SEINE RIVER TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

Dear valued members of the association,

Every year around this time, I take a good, long look at the last twelve months, and reflect on the successes, missteps, and intangibles that have placed themselves upon the year's timeline. In those reflections, many memories and thoughts come up. Like many of you I'm sure, I can't help but watch the news on a daily basis, amazed at what is happening in our region, our country, our continent, and our world. Regardless of what sensational stories emerge, it reminds me to make sure to connect with those close to me because those relationships will carry me forward no matter what news makes the headlines.

As a result, I have made sure to connect with colleagues, friends, and family over the past 52 weeks, and sometimes those reasons are for good, while others are for tougher situations. I know that through the course of this year, many of you have connected to me, wishing me well, and I've returned the sentiment. It's a great feeling to know that others are there for you, watching out for you, having your back. That's why, as your President and as a citizen of this society, I live each and every day with that in mind — the more help I can give, the better off we all will be.

To that end, I've witnessed the good folks on the SRTA Executive working as a professional and diligent group for the 360 (or so) members of our Local. They believe in that same philosophy, to help others whenever they can. I hope that if you have one of these fantastic individuals in your building, or if you see them at a divisional event, you take the time to say thanks and wish them a happy holiday. As volunteers, they are attending meetings and seminars, passing information along to benefit all members, shaping our future as an organization.

And the wonderful work being done here is echoed across all parts of this province. As the MTS Provincial Executive liaison to the Northern region, I had the opportunity in early November to take a quick trip to Nelson House, Thompson, and The Pas. In each town and city, Local presidents met with me and took me on tours of their schools and their communities. I had the good fortune to attend a New Teacher Induction Dinner in Thompson, where over 40 teachers were celebrated, and then followed that up by attending the Kelsey School Division Staff Awards dinner the following evening. It was great to see how other Locals and school divisions were celebrating their teachers and other staff, and it inspired me to think more about what we can do for members right here in Seine River.

Local Updates

In no particular order, here are some SRTA and MTS updates:

- The SRTA hosted a Collective Bargaining Forum in late October. The information shared there, and the discussions that resulted, will shape our bargaining strategy as we move towards opening negotiations with the division.
- The annual Maternity and Parental Benefits seminar occurred in early November, where a great many of you were able to get information and ask questions related to maternity and parental leave.
- Our first liaison meeting with the SRSD Regie group came the day after our budget consultation with SRSD trustees. Each meeting proved to be very productive, and it is obvious to me that our voice is being heard each time we consult with our educational partners.
- MTS Professional Development Day (October 20) was a great success once again, and my many thanks go not only to attendees, but also to SRTA members who took the time to be presenters this year.

If you haven't already heard, we recently said, "see you soon," to our Professional Development Chair Kaitlan Fisher, who is about to go on maternity leave. Another wonderful teacher, Mark Eismendi from Dawson Trail School, is taking over until Kaitlan returns, and I know Mark will do well in serving Local members that use the SRTA PD fund.

And so here we are, another year older, another year more experienced, another year wiser. From the bottom of my heart, I wish each and every one of you a very happy holiday and an exceptional start to 2018. See you in January and February for school visits!

In solidarity, for each of you and for each other,

Jonathan Waite

Message from the Vice-President
by Rebecca Brown

The past three months have been a whirlwind. I have been at McMaster House on more weekends than I can remember! I am always amazed how the SRTA only has half time release time for our president. His phone doesn't stop with emails, meetings or phone calls. Thank you, Jon, you are always there to listening and being there for our members.

With the complex roles teachers have in their workplace report time always seems to add extra stressors. As your Vice-President I hear about the school days that don't seem to end, and have had many of them myself. As a committee member of the MTS Disability Benefits Plan I see the numbers of members who are on short and long-term disability and each meeting the numbers go up. Balancing life after school and the expectations at school is a challenge that never goes away. Sometimes you just need to leave your marking, or laptop at home and spend time with your family and friends. This winter break, please recharge and spend time with those who bring you joy.

Collective Bargaining Update
by Dan Lagacé, Collective Bargaining Chair

As our winter break fast approaches, I hope everyone will take advantage of well deserved rest.

On the collective bargaining front, we have struck a committee and begun working for you. We held our first meeting on November 21st and have 2 more meetings planned in the new year. At this time, we will be informing your school reps on what priorities we have established for our next round of bargaining. We are moving forward as "business as usual" even with the announcement of Bill 28. A survey will soon follow.

