

SITI (Summer Institute of Technology) Articles

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When Dr. Singh first approached me about the idea of dedicating an edition of the *Morning Watch* to TESIC's Summer Institute of Technology (SITI), I was delighted by the prospect. One of the primary mandates of the Technology Education Special Interest Council (TESIC) is to provide professional learning to our membership and SITI represented one of our biggest initiatives to date. The opportunity to further communicate the good work of our members and partners to the wider educational community was not something I was going to turn down.

SITI was conceived during the winter and spring of 2014. Based on the feedback we had received concerning our professional learning sessions over the last number of years, the executive council of TESIC felt that a summer institute could meet a need within our community. Over the last few decades, educational technologies have penetrated every facet of school life. In particular, the last decade has seen an explosion of diverse and rich technologies that have stretched the idea of normal, not only in school, but in society. As schools and teachers try to re-conceptualize and integrate this new normal into their everyday practice, TESIC finds itself in a unique position. Our members have an intrinsic interest in technology and its impact on teaching and learning. They deal with these issues on a daily basis and come up with ingenious solutions to otherwise insurmountable problems. As they integrate technology in a positive manner, they also deal with many potential negative concerns both skillfully and professionally. Technology is a means of implementing new teaching methodologies that are reflective and progressive. With these things in mind, SITI was an attempt to help our membership and other stakeholders continue the dialogue, discussion, and discourse around these issues within a collegial and supportive environment.

In its genesis, SITI was conceived as a conference for teachers by teachers, but to leave it as such would be naïve. The classroom is like the tip of an iceberg as there are many internal and external forces that affect the focus of the day-to-day activity that defines classroom life. Therefore, the executive of TESIC reached out for partnerships with Memorial University's Faculty of Education, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, The Department of Education, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and various industry leaders. These partnerships allowed TESIC to increase the scope of our audience and allowed these various stakeholders to have their perspective heard through the dialogue created at SITI. The executive was very grateful for the relationships developed with the Faculty of Education. Without their support SITI would not have been possible. From facilities to logistics, the Faculty's staff went above and beyond to accommodate this initiative and we look forward to working with them for many years to come.

SITI 2014 was held on the weekend of July 25th. With over 100 attendees, 37 breakout sessions, 25 facilitators within 6 concurrent streams it was an intense, but paradoxically relaxed and informal event. Sessions covered everything from research to policy to technology teaching

practice within a collaborative and mostly hands-on environment. This informal relaxed conversational style was one of the key factors that attendees pointed out as making SITI a very positive and rewarding experience. The cross pollination of ideas and best practice that was cultivated by SITI is a great example of how diverse groups of educational stakeholders can share and learn from each other. There was a great sense of ownership exhibited throughout the weekend as individuals and groups interacted, networked, and learned from each other. In the end, SITI embodied the idea that our diverse groups don't need to be isolated, and by working together we can have a greater impact on influencing the direction of our education system. Collectively, we have the skills and knowledge to effect positive change and it is through equal and collegial partnerships, such as SITI, that we can continue to refine our focus as we move forward in this venture.

Within the pages that follow are several textual representation of a cross-section of the sessions from SITI 2014. Whether the articles discuss the development of technology-rich, project-based activities, technology-enhanced inclusive educational practices, assistive technology, technology-aided literature circles, professional development, or the barriers to integrating technology; they all deal with the central theme of technology's ever present pressure on teaching and learning. Each of the articles in this edition are presented from different perspectives; the teacher, the researcher or the graduate student. Just like the sessions at SITI, these articles all have their place within the conversation on the impact of technology within education. Hopefully, as you read this edition, some of the ideas and thoughts shared by the authors will give you cause to stop and reflect on your own practice as many of them caused me to this very thing. As I close this brief introduction, I'd like to again thank Dr. Singh for the opportunity to extend SITI's reach in this manner and I look forward to future opportunities to share, learn and grow within the educational community of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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Guest Editor's Note

With the exception of Nadeem Saqlain's article entitled *Actualizing Virtual Teaching* all of the articles in this edition are based on presentations from TESIC's 2014 Summer Institute of Technology Integration held at St. John's campus of Memorial University's Faculty of Education. As Nadeem's article gives a historical overview of the development of distance learning in Newfoundland and Labrador it is complementary to the themes presented at the conference and therefore it was included in this edition.