

# Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia

Connecting...

Spring 2012

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## Learning how to learn...

### Message from the Chair

*"The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."*  
– Alvin Toffler

When I saw this quote in the newspaper recently, it occurred to me that it captures in a significant way a truth that everyone involved in workplace education deeply understands. It wouldn't surprise me if that understanding were in large part responsible for the passion and dedication of workplace educators.

It set me to wondering whether, of all the essential skills, that central one—continuous learning—may be the least understood and least implemented in actual instructional situations.

When explaining the need for continuous learning, the HRSDC website identifies three areas that "will become Essential Skills:

- knowing how to learn;
- understanding one's own learning style; and
- knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities."

It's been my experience that people sometimes assume that they (and others) know how to learn (perhaps the process of learning is seen as an innate ability or is, itself, learned from prior experience). And, while this assumption may be justified to a certain extent, I wonder whether there isn't more to be considered.

So, this is the question, then: *Are we addressing all three areas in our programs?*

I invite you to make this part of your dialogue with your colleagues—and please send your thoughts to AWENS for sharing with others, perhaps on our redesigned website or in a future issue of the newsletter.

By the way, Toffler also said, "Knowledge is the most democratic source of power."

And that's the business we're in.

I wish you well in all your WPE endeavours.

Leigh Faulkner  
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# Get to know Margan Dawson

Margan Dawson is the Executive Director for the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia and is responsible for securing financial support and driving the image enhancement of AWENS.

She particularly likes building relationships within the workplace education community and believes this brings about opportunities to build and share knowledge in the field.



## A Message for Workplace Educators

As workplace education instructors, to share knowledge and transfer best practices is the single most important thing we can do. We “compete” in the marketplace based on our Essential Skills expertise and our ability to provide high quality, customized workplace education programs. So, in order to stay competitive, we need to be able to manage the knowledge we have and learn to continuously improve our practice.

Currently, one of the enablers of transfer of knowledge and best practice is that which already exists, our partnership and connection with the well-developed Nova Scotia Workplace Education model. Opportunities for knowledge exchange present themselves through the interactions and interchanges that take place while working with workplace education coordinators, project teams, and other instructors. And we, as workplace educators and AWENS members, are part of a strong lifelong learning environment; the Workplace

Education Initiatives/AWENS partnership provides many opportunities for growth and professional development.

It’s important that we keep pace with external and internal trends and changes as we continue to grow and move forward. To do this, we’re forming a committee that will focus on creating opportunities to share knowledge among our instructors so that we can learn from each other and strengthen our organization.

For this committee to be of value, we need volunteers who are willing to organize and to discover exactly what our members need. Help us create a dynamic exchange of best practices by volunteering to serve on the committee, or send me your recommendations for building and sharing knowledge in the field of workplace education.

Margan Dawson  
Executive Director  
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### AWENS Objective

The objective of the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia (AWENS) is to provide a forum for the promotion and advancement of excellence in instructional practices by networking, creating professional development activities, responding to trends in the field, and representing the interests of educators.

### AWENS Mission

To promote excellence in the field of workplace education.

### AWENS Vision

A strong professional network of partners, supporting workplace education in Nova Scotia.

### AWENS Values

**Collaboration** – We value collaboration with all sectors and regions of the province and with our partners at all levels.

**Forward Thinking** – We value forward thinking and maintain awareness of and are responsive to workplace trends with all our partners.

**Support** – We value the support of our membership by providing ongoing contact, networking opportunities, and updates.

**Commitment** – We will take on only those initiatives that fit with our goals, and we will incorporate our values into everything we do.

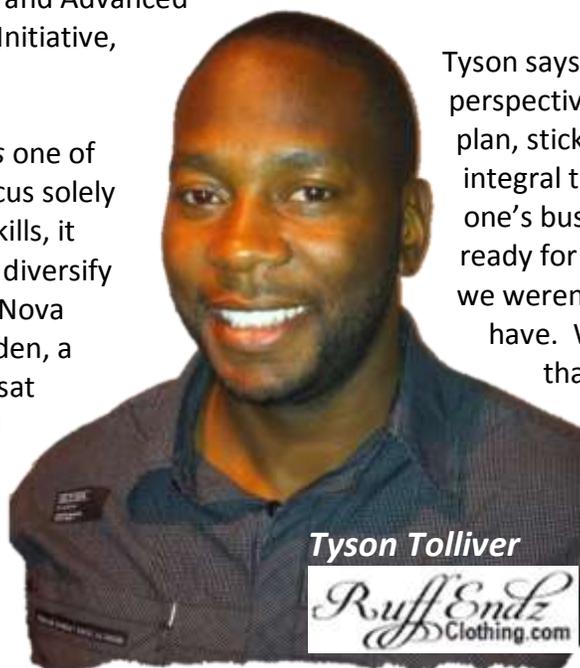
# Founding Foundations for Success

## A New Course on the Essential Skills of Business

Tyson Tolliver, co-owner of RuffEndzClothing.com is always looking for ways to continue his business education and sharpen his mindset. "I'm never going to stop learning," says Tyson, "so I want to take any opportunity to expand what I already know and get in a room with like-minded individuals." For Tyson, the *Foundations for Success* program, put on in collaboration with AWENS, Labour and Advanced Education, and the Black Business Initiative, was one of those opportunities.