We will be working very hard to make sure our members are well served and that your needs are being met. If you have any questions or concerns, I can be reached by email at bargaining@srteach.org. Have a great holiday season.

Pension Sustainability (in a nutshell) - Defined Benefit Plan
by Leslie Buffie, Employee Benefits Chair

TRAF provides a pension for life, plus cost of living adjustments (COLA). Right now, the amount of your pension is not directly related to investment returns. But many provinces now have a Target Benefit plan which means a teacher's pension fluctuates according to the investments involved. There is no prediction of what a pension COULD be as it's all based on changes in valuation. Our province is in "talks" about his right now. Is a change coming?

Today TRAF and HEPP (Manitoba health care pension) have an early retirement age set at 55 but the penalty is 3.3% per annum. There is also a bridging benefit to age 65.

TRAF's contribution rates are on the lower end as compared to other Canadian teacher pension plans.

Members are strongly encouraged to attend Early to Mid-Career Pension Sustainability seminars made available by MTS and TRAF as members' opinions are CRUCIAL!

Professional Development Opportunities

by Mark Eismendi, Professional Development Chair

Finding PD can be difficult, so for this month's issue I have included some of the PD that other teachers are attending.

Out of Area:

February 7 -Special Education Convention and Expo

February 17 - National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference

April 19 - Learning and the Brain Conference: Mindful, Behaved Minds - Reducing Anxiety & Raising Achievement

April 19 - Science of Stress, Emotions, and Behavior

April 25 - National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Annual Meeting and Exposition

In Area:

December 12 - Borderline Personality Disorder-Understanding and Supporting

January 23 - Save Your Sanity

January 24 - High Impact Writing Strategies

February 12 - Creating a Culture of Dignity

February 12 - Kelly Gallagher Literacy Instruction: Blending the Tried and True with the Brand New

March 12 - Enhancing teacher and leader abilities to skillfully and respectfully get results and strengthen relationships when stakes are high, emotions are strong, and opinions are opposing.

April 18 - Frontier Games

MTS also offers a number of excellent PD throughout the year. Visit **www.mbteach.org** to check out what they are offering. Most of these PD opportunities can be further explained on their respective websites, but if you would like more information on any of these PD opportunities please don't hesitate to contact me at pdchair@srteach.org.

Messy: the art of managing untidy conversations

by Danielle Fullan Kolton, PhD, The Manitoba Teachers' Society

(submitted by SRTA Equity and Social Justice Chair Lisa Harder. Originally appeared in MTS Balance Magazine, April/May 2017 edition)

Teachers talk. They talk with students, parents, other teachers, principals, and clinicians. They talk all day long. Though many of these conversations are productive and positive, some can become unintentionally messy. By messy, I mean disorganized, muddled, ambiguous, emotional, loud, and… well… rather nausea inducing. Yet, author Tim Harford (2016) embraces the idea that "there can be magic in messy." In his book, Messy: The Power of Disorder to Transform our Lives, he advocates for a little more mess by trying to dissuade a universal attraction to tidy.

Tidy. The word evokes a sense of satisfaction, control, and predictability that many people seek: Tidy spaces, tidy closets, tidy desks, tidy routines, tidy calendars, tidy classrooms. The quest for tidy seduces people to purchase Ikea bins and boxes, to binge shop at Staples for things like label makers, and to become addicted to Pinterest organization boards.

This desire for tidy also sends many Members flocking to our Crucial Conversations workshops in search of a little magic to make difficult conversations more manageable. Though the workshop is very effective at building confidence and capacity to prepare for and deliver a message, it always seems to fall short of the "what happens when things go sideways?" question. This is because having conversations is not formulaic; it is impossible to predict

every possible turn. Rather, you have to roll with it, and that is the vulnerable part.

Sadly, having a difficult conversation is not at all like a Choose Your Own Adventure book where you can flip ahead and discover the outcome for each word choice and conversational judgment. That would be super helpful. And less anxiety provoking. And tidy. However, talking face-to-face happens in real time. Consequently, it is impossible to sanitize the dialogue from either person's history, reactive patterns, or triggers.

The best you can hope for is to manage the messy. This means that it will still be messy, but you are using tools to contain it and minimize the chances that it will turn into a clean up on aisle six. Typically, three distractions can interfere with your ability to speak and listen in real time so that you achieve a satisfactory outcome while building the relationship. The next time you are in conversation, consider these messy management tools:

(cont'd on page 5)

(Messy: the art of managing untidy conversations continued from page 4)

1 **Messy:** Your palms sweat, your heart beats, your eyes well up, your face flushes, you feel wobbly. You forget your own name and any messaging that you had previously prepared, and it feels like your brain needs a reboot. This is reptilian brain, a physiological and instinctive fight, flight, or freeze response.

