

EDUCATION

You've got a friend in me: PALS marks 20 years



Erica Lane, volunteer Ashley Kirkpatrick, Deborah Fisher, and facilities manager Jim Connors stand outside Prince Charles School, the site of the first PALS program.

Photo: Sean Mott/Telegraph-Journal

Sean Mott | Telegraph-Journal

SAINT JOHN • Deborah Fisher stood outside Prince Charles School Monday morning, watching volunteers clip bushes and tidy up the garden ahead of a school year unlike any other this fall.

For Fisher, it was a full-circle moment to be back at Prince Charles where a two-decade-long journey started for her.

Fisher is the coordinator of the Partners Assisting Local Schools (commonly known as PALS), a community program celebrating its 20 anniversary this year. A retired teacher, Fisher joined the program from its inception although she didn't expect to still be working into 2020.

"I was only supposed to be here for a year, so I must have liked something," she said with a laugh. "It's wonderful."

Fisher said PALS began with the idea of addressing intergenerational poverty in Saint John. The concept eventually focused on working with school districts to assist children living in poverty.

"Starting early is the best way to make a difference," Fisher said.

PALS approached Prince Charles School in 2001 and started working with them. The program gradually grew from those humble beginnings to join multiple schools.

"The idea was always to expand past one school," Fisher said. "(We would) make a blueprint that could be duplicated."

According to the PALS website, the program works with schools to develop strategies that align with their school improvement plans. PALS volunteers can help schools by leading after-school sports and clubs, serving breakfast, supporting early literacy, and participating in math and reading buddies programs.

"We're there to help where (schools) see needs," Fisher said. "We work to compliment what school staffs do every day."

For Erica Lane, PALS provides a volunteer base that goes "above and beyond."

"PALS is a shining example for other organizations and community groups to engage with students' lives," said Lane, a community engagement coordinator with the Anglophone South School District.

Fisher said PALS is "a great way to still be involved in education," noting how the community's eagerness to help students has made the program a success.

"It's not difficult to get people onboard," she said. "People are in it for the right reasons and help make a difference."

Lane said she expects PALS to continue to grow as it enters its third decade.

Drive carefully in school zones: police



Telegraph-Journal

SAINT JOHN • Saint John police plan to step up patrols of school zones to curb speeding at the start of the new school year.

According to a press release from the Saint John Police Force, patrols will increase as many parents will be driving their children to school, meaning extra vehicles will be on the road along with the regular flow of school buses. The force is reminding drivers to slow down as school resumes this fall.

“The safety of our students who are walking or busing is always a priority, particularly when the school year starts and motorists may need some reminders,” said Zoe Watson, superintendent for Anglophone South School District, in the release.

Anti-poverty group has made a big difference



Erica Lane, volunteer Ashley Kirkpatrick, Deborah Fisher, and facilities manager Jim Connors stand outside Prince Charles School, the site of the first PALS program.
Photo: Sean Mott/Telegraph-Journal

Editorial board

The workers and organizers behind the community-based Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) initiative are to be commended as their organization celebrates its 20th year.

PALS works with schools across Saint John to eliminate intergenerational poverty, a serious problem in a city where more than 22 per cent of residents, including more than 30 per cent of children, live in poverty, according to a 2018 report by Living SJ.

This compares to a national average of 14 per cent, and a provincial average of 17.1 per cent.

Volunteers working with PALS have partnered with local school districts so poverty eradication can start at an early age. This means supporting school clubs, sports, literacy programs, free meals and other programs, an approach that has received an enthusiastic response from students and communities.

PALS's approach showcases the potential of private citizens working together against a widespread community problem. Intergenerational poverty in Saint John is an issue that will only be solved by a broad assortment of approaches from both government and community members, and PALS is an important part of that.

It's had an immense and positive impact on the local community. PALS volunteers deserve Saint Johners' thanks.

Information Morning - Saint John



Saint John high preparing for return to school



Play Segment 9:53



Share Segment

Host Julia Wright gets a guided tour of Saint John High to see how they're welcoming students back during the pandemic. Lots of changes to water fountains, washrooms, classroom sizes and more. Join Julia and Principal Lori Wall for the tour.

