically:

Importance of literacy and numeracy

Adequate preparation for the transition to the labour market or higher education

ALL STUDENTS ACHIEVING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

- **Intervention starting in early childhood**

- Early childhood intervention is key to educational success, particularly for students in low SES situations but it requires specific human resources - additional resource teachers, professionals, and technicians.
- Assessment and identification of students must happen quickly or students will accumulate learning delays.
- Implementation of 4-year-old kindergarten in low SES areas should continue.

...continued on page 6

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- Benefits, relevance and feasibility of expanding 4-year-old kindergarten to all students, not just those in low SES should be examined.
- **A response adapted to students with specific needs**
 - Given the nearly 100% degree of integration and inclusion of special needs students in the English sector, there is a need for greater resources and direct services to students with an awareness that the difficulties and challenges caused by this degree of integration and inclusion vary from area to area.
 - Without the appropriate resources and support in the classroom, the teacher is trying to accommodate the needs of the special needs student, the regular student and the gifted student within the same classroom. Are all students receiving equally appropriate learning opportunities?
 - Resources to support special needs students in Adult Education – for many this is their last chance for academic success – should be added.
- **Quality of teaching and pedagogical practices**
 - The professional autonomy of teachers must be recognized by not imposing methods, approaches, and training that do not match their needs.
 - Teachers, as professionals, are the best judges as to their professional development needs. I must mention that the cost of attending professional development sessions has increased but the funding from the Ministry has remained unchanged.

A FAVOURABLE CONTEXT FOR STUDENT LEARNING, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS

- **Importance of literacy and numeracy**
 - Literacy and numeracy are important, but other elements in the curriculum such as arts and physical education should not suffer or be sacrificed.
 - In order to attain basic skill levels, curriculum should respond to the needs of the student and provide the teacher with the tools to help those students.
 - There must be a greater number of pathways and alternative academic and vocational options in order to incite and encourage individuals to stay in school with resources to support and guide them.
 - A broader curriculum, particularly at the secondary level is needed. More options for students will lead to more student engagement and greater personal development.
 - Courses such as home economics (“*économie familiale*”) have been lost. Students are ill-prepared for living independently and lack skills such as cooking and managing their personal finances.
 - More exploratory subjects and options are needed in high school to expose students to different possibilities before they go to vocational education. Courses such as shop (“*initiation à la technologie*”) accommodate students who are less academically inclined.
- A general improvement to the context of student learning would be for the government to fully fund a breakfast program for all students in public schools

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- **Adequate preparation for the transition to the labour market or higher education**
 - An employer may offer job guarantees to graduates, but the training in vocational programs must be general to allow for mobility and must be performed fully by teachers.
 - The government must look for trades or skills that will be needed in the future and respond quickly to develop programs.
 - A consultation mechanism needs to be in place to consult vocational education teachers about programs.
 - Resources and support for special needs students in vocational training should be made available.
 - A maximum class size for Adult Education should be established. Again this is a last chance for academic success.

In conclusion, the Appalachian Teachers’ Association believes that

- Education should help students become capable citizens who will be able to integrate successfully into a workforce that is forever in transformation.
- Education should be about equality of opportunity and about the development of each individual.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I am optimistic that these consultations WILL develop a shared, innovative vision that WILL ensure educational success from early childhood to adulthood.

It will be interesting to watch over the next several months to see where the Ministry makes changes and how those changes will be implemented.

Links of Interest

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| • QPAT | www.qpat-apeq.qc.ca | 1-800-361-9870 |
| • Parental Insurance Plan | www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca | 1-888-610-7727 |
| • Quebec Pension Plan | www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca | 1-800-463-5185 |
| • CARRA | www.carra.gouv.qc.ca | 1-800-463-5533 |
| • MEES | www.meq.gouv.qc.ca | 1-866-747-6626 |
| • Industrial Alliance | www.inalco.com | 1-800-363-3540 |
| • Strathcona Credit Union | | 1-888-350-5111 |