Manage the messy: Pay attention to your body and reframe the stress response as a mechanism to keep you alert. Take a deep belly breath and engage in a detached cognitive task to recall blood to the brain. Ask yourself, what do I want for the relationship, the outcome, and myself? Breathe.

Voices from the field: Unexpected turns in a conversation can rattle a person. When this happens, Bettina Nyman, a School Psychologist from Winnipeg School Division, says that self-awareness and careful listening are important strategies. She is also not afraid to pause the conversation or take a break; this provides time to process, regain perspective, and manage emotions before coming back to finish the conversation.

2 **Messy:** The person you are speaking with cries or yells at you.

Manage the messy: First, breathe; emotions are a natural by-product of difficult conversations. Though your instinct may be to barrel through the conversation to get your message out, resist this urge. Clarify your intent and practice humble curiosity. This means that you risk being wrong. Also, apologize if necessary: Apologizing does not always mean you are wrong and the other person is right. It means you value the relationship more than your ego. That said, there is a big difference between a raised voice and aggressive or abusive behaviour. When people are unable to communicate safely, you need to define boundaries for the conversation and discontinue if necessary. It is okay to say, "I am feeling uncomfortable with the volume and tone of this conversation, and I would like to continue talking tomorrow so that there is space for both of us to talk and listen to one another."

Voices from the field: "We get into emotional trouble when we take things personally," says Darcelle Saunders, principal in Lord Selkirk School Division, "especially when hurtful accusations can trigger us." She cautions against reacting emotionally in response to others' emotions. She believes that it is important to be resilient in those moments to stay on track in the conversation and be open to listening rather than defending yourself. Anne Christianson, a reading clinician in Winnipeg School Division, also deals with emotion in difficult conversations by creating a "mindful gap"; that is, a space between herself and the emotions. She describes it like catching a ball and holding it out in front of herself. By creating this distance, she is able to look at the emotion rather than absorbing or engaging with it. This deescalates the intensity of her response and increases empathy. Having empathy allows her to hear and validate what the other person is saying, and this makes it safer to stay in conversation.

3 **Messy:** Your mouth becomes a runaway train spewing a downward spiral of nonsense in which you keep talking, retelling, and complicating your message. In our workshops, we discourage this "talky-talky".

Manage the messy: Jennifer Abrams, the author of Hard Conversations Unpacked, advises that people speak no longer than 60-90 seconds before inviting the other person to share their perspective. Since "your communication is only as effective as the response you get," (West, 201) people need to talk less, listen more, and ask questions to ensure that their message was received as it was intended.

Voices from the field: Wade Houle is an Indigenous studies and graphic arts teacher in Mountain View School Division. To avoid this condition of "talky-talky", he reminds himself that he has made his point: "When we overtalk a point, we are not getting any further or progressing; the conversation actually becomes very static." In conversation with others, he really works hard on listening, "If I am listening I try to limit my words, because I don't want to become the person who is creating the static. It is my job to listen and affirm," he says.

Teachers are in the business of building relationships and collaborating with other human beings, so being vulnerable and authentic in conversation requires a little bit of messy. Preparation and forethought are important rst steps (when possible), but not with the intention of sanitizing the conversation. Talking in real time requires self-awareness and listening with presence rather than trying to control every turn. In fact, "tidy conversation" is an oxymoron; aiming for that will surely leave you chronically disappointed in yourself and others. The next time you find yourself going reptilian brain while being yelled at and explaining yourself repeatedly, be sure to breathe and look for the magic in the mess. It is there, especially in those moments when you learn more about yourself and build trust with other people by keeping it real.

Danielle Fullan Kolton is a staff officer in the Professional and French Language Services Department (PFLS). The PFLS department is committed to supporting teachers as adult learners. Follow the PFLS department on Twitter @mtslearning.

MTS 2018 CURLING BONSPIEL

The Brandon Teachers' Association, together with the Éducatrices et Éducateurs Francophones du Manitoba, will be hosting the 2018 Manitoba Teachers' Society Bonspiel from February 2-4, 2018 at the Riverview Curling Club in Brandon. The entry fee is $200 per rink and includes 4 dinner/dance tickets. This is a great event for all skill level of curlers. First timers or seasoned champions are welcome to go out and enjoy the weekend!