Aired: Sep. 2, 2020

EDUCATION

Inside a New Brunswick elementary school before students return to class



By **Callum Smith** · Global News

Posted September 3, 2020 6:37 pm



<https://globalnews.ca/news/7314611/inside-nb-elementary-covid-19/>

ATLANTIC | News

N.B putting K-8 students in classroom bubbles, with younger kids going in smaller groups

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Published Tuesday, September 1, 2020 4:06PM ADT
Last Updated Tuesday, September 1, 2020 8:34PM ADT



<https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/n-b-putting-k-8-students-in-classroom-bubbles-with-younger-kids-going-in-smaller-groups-1.5088047?cache=ftdpqpcfvwjhs>

EDUCATION

'I think they have it figured out': Parents, kids feel good about back to school



Charlotte Ducey says she is excited to see other people's masks when she heads off to a new school for Grade 1.

Justin Samanski-Langille | Kings County Record

The province's school operation plan have eased some anxieties that parents and children had heading into the new school year.

On Thursday afternoon, schools across the Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) published their operational plans detailing exactly what classrooms and schools will look like as students start to return to classes Sept. 8

Each plan details everything from access to the building, physical distancing, personal protective equipment, mask use by students, schedule changes, communication, and more.

Four-year-old Everly Tremblett said she is excited to be going to school for the first time this year, as she starts pre-school at Sussex Christian School, though she isn't too happy about wearing a mask at times because she said they make it hard to talk.

"I think it's great, I feel like [the pandemic] has taken away their ability to just be kids, so I think this will make it a little easier for them," said her mother Shannan Tremblett.

Charlotte Ducey said she is "excited and nervous" about starting Grade 1 at Sussex Corner Elementary School this year, mainly because the six-year-old is starting fresh at a new school, with new

with mental health concerns. This is support that has always been there, it is not pandemic specific," wrote Watson.

Leading up to this school year however, Watson said school principals and vice principals participated in three workshops focused on anxiety and trauma led by a child psychologist from Halifax, and a national expert in the area of trauma response from Alberta.

Operational plans are largely similar between schools in the district, with minor differences based on the physical features of the building and wording specific to the grade levels taught at the school.

For each action outlined in the plan, there are columns indicating whether the action has been completed or whether it is in progress, as well as links to specific documents related to the action.

At the top of the document are signature and change lines for reviews of the plan to be conducted monthly.

In Sussex Corner Elementary's plan, for example, it states in the communication section teachers will provide in class orientations to all students, with attendance checks to ensure no student misses them, and that school administration will provide updates for parents and caregivers by voicemail and the school's website. a new teacher and new friends.

"I'm excited about it too, honestly I'm not worried about COVID," said Charlotte's mother Tracy Ducey. "I think (the school districts) have it figured out as much as they can honestly, but obviously it is going to be an evolving thing once they get the kids there."

Ducey said not much in the plan came as a surprise to her, with a steady stream of evolving information on the return to school emerging over the past month, but one apparent omission on mental health support did jump out at her.

"They really only indicated a plan for the staff [in the Sussex Corner Elementary School operational plan]," she said. "I would have liked to see some sort of plan for the kids too. That's kind of a big thing with the [pandemic], at least to me."

ASD-S superintendent Zoë Watson said that omission is likely due to student mental health support coming from curriculum changes, rather than from the operational plan.

In an email to the Kings Country Record, Watson said the district has taken a proactive approach in education over the past few years, predating the pandemic, to teach skills which foster positive mental health.

"Every school is supported by an Integrated Services Delivery Child and Youth Team, where multiple professionals can assist a school

In addition to provincially-mandated precautions such as class bubbles, the plan details how fire drills will be limited to 15 minutes with muster points staggered so physical distancing can be maintained when outside the school.

Watson said the district encourages parents to model the practices outlined in the plan with their children at home.

"District and school staff have worked very hard over the summer and especially the last few weeks with the return of our principals to make sure we are prepared for the start of this school year," said Watson. "Schools are excited about having students back and I feel we are ready."

EDUCATION

'We're just hoping it keeps going well': Families adjust to school life



Caitlin Dutt, Local Journalism Initiative reporter | Telegraph-Journal

SAINT JOHN • Greater Saint John students returned to school Tuesday with a new item in their backpack – masks.

After not seeing her students for almost six months, Prince Charles School principal Lori Doyle said she and her staff were beyond excited to welcome them back Tuesday morning.

"This is the way it's supposed to be," she said Tuesday. "To see them this morning, it was wonderful."

Doyle said her school has planned a staggered entry this week in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. On Tuesday, only Grade 6 and kindergarten students returned. On Wednesday, Grade 1, 2, 7 and 8 students will return. And on Thursday, Grade 3, 4 and 5 students will return.