Not only is *Foundations for Success* one of the first AWENS/LAE courses to focus solely on developing essential business skills, it was also an opportunity for LAE to diversify its portfolio by targeting the black Nova Scotian community. Margo Hampden, a workplace education coordinator, sat down with the Project Team at BBI to assess the best way for workplace education to help serve BBI's clients. They came to the conclusion that one of the core foundational programs needed was a course that would help entrepreneurs understand and develop the essential skills of running a business. Shortly after, *Foundations for Success* was born.

The course has participants develop a business plan. Course facilitator, Yvonne Thyssen-Post says she focuses on topics such as business profiles, industry analysis, and marketing. With this emphasis, Margo says it was important to offer the course to people who would be able to use the learning to help grow and develop their businesses and become stronger contenders in the NS work environment.



Tyson Tolliver

RuffEndz  
Clothing.com



L-R: Bernadette Hamilton-Reid, Nicole Thomas, Wayne Talbot, Terrence Hyacinth, Yvonne Thyssen-Post and Christina MacLeod

Tyson says the course transformed his perspective on the importance of a business plan, sticking with it, and using it as a very integral tool in the implementation of one's business. "We had a business plan ready for our business," says Tyson, "but we weren't really using it as we should have. We didn't have the understanding that a business plan should be used under a continual basis, updated, and even enhanced."

For Virginia Hinch, owner of Mama D's Cheesecakes and Catering, the course helped her to really focus and start taking the steps to expand her business into a 'full-fledged' restaurant and jazz café. "I'm still a home-based business," says Virginia. "So, when the opportunity came up, it was a no-brainer to take the course. I'm trying to do as much as possible with my business to get it up and running . . . No matter how many times I looked at different business plans I found it daunting. Yvonne has made it easier to understand. Having a person hands-on, helping me do this is really beneficial. It really motivates me as well."

*Continued on page 4*

Yvonne's hands-on help and easy teaching style isn't the only motivator for participants; being able to feed off of a room of business minded individuals is also amazing, says Virginia. She continues, "we all have suggestions, we all have ideas, everyone has something to offer to the course."



*Virginia Hinch  
Mama D's Cheesecakes  
and Catering*

Tyson agrees. He says the course is empowering: "[*Foundations for Success*] allows lots of room for discussion amongst the participants to share and gain knowledge. . . Business people think differently, and to hear all the ideas from the other participants is monumental."

For Vekisha Drummond, who is hoping to start her own business in the near future, the chance to network with other business owners has been one of the best facets of the course and has opened her eyes to a multitude of possible business options. "The program is fabulous," says Vekisha, "I'm just hoping that we can continue on. I think we need more after this."

Lucky for Vekisha, not only is there hope to run a similar course again, but Margo says she'll be talking to BBI about the possibility of adding a course that will take the current participants' learning to the next level.

## Mobile Computer Lab: Bringing technology into the classroom

In addition to AWENS' brand new office space, there has been a technological addition to the AWENS operation: a mobile computer lab! The lab can be used for sessions hosted at the AWENS office or transported when the courses take place in another locale.

*Foundations for Success* is one of the first courses that's had the opportunity to incorporate the mobile lab into their learning. Having access to the computers has meant a lot to some of the participants, says Yvonne Thyssen-Post. "It's been a wonderful asset for them to have." Yvonne doesn't feel the course could have progressed the way it has without access to the lab.

Students can develop pieces of their business plan, save the files to a memory stick or access their personal computers remotely, and then continue to work on the plan while in class. In addition, when discussing aspects of a business plan in class, participants are able to go online and look up specifics relevant to their individual businesses.

Tyson Tolliver, a participant of *Foundations for Success*, thinks having computers in the classroom is essential. "We live in an advanced age where we can't do without them," says Tyson. "Having a computer in the room sets the course to a whole new standard."



## Meet Yvonne Thyssen-Post

Workplace Education Facilitator

In addition to being a facilitator, Yvonne has been working as a consultant since 1997. She established Thyagrissen Consulting Limited in 1998. Yvonne has a Bsc in Agriculture and a Masters in Adult Education.

With this background, she provides her clients with a number of services. Among other things, she helps with business plans and helps clients understand their financial statements so they can use them to make wise business decisions. She also provides workshops and seminars on a number of business topics.

When someone suggested that Yvonne should get involved in AWENS and LAE's Workplace Education programs, she thought it would be a chance to expand her business opportunities and draw from the expertise she's developed over the years.

Of the participants in *Foundations for Success*, Yvonne says, "they're an amazing group. They're inspiring. They're dedicated. They're just really fun to be with. . . They energize me." Yvonne would love the opportunity to go and spend time at the participants' businesses to see their learning in action.