A spot has been reserved for each Local Association until **Wednesday, January 10th, 2018**. Afterwards, additional entries will be accepted until **Friday, January 26th, 2018**. If you are interested in registering a team for this event, please let SRTA president Jonathan Waite (president@srteach.org) know no later than **Monday, January 8th, 2018**. As per our policies and procedures, registration costs for one team to participate in the MTS Annual Curling Bonspiel are covered. If more than one team is interested, the cost of one team shall be divided equally.

Additional information:

Accommodations for out-of-town rinks have been reserved. Please contact the BTA office (204-729-3141) for information on accommodations.

The bonspiel will again be an open format this year. At least three members of each team must belong to the same local association of MTS. Teams can be made up of any arrangement of male or female curlers.

Curling will begin Friday evening. BTA will accommodate the draw for teams travelling. Saturday curling continues all day with a social evening to follow. Teams are invited to participate in the Saturday night supper and live entertainment (Bethel Road Music). This is all included in the entry fee. Sunday curling will resume at 11:00am with the finals later in the afternoon.

For more information please contact drawmaster Cale Dunbar at btabonspiel@gmail.com.

Be Aware When Driving Students

With the beginning of the school year, The Manitoba Teachers' Society is reminding teachers of the legal issues around transporting students in a teacher's own vehicle. According to legal opinions sought by MTS there are possible liability issues and consequences of which teachers should be aware:

October 17, 2017 — *Manitoba public school teachers should be aware of possible liability issues and consequences of using their own vehicles to transport students to school-sponsored activities.*

That's the bottom line of a legal opinion that had been sought by The Manitoba Teachers' Society after concerns were raised about the legal issues around such transportation. Basically, teachers are covered two ways when transporting students, through a division's liability insurance and through personal, regular insurance from MPIC.

In the event of an accident, MPIC comes into play. As a "no-fault" province, no one, including a teacher can be sued for bodily injury arising from a motor vehicle accident. The opinion points out, however, that accidents can occur that do not involve a vehicle, in which case the division coverage kicks in.

As well, in travel outside Manitoba teachers are open to liability in jurisdictions that do not have "no-fault" insurance.

"The teacher may be sued in accordance with the law in the jurisdiction where the accident occurred, " the report says. "MPI would be required to defend the case on behalf of the teacher up to the limits of liability under the MPI policy. Any amounts of liability, in excess of the policy limit, would (subject to coverage available under the division policy) be the personal responsibility of the teacher."

It's for those reasons that MTS recommends teachers ensure their coverage, through MPI and the division policy, is adequate and that they ensure they have approval to transport students from their administration.

MTS lawyers recommend that teachers obtain permission from their principals for routine excursions and from the board for trips outside the province.

They also say teachers should be aware of other employment issues associated with transportation of students in personal vehicles because having a vehicle is not a condition of employment.

- *As is the case with any motor vehicle accident, the teacher, if at fault, would have to assume the financial penalty to their MPI rates as well as the surcharge on their licence.*
- *Teachers put their welfare at risk when transporting students as the opportunity is greater for allegations of misconduct to be made. Depending on circumstances, it is possible for the employer to impose discipline, possibly up to termination, if, for example, serious injury was a direct result of negligence on the part of the teacher.*

A principal who authorizes a teacher to drive students without verifying the validity of a teacher's driver's licence and/or registration may be disciplined for a resulting accident if in fact the licence or registration were not valid.

Dragons' Den Education Plans

Nov. 23, 2016

Norm Gould, President of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, says he objects to Winnipeg economic development agency North Forge Technology Exchange turning the search for education initiatives into pitches "like on Dragons' Den" – all with the blessing of Manitoba's Minister of Education.

Gould was asked what he thought about an early literacy and numeracy initiative referred to in today's Manitoba Government Throne Speech. "It sounds like private enterprises like Wawanesa Insurance, National Leasing, and Thompson, Dorfman, Sweatman are going to come up with literacy and numeracy strategies and present them just like on Dragons' Den.

"These ideas will be pitched to a panel and the winning submission will drive literacy and numeracy initiatives in the province going forward," said the incredulous Gould.

"I find it extremely disrespectful and insulting that the over 15,000 Public School teachers are not part of this initiative. Furthermore a Kindergarten teacher, or Grade 1 to Grade 3 teacher would certainly have ideas as to how to improve literacy and numeracy in the Province and their voice wasn't even requested."

Gould says he doesn't know Jeff Ryzner, the North Forge CEO and has nothing bad to say about him, "but just because he has two young children doesn't make him an early childhood education authority."