Eventually, by Friday, all of the grades will be in school together.

Doyle said principals have had several meetings with Anglophone South School District and New Brunswick's education department to get support in preparing their own schools' operational plans for the return to the classroom.

While each school has a different operational plan, New Brunswick's Department of Early Childhood Development and Education issued a document, Return to School September 2020, which serves as a "comprehensive and first reference point."

In Prince Charles School's operational plan, staff and students must self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before and throughout the day. If students get two or more symptoms, they have to put on a mask and leave the building, or go to an isolation room and be picked up to go home. They must not spend more than an hour in the isolation room.

Even with all the changes, Doyle said there were no tears shed by the kindergarten students who came to school Tuesday morning. She said a photo booth was set up where the parents or guardians could get a picture with their child.

"Children are so much more adaptable than adults are... They were excited to come in with their masks," Doyle said.

Bianca Dugas dropped her daughter Sawyer off outside of Prince Charles School at 8:10 a.m. Tuesday for her first day of kindergarten.

She said Sawyer was excited as ever, albeit nervous, since it's the first time coming to a "big school." She's pleased with how the school has handled the pandemic so far.

"They seem like they have a pretty good system going for how they're going to run the classrooms breaks recess and lunch," Dugas said. "I'm pretty pleased with it so far."

Dugas and other parents of kindergarten students came last week for scheduled meetings with the school so they could see the classrooms. They also learned how pick-up and drop-off worked under than the new pandemic protocols.

Other than falling down on the way out, five-year-old Lacey Owens had a good first day at kindergarten. Sporting a Woman Wonder outfit complete with matching mask, Lacey made a friend on her first day.

For her mother Rebecca Connors, it went smoothly for her too. She said the kids had a washroom within their classroom and didn't have to wear masks in the class, only when they were walking to and from the classroom.

"I thought they handled it well. Best you can do, right? So we're just hoping it keeps going well."

EDUCATION

Smooth start - so far - for return to school



Six-year-old Charlotte Ducey boards the bus to start school Tuesday.
Photo: Submitted

Justin Samanski-Langille | Kings County Record

The first day of classes for many students in southern New Brunswick went off smoothly Tuesday, despite little being normal about this school year.

Some students in the Anglophone South School District returned to the classrooms, with others staggering their first day of classes in one of many examples of how school during a pandemic is different.

"It went really well," said Tracy Ducey, whose daughter Charlotte started Grade 1 at Sussex Corner Elementary School. "[Charlotte] had a great day."

Ducey said Charlotte didn't mention anything negative, and her teacher seemed to be able to spend more one-on-one time with her because the class was not full yet.

"I think that's really nice, especially where it is really strange," said Ducey. "I think it is really beneficial for the kids for sure."

Ducey said the only difference she noticed was how empty the school bus was picking up and dropping off her daughter, due to the staggered return to classes and limiting each seat to one student.

Throughout the district, superintendent Zoë Watson said principals reported a smooth start to the year.

"We were in touch with about a dozen of the principals today, and all reported that things went smoothly, and they observed students that

were happy to be back," said Watson in an email.

Watson said it was important to note only around a third of the district's elementary students, and around one-quarter of high school students, were in class Tuesday, with a more complete class schedule set to begin next week.

"This is positive as it gives teachers an opportunity to orient the students to the new routines and processes and allows principals the chance to see their operational plan put into practice and note any areas that need to be adjusted."

Given school has not been in session since March, Watson said it is important to remind motorists to pay extra attention when driving around schools and the district's 240 school busses, and crosswalks will be busier near schools and bus stops.

Watson said the discussions leading up to today, combined with a smooth start, makes her optimistic about the year.

"We have been talking about the return to school for the last few months and it was good to see it all begin this morning," said Watson. "The window of my office overlooks Millidgeville North School and it was great to hear the students outside this morning."

Staggered start times in New Brunswick



Not every student was in school Tuesday so it was the first of several first days. Laura Lyall reports.



<https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2030970&jwsourc=em>

New Brunswick

Principals feel ready as students head back to school across New Brunswick

In Saint John, Jill Ferguson, principal at Barnhill Memorial School said she has been telling parents things will be done in little steps as students return to school.

"We just want everyone to feel safe."

Ferguson said they are excited to have the students back in the classrooms and hallways of the school again.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/nb-first-day-school-1.5715363>

New School Year Brings Challenges And Excitement

Saint John, NB, Canada / The Wave

Tamara Steele

Sep 10, 2020 7:46 AM

It will be a few weeks before everyone knows exactly how return to school plans are working in the Anglophone South School District and all over the province.