Yvonne Thyssen-Post's favourite part of being an Adult Education Facilitator is seeing the participants glow and grow. "Seeing where they go, 'oh, now I get it!'" says Yvonne. She says she also loves to see the participants learn from one another. "That's what I like about adult education; everyone who comes into the room, including the instructor, has a lot to contribute," says Yvonne.

Although Yvonne has been involved with adult education for years, she only recently started working as a Workplace Education Facilitator for AWENS and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. She has done several programs so far. The first was a course on essential accounting skills for the agricultural industry, and then she ran a similar program several months later. Yvonne's current course, *Foundations for Success*, was offered to the clients of the Black Business Initiative. She really enjoys the material, as it closely relates to her day to day field.

*"Yvonne's teaching methods allow you to grasp the ideas and concepts that she's bringing forth to you very easily. She breaks ideas down in a 'down to earth' type method because that's the way she is as a person.*

*She's very honest and straightforward with the way she approaches things, so that makes her really easy to understand. It makes [Foundations for Success] a course I look forward to each week."*

– Tyson Tolliver

Outside of work, Yvonne is a runner. She says, "I'm not a competitive runner but that's my stress relief." She goes out every morning at 5am for a run or a walk. She loves to garden, bike, kayak, and go camping. Basically, she's an outdoor enthusiast who finds peace in nature. Yvonne also enjoys spending time with her 11-year-old daughter.

# A Passion for Learning

Introducing Margo Hampden,  
Workplace Education Coordinator

Margo Hampden has always been interested in education, both her own and helping to further the education of others. When she had the opportunity to work for Labour and Advanced Education several years ago, she jumped at the chance. Margo started as a Labour Market Agreement Coordinator. "I was so excited and just thrilled when they asked me if I wanted to do [workplace education] full time," says Margo. Of her position as Workplace Education Coordinator, she says, "I absolutely love my job. I love helping people learn and grow and develop and to watch them open the door of learning for the rest of their lives."

In a nutshell, a coordinator's job is coordinating the entire process of a workplace education program:

choosing the worksite,  
assessing the needs of  
that site, putting  
together a project  
team, and hiring  
an instructor. For  
Margo, the most  
exciting and  
inspiring part of  
that job is to  
attend the  
graduation  
ceremonies  
after each  
program. She  
finds it motivating.  
"Something we  
sometimes take for  
granted as being just a small

*"I think workplace education is a program that is truly a diamond in the rough . . . it's truly a program that is unique and is inspirational and that teaches people to continuously keep the door open for learning: Learning can be fun and not intimidating!"*

—Margo Hampden

one off program can be something that can really change someone's life, even if it's communications or learning the basics of a computer," says Margo.

Before coming to LAE, Margo had a number of different jobs, all of which led her to where she is



today. She worked at NS Power, Aliant, Service NS, and Municipal Relations, so she understands both the private and the public sector. When the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs opened up, Margo worked with them for 5 years. "That gave me a really good understanding of the critical issues that were happening with businesses and individuals of African Nova Scotian descent," says Margo. "I took that knowledge and brought it with me to LAE and always keep that in my mind and in my heart: what can I do to help our community and to try to help businesses and individuals in any way that I can?"

Since Margo became a Workplace Education Coordinator she has worked to bring diversity into the team's portfolio. *Foundations for Success* is a result of that work.

Outside of her work, Margo has a variety of interests to keep her busy. A lifelong learner, Margo is looking at doing executive management training. She is also a Steering Committee member of Imhotep Legacy Academy, a program that helps African Nova Scotian students prepare to enter the STEM fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. She is a passionate golfer and, most importantly, says Margo, she enjoys spending time with her two grandchildren.



Lisa Smith is one of the newest members of the family at AWENS. As Executive Assistant, Lisa has a large array of tasks. She manages AWENS memberships, the front desk area, day to day operations, the resource library, and basically anything that comes in and out of the AWENS' doors. She also organizes any meetings or trainings that take place at the AWENS office.

Recently, one more item has been added to Lisa's portfolio. She will manage the newly developed value added workshops. (*Look to the next issue to learn more!*)

When asked what her favourite part of being an Executive Assistant was, Lisa replied, "I enjoy every aspect of the job." After some thought, however, she concluded that she most enjoys managing projects. She likes to make sure that all the components of a project are in place, ensuring that each endeavour will be a success.

Before coming to AWENS, Lisa worked at the Red Cross, also in the

## AWENS is growing!

Meet Lisa Smith,  
Executive Assistant

position of Executive Assistant. She managed daily operations, a variety of projects, and attended to the Director General's needs.

When she's not working, Lisa loves to spend time with her three-year-old grandson. She is also heavily involved in her church: she works with youth, the choir, and helps her mother organize the church camp. Of her part time and after work activities, Lisa says, "I play a lot of different roles."

"I really don't have a lot of free time for myself," says Lisa. "I tend to involve myself with my family... that's hugely important to me."

When she does have personal downtime, Lisa spends her time reading a broad range of material at Chapters, going fishing, or taking her dog for a walk.

### SUBMISSIONS

Please send any comments, suggestions, or photos to:

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