For his part, Minister of Education and Training Ian Wishart says "This idea of a tech think tank applied to social innovation could be used to address other issues."

French-language Education at Risk

A large group of Manitoba education partners says over 30,000 public school students in Manitoba will suffer a reduced quality of K-12 education because of the Manitoba government's gutting of the Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF) – and the cutting of its Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM).

Partners for French Education had written a letter to Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister asking for a meeting to outline their concerns. The premier's office acknowledged receipt but Pallister has yet to respond to the meeting request. Today (Nov. 13), the partners decided to hold a news conference at Collège Louis-Riel to make their concerns public.

Partners for French Education says the BEF creates and administers programs on French curricula, educational support services, Official Languages commitments, and libraries and materials in Manitoba. It also provides professional development to teachers. And the Manitoba government's recent cuts are putting all French-language and French immersion students' educations at risk.

"The BEF's ADM used to bring issues in French-language education directly to decision makers in government," says Bernard Lesage, president of the Division franco-manitobaine. "Without that direct access, parents and other stakeholders have lost their voice at the table. Not only has the ADM been cut, but some of the Bureau's employees have already been cut or reassigned."

"French-language education is not simply the translation of English education," says Norm Gould, president of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, "it's a unique educational and cultural experience with a curriculum of its own. A fully functioning BEF is essential to the quality of French-language education that Manitoba teachers and schools provide to students."

Christian Monnin, president of the Société de la francophonie manitobaine says pulling the plug on the Bureau demonstrates the Manitoba government's "lack of understanding of French-language education, and a lack of respect for French minority language students, parents and partners."

"We expect a quick restoration of government funding and resources to the BEF," says Brigitte L'heureux of the Fédération des parents du Manitoba, "and the immediate appointment of an ADM to properly represent French-language stakeholders' concerns to the Manitoba government."

12th Annual Brandon University Volleyball Coaching September Summit
September 28, 2017
by Cathleen Armstrong, CLC

The Brandon University coaching summit's feature coach this year was Diane Scott the head coach of the University of Winnipeg women's volleyball team.

The summit began with Kevin Neufeld, the head coach of the Brandon University women's team talking about drills with less than 12 players. The University's men's team demonstrated drills in the background while Neufeld explain the drill and the skills that each drill was working on. He also talked about modifications that could be added to make the drill more or less challenging. The drills that were the most useful for my situation were the ones for 9 to 10 athletes.

Diane Scott was the nest session with serve receive formations. The notes that we received suggested that we were going to be talking about a 6-1 rotation but once she started she realized that we were all using different rotations, so instead she talked more about basic skills for passing. She talked about how when we are practicing passing we need to simulate game like situations and instead of tossing the ball at a player we need to push the ball at a player. This is one of the practices that I've changed with the athletes that I coach.

The next session was with Jeff Maxwell, head coach of the ACC women's team. Maxwell brought in two of his players and talked about training a setter. His players demonstrated a few drills that they do at practice and on their own. Maxwell talked about how we need to spend time with setters to help then refine their skills and play their position better. He said that many people don't take the time to train them and just assume that a regular practice with no focus on setting is enough. He stressed throughout his session that time is need to train a setter and that taking the time can change the effectiveness of the team.

Scott came back for the fourth session which was on blocking. She went over a few drills that she uses to build up the skill of blocking. The main skill that needs to be worked on with blocking is timing, which develops the more a player has exposure to blocking.

There was then a lunch break, which was provided, and the men's team played a game against each other while we ate. Some representatives from Sport Manitoba also did a presentation during lunch about funding for athletes.

After lunch Scott talked about attacking. She focused on basic skills and demonstrated a few drills that build up to attacking. One of the drill that I thought was most useful was getting a player to dig a ball to a setter and then the attacker hitting an unpredictable

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(12th Annual Brandon University Volleyball Coaching continued from page 9)

ball. It helps them work on their footwork and timing by simulating game like scenarios.

The next session was the most useful session for me. Tommy Sloan, assistant coach of BU's women's team, talk about warm up and ball control drills. The drills that were presented were fun and worked on skills for warm up instead of playing pepper for 15 minutes of a practice. They focused on maximizing contact and ball control. I now use many of these drills in my practices. The players like them and they also like the variety. They are run smoothly if there is an assistant coach but can be effective if there is only a head coach.

The last presenter was Grant Wilson, the head coach of BU men's team. He demonstrated a few wash drills that he does with his team. Wash drills simulate game like scenarios. Some of the drills were too

advance for the level that I am coaching at but most were useable. The washed drill that I liked the best was called 'Fix it Wash', where the play restarted where it had stopped but the player who made the mistake gets a chance to make a better decision and fix it.

Overall the summit was a great experience. The coaches were very knowledgeable and offered their own coaching philosophies to why they coach the way they do. It helped me as a new coach to add some drills to my repertoire to make my practices more focused and engaging. I would recommending any volleyball coach to attend this summit at least once, I intend to go back in a few years.

See Me Beautiful Conference
by Jessica Laluk, SAE

I had the opportunity to attend "See Me Beautiful" conference this year with our school team in honor of one of our students. It was a great conference and we learned so many wonderful things that we were able to put into action.

The morning was spent learning how to do demystification for a student who has a different profile or specific needs. This was so interesting as this is something I didn't know a lot about but think it would be so valuable to do. Then in the afternoon, we had the opportunity to discuss challenges especially around behavior and get some ideas on different things to try. We were given some time to plan in between sections of the presentation which was very valuable as the opportunities for our school team to meet regarding specific students is minimal.

Overall this conference gave our team some very valuable strategies and ideas to further develop the programming for one of our students.

Leadership in French immersion: Challenges and opportunities
by Simon Laplante, CSNC

I had the privilege to attend the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals from November 2nd to November 4th in Charlottetown, PEI. My focus in attending this conference was the various challenges facing French immersion leaders in Canada. Educational leadership is a complex set of skills and knowledge honed over many years. The potential impact of an educational leader on what is happening in the classroom is well documented (Fullan 2014, Hattie 2011, Fullan and Hargreave 2012). To maximize the impact, however, leaders need to be highly visible in classrooms, to create opportunities for collaboration between teachers, to develop SMART goals with their school community and to shift the focus of professional development activities from how to teach to how students learn. These challenges are key in creating a school culture where the leadership migrates from a managerial approach to a transformational stance, providing rich opportunities for staff development and conversations to optimize student learning.

In the context of French Immersion, effective leaders also need to be concerned by many other factors such as the relative youth of our leadership, a leadership that is often unilingual, parental expectations and the lack of understanding of second language acquisition, just to name a few. However during the various workshops I attended it became clear that immersion leaders are faced with emerging challenges that certainly make our work a little more complex.

Research and Evidence based decision-making processes

Decision-making is a daily activity for all educators. Although experience plays an important role in making good decisions, we must develop a leadership that is well versed in educational research. Authors such as Hattie and Fullan must be part of all educational leaders' library. In this context, aiming to hire leaders who have completed or are in the process of completing graduate studies is necessary. Evidence based decisions is also crucial but is not necessarily used by all leaders. We must learn to collect data and put faces to the data (Sharrat). Personal experience is great, but it must be anchored in the evidences provided by researchers.

Learning a second language

Scientific understanding of how we learn a second language is still at the beginning stage and because of this, most immersion staff has had to innovate (often improvise) without specialized training. Many authors such as Roy Lyster (2007) are now providing us with a deeper understanding of second language learning, such as the interaction of second language acquisition and content. Our leadership must be very knowledgeable in this area so that classroom strategies can be monitored and improved.

French Immersion Attrition

Across Canada, the rate of student attrition in our immersion programs, from K to 12, tends to be around 50%. This is a very high rate and concerns were expressed in the various workshops. Discussions were held as to the reasons and possible solutions. Lack of resources, lack of teachers, less options at the High School level, transition between schools were some of the major points of discussion.

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(Leadership in French immersion continued from page 11)

Student engagement

In What Did You Do in School Today? Willms, Friesen and Milton (2009) identifies three components to student engagement: social, academic and intellectual. Although most of our immersion schools engage their students in a wide variety of cultural activities (student exchanges, drama, etc) too many immersion teachers confound compliance vs. intellectual engagement in their classroom. Listening to our immersion educators we tend to look for reasons outside the classroom and the school as to why our students leave. We need to change the nature of our conversations. How do we engage our students intellectually in the classroom? Let's not talk about why a student should not be in immersion but rather how we can help this student to learn despite his or her challenges. Our educators and leaders need to have pedagogical clarity based on the latest research in how we learn so that the materials and activities are relevant and challenging.

New Canadians

I was really interested in the fact that many immersion schools in Alberta and British Columbia are actually welcoming at various grade level students you speaks one or many languages other then French and English. Accommodations are made and resources provided so that the new students can be integrate in the regular Immersion classrooms. The students are very successful because the fact they are already pluri-lingual.

Mental Health

We had many discussions regarding the various needs our immersion students are more and more bringing into our classrooms. For too long our immersion teachers and leaders did not have much opportunity to practice their skills in working with children exhibiting difficult behaviour. There was, however, general consensus that these students are now part of our immersion programs. Across the provinces, there are many initiatives to help French Immersion schools to keep and better understand these children in our program rather then recommending that they go into the regular program. Training and professional development is needed in this area.

Technology

Fullan in Stratsphere (2013) says it best when he declares that technology has had little impact on the pedagogy used by our teachers across Canadian classrooms. Yet some of our immersion teachers have shown that the power of technology on student engagement is revolutionary. Too often, however, having technology in the classroom has not brought changes in pedagogy. iPads, for example, offer countless opportunities for students to practice speaking French and to assess their fluency and precision. Or check on the new whiteboard animation (RAS technology) as way to get students engaged. On the other hand, using an iPad as a note-taking device is a very expensive pen! Infusing technology in our classroom requires a concerted and strategic approach from leadership. Educators will require much support and time to grasp the power of technology on student engagement.

As the number of students enrolled in French Immersion across Canada rises, it is crucial to offer teachers a program that is challenging, relevant and focused on how students learn. Losing up to 50% of our students in the course of the academic requirements is inacceptable. We must focus our efforts on improving the quality of instruction to offer our student deep learning opportunities. Student intellectual engagement and accommodations are key in stopping the exodus and providing rich and relevant French immersion programs across our country.

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Strategies for Organizing Inclusive Classrooms and Schools – 5670

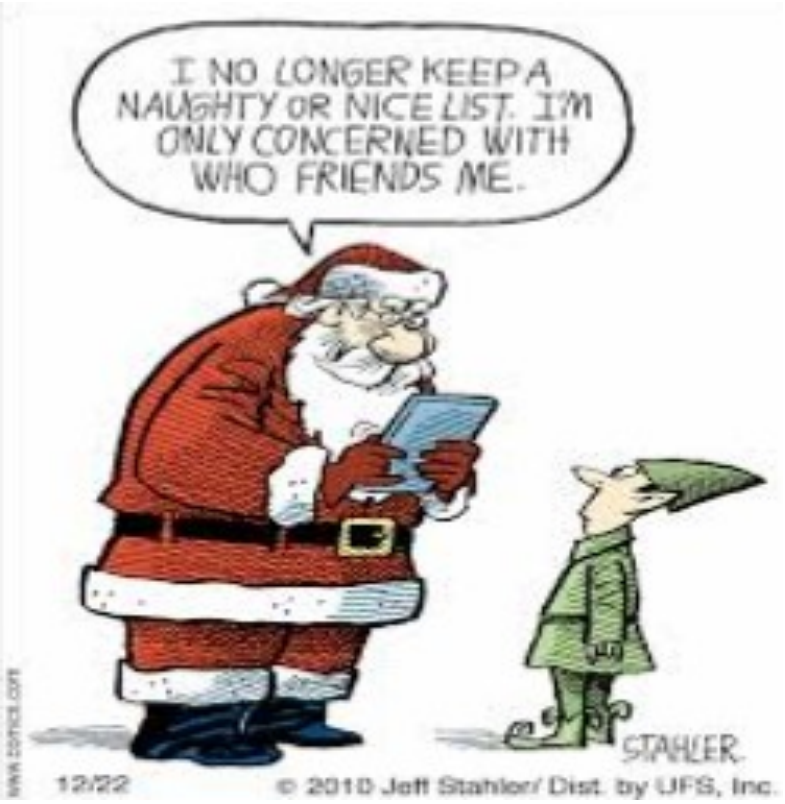
by Kaitlan Fisher, DTS

This fall I took *Strategies for Organizing Inclusive Classrooms and Schools* with Professor Allison Wells-Dyck at the University of Manitoba. This course is a core requirement for my Special Education certification, so I was required to take it to get my certification. The course was focused on strategies that were research based to be helpful within the classroom. We talked and read about programs like response to intervention (RTI), universal design for learning (UDL), direct instruction (DI), and peer tutoring to name a few.

I had a lot of hope for this course. I like the idea of running programs and using strategies that have research behind them within my classroom instead of just jumping on the trending train of the month, but was a little disappointed. The textbook presented the many strategies we discussed along with the meta-analysis that supported them, but the language was very jargony. It gave concise descriptions, but they were often very hard to understand.