Early feedback from school principals is positive with students happy to be back.

Superintendent Zoe Watson said the staggered entry system this week is helping students adjust to the changes.

“Some schools used Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of this week. Others are using the four days (Tuesday to Friday) and then all students returning on Monday,” Watson said.

The school district prepared age-appropriate materials to help students adjust to the changes this year.

Watson said the videos cover the use of masks, hand-washing and give the teachers the chance to show students what is different in the school.

“The arrows on the floor, the decals reminding people of the physical distancing. Also, the routines, like at K to 8, where students have to remain in their classroom bubbles. What the transition times look like, [such as] when you are walking to the gymnasium,” Watson said.

Watson acknowledged the efforts of principals and vice-principals in creating operational plans for each school.

The district hired Occupational Health and Safety coordinator Claire Tooley following the shutdown in March to assist with this process.



The Anglophone South District Education Council held its monthly meeting on September 9th 2020.

(Facebook)

FEATURE

UPDATED: 'It was the best job anywhere': Former bus driver remembered



SAINT JOHN • LeRoy Ryder was a man who loved conversation and cars – and his job as a long-time bus driver gave him access to both of those.

The Saint John school bus driver, who died from a heart attack on Aug. 26, is being fondly remembered by family, friends and the close-knit community at the Anglophone South School District.

Ryder, who had a "big booming voice" whenever he talked and laughed, loved to socialize, said Steve Evans, assistant manager of transportation in Saint John for the Anglophone South School District.

"Wherever LeRoy was – the coffee shops, the car dealerships, or the used car lots – he loved conversation," Evans said.

He met Ryder when the bus driver started driving kids. Ryder even ended up driving his own kids when they were in high school.

Ryder's daughter Terri Turrell said her father, who described his work as "the best job anywhere," planned to retire after the 2020-21 school year, but he died days before he would be able to drive students for one last time.

It was Wade Freeze, a friend for almost 30 years and fellow school bus driver who encouraged Ryder to apply for the bus driver job two decades ago. Ryder spent most of the time driving around Saint John's west side.

"He said it was the best job he ever had in his life," Freeze said.

Ryder loved the job which combined his passions: He got to drive for a few hours a day and also chat with the kids.

"If you got a good bunch of kids, it's a good job," Freeze said.

During his time off, Freeze said, Ryder would look at cars. In total, he owned 11 vehicles, including Ford Tempo cars, according to Turrell.

Ryder even found and purchased the car which his father had previously owned. It was a 1965 Morris Oxford that Ryder's parents had sold in the 1960s. He restored it to its former glory after it was rescued in the 1980s from a backyard snowbank with a for-sale sign on it, Turrell recalled.

His dad's name was in the owner's manual.

Ryder's passions for cars once brought him and Freeze who roomed together for three years at one point to a junk yard in Kingston. They were looking for car parts.

"We were pressed for time but spent five hours just walking around the junk yard looking at cars," Freeze said.

Ryder was grooming his 12-year-old grandson Hayden Turrell to be a car lover just like him. He would take him to car shows.

Freeze said Ryder cared for his kids and spoke of them with pride.

"When he talked about his kids or his mother and father you could see tears coming to his eyes," Freeze said. "He was a very emotional man and he loved his kids and family."

EDUCATION

Custodians key to school operation during pandemic



Justin Samanski-Langille | Kings County Record

Schools across southern New Brunswick would not be able to operate without custodial staff, who bear the brunt of the responsibility for implementing COVID-19 pandemic procedures, say school officials.

Despite the extra weight on his shoulders this year, Kevin Bowes, head custodian at Sussex Regional High School, said it's just a part of the job he loves.

"I don't find much has changed, you just have to be out there sanitizing more," said Bowes. "The way I look at it, it's just part of the job. It keeps you busy, but you still get your breaks and all that. It doesn't bother me, I like doing my work and my whole staff is the same way."

Bowes serves as the day shift custodian at the school, keeping common areas such as hallways, washrooms, and the cafeteria clean and tidy while students move between classes.

In a normal school year, he would clean most of those areas once or twice a day, and leave the deep cleaning to the comparative battalion of six custodians on the overnight shift.

This year though, things are different.

All of those common areas are now cleaned by Bowes, and a newly hired extra day shift custodian, as many as four or five times each day. That is in addition to supplemental tasks like topping off hand sanitizer bottles, replacing any damaged social distancing signage, and watching over students as they move around the building to ensure they follow social distancing and mask rules.

Numerous, small, and easy to forget touch points throughout the school must also be cleaned at least twice a day, such as light switches,

door handles, water fountain and vending machine buttons, and door frames.

"We just work a little harder, do everything a little faster," he said. "You don't go do anything extra when you get home, that's for sure.

While Bowes may humbly brush off the extra work as just being a part of his duty, principal Lori-Ann Lauridsen is bombastic in her appreciation for what Bowes and his team do for the school each day.

Custodians are on the front lines of the battle against the coronavirus, vigorously cleaning schools day and night, and ensuring students and staff alike are following the correct procedures, she said.

"We know we would not be able to function, or be in this building, without the work of the custodians," said Lauridsen. "We are super lucky at Sussex regional we have a staff that not only cares about the work they do, but cares about our kids and their colleagues."

Anglophone South School District Superintendent Zoë Watson also heaped praise on the clean-up crews.

"We are very appreciative of their efforts, and have to remember when schools closed in mid-March they had to go back in the schools and do a lot of cleaning and disinfecting," said Watson.

"They were the ones opening middle and high school lockers to clear out any food that was left behind, more cleaning had to be done when teachers went back in late April to pick up supplies needed for home learning, and again in May when students and families went to pick up belongings."

Watson said after that work was done, the custodians were right back into the schools to perform their regular summer work, which involves constantly moving furniture around to polish floors, among other time-consuming tasks.

In order to help the district's regular custodians, Watson said they have received funding to hire the equivalent of 40 new custodians across the district, including a mix of new casual staff and the promotion of existing casual staff to regular employees.

Bowes said he is happy with the support he has received, both from the district and from his colleagues in Sussex, and ultimately he feels there is little else anyone could do to make his job easier – other than stopping winter slush from making a mess of his floors perhaps.

"I've always cleaned the school for the kids, that's the reason I got into it, and I am still doing it for that reason," said Bowes. "As long as the kids are happy and the school is safe for them, I'm happy."

NEWS

Middle school receives donation to help with 'open air' learning



Kings County Record

Hampton Middle School students will have a natural place to sit while outside as they adjust to new ways to learn during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coleman's Landscape and Tree Services recently donated approximately 30 stools made out of tree trunks to the middle school as a way to give back to the community.

"We were going to do a big tree job before [hurricane Teddy], and this particular sight happened to have large, tall poplar trees, so there were lots of them," said Dan Coleman, a local arborist and tree service expert who owns Coleman's.

Coleman said the school's principal, Theresa Ketchum-Boudreau, had approached him earlier, asking him to make the stools for the students.

"Anytime you can get kids outside, it's not a bad thing," Coleman said. "It's also somewhat necessary too to keep everyone separated."

According to a social media post from the middle school, the stumps will give teachers the flexibility to teach the students "outside in the open air."

'Thrilled' former colleagues recognized for education excellence



Stacey Stairs, left, a teacher at Sussex Regional High School has been announced as a 2020 recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. Lisa Brown, owner and director of Lisa's Playhouse in Roachville, has received a Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education.

Years after teaching together, a pair of Sussex-area educators have been recognized individually by the highest reaches of Canadian politics for excellence in their field.

Stacey Stairs, a teacher at Sussex Regional High School has been announced as a 2020 recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, and Lisa Brown, owner and director of Lisa's Playhouse in Roachville has received a Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education.

The pair worked together in the classroom for several years at the high school, Stairs as a teacher and Brown as her education assistant, before Brown left to start Lisa's Playhouse, an early childhood education centre quickly recognized for its unique focus on outdoor play and learning.

"I was thrilled to see Stacey got a shout out too," said Brown. "I am just speechless right now ... She has always put her students first and worked above and beyond any expectation to help her students succeed."

Stairs was just as quick to level praise at her former colleague, calling Brown "an incredible educator," praising her work developing the forest school concept in the province, and calling the dual honours "a pleasant surprise."

Stairs was recognized for her leadership and exemplary teaching practices, demonstrated by several key accomplishments over her career, according to a news release. They include securing nearly \$250,000 in grants to purchase technology to better serve students who don't have home Internet access, to refurbish a welding lab, and to feed students through school lunch program.

SRHS principal Lori-Ann Lauridsen said Stairs was deserving of the award for "too many reasons to name."