

A Tribute to our Colleague and Friend, Dr. David Dibbon
by
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It is an honor to write this tribute to David Dibbon—a friend, colleague, teacher, scholar, educational administrator, school board trustee, Dean of Education, husband, father, and son. In whatever role we knew him, from whatever vantage point, he stood apart as someone special!

I first met David just as he was beginning his career in educational administration. He was vice-principal of a school in Norman's Cove, Trinity Bay. His special leadership abilities and charismatic personality were readily apparent! It was clear that he would most likely have an outstanding career as an educational leader. This first encounter marked the beginning of our longstanding professional friendship and scholarly collaboration.

David was committed to research focused on improving schools and school systems in Newfoundland and Labrador and elsewhere. He was passionate about enabling schools to become better places for students to learn and for teachers to work. He was a transformational leader and change agent who had great dreams of what public education could be. He had a gift of innovative thinking, a visionary spirit, and the tenacious patience required to successfully lead meaningful educational reform. Having observed those qualities in David, one participant in the Faculty's school leadership development project in West Africa observed that "the only legacy that will preserve David's memory with us is to keep a united front and work in our respective countries to transform the leadership landscape in our educational institutions towards excellent performance." This latter comment that was endorsed by many other participants reveals that David's contribution to educational reform extended well beyond his home environment!

In addition to his devotion to his work and to the improvement of education locally and globally, David always found time for his colleagues, his friends, and his family, especially his parents, his wife Janice, and their two daughters, Katherine and Lauren. Having worked and travelled with David quite a lot over the last few years, I learned a great deal about his love for his family. They were never far from his thoughts. He kept in regular contact with them when he was away from home, and always made certain that he returned with "a special little something" for each of them.

It was a privilege for me to have been a part of David's life. Although much too short, his, was a life well lived! He was a determined, visionary, collaborative, goal-oriented, caring person who loved life and all that it offered. Through both his scholarship and his practice, he made a significant contribution to our Faculty of Education, to Memorial University, and to K-12 education in Newfoundland and Labrador and elsewhere. His many awards and public recognitions reveal that his, was a distinguished career of considerable import! His enthusiasm for that next big project was infectious, and a huge component of his and his colleagues success. Dr. Kenneth Leithwood, David's doctoral dissertation supervisor and editor of one of David's last publications, wrote:

David's contributions were powerful and his work ethic more than remarkable.... Energy, commitment, integrity are all words that begin to capture my image of David. Would that we had many more like him. But he was one of kind and will be sorely missed as a colleague, scholar and friend (Leadership and Policy in Schools, 10:125, 2011).

David--a caring and beloved family man, a cherished colleague, a scholar and friend--will be missed by many, but never will he be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to have known him!