As for course work, we had to complete two group projects and two personal journal reports. These were very doable, and helpful to better understand the textbook. I was lucky that there were two other teachers from our division in the same course, so we have many options for partners to pick from and bounce ideas off.

This is the second time I have had a course with Professor Allison Wells-Dyck and I was not disappointed. She is just recently out of an actual school so she understands what really works in schools, not just what happens in theory. She is very personable and quick to get back to you when you email.



Innov8 Conference Las Vegas, Nevada

by Miranda Fogg, Ann Groening, and Melissa Paterson, LBC

The Grade 7/8 team from La Barriere Crossings School was given the opportunity to attend the Innov8 conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, from November 15th – 17th, 2017. As a team of three, we were excited to be able to learn, practice, strengthen, and talk with experts and math teachers from both Canada and The United States. Throughout the three conference days, we did just that, along with think of our next steps, and our big idea as a 7/8 teaching team.

The Innov8 conference had a wonderful balance of choice and something called Team Time. Throughout the days, sessions were given to us in an outline, which allowed us to pre-read about the session to decide which was of interest to our team. They had a multitude to choose from, such as problem solving strategies, project-based learning, hands-on experiments with cross-curricular content, and how to break down problems to allow for more comprehension from students. Our Team Time allowed us to collaborate with other school teams, hear of their successes and strategies to strengthen their teaching, and allowed us to talk through our big idea and where we wanted to go as math teachers.

One of our sessions was with a teacher from Texas who broke down the art of teaching problem solving. She had us work through a problem, and even went through how she would teach as if we were the students. She discussed what good problem solvers do, and included reading strategies we as teachers use during our ELA programming, include the idea that “reading strategies aren’t just used in the ELA classroom”. Instead of simply rereading the world problem once or twice, she actually acted out what the problem was asking her to solve, which allowed for a visual component. She also modelled “self-talk”, which ensured her ideas were shown, clear, and highlighted what was being misinterpreted or misunderstood. She has us break down our steps as a teacher for a word problem, and we practiced with a partner. We took away a checklist of what good problem solvers do, and plan on trying out the strategies she taught with our own students.

Another session that was very valuable for our team, which led to our big idea, was done by a teacher from Atlanta. She began the lesson with inquiry in terms of products that were placed on our table. As a group, we were given a real-world task, along with some information which guided us to making a problem-solving decision to make the most money possible. Our job was to determine the best procedure and plan to make the money for our team. In the end, there were so many ways we could go with this lesson. We discussed perspectives, learning about the world, talking about currency and exchange rates, percentages, cost of living, etc. From this, our team decided to take on a project-based approach to teach some of our larger-scale units, such as percentages, fractions, and integers.

In the end, we discussed how we would use our collaborative time during the school year to plan the big idea for the unit, what we would like students to learn, and ways we can reach this through real-world applications. The Innov8 conference allowed us to work, learn, and talk as a team to determine the best way to meet the needs of our math learners, and focus on real-world relevance with engaging strategies to keep them excited about what they are learning.

Social Psychology

by Karen Thiessen, RCH

Have you ever wondered why people do things they do? My eyes were opened to a completely new understanding of human behavior when I took the course, Social Psychology. What I leaned is that human beings are agents; we act and exert our personal powers and cause things to happen. The way we act as individuals is understood, in part, by reference to their psychological makeup. Human beings have perceptions and conceptions of the nature of reality; we all have thoughts, attitudes, values, principles, and feelings that give substance and direction to our bodily energy. In the course Social Psychology, we examined how psychological forces contribute to our understanding of human behaviour.

As a result, of this course, I learned that our powers of perception and our capacity for action are not purely personal attributes; they are abilities that have been cultivated in each of us by other members of society. As we navigate our way through our world, we encounter problems, challenges, and tragedies of human existence all the while being given advice by family, elders, leaders, and friends as how to best think about and respond to them. Our motives and actions are not individual creations, but rather, they are social products, the result of collective interaction, interpretation, and judgment. Understanding this concept has deepened my knowledge of human behavior in a valuable way. As I continue to work in the field of education with students, parents and staff, I will use this understanding to grow as an educational leader.

Education of Exceptional Children

by Kathryn Reuter, EIDCS

This Fall, with the assistance of the SRTA PD fund, I was able to complete a course called “Education of Exceptional Children I”. In this course, we focused on Disability Studies in Education and its perspective of Inclusion.

Disability Studies in Education challenges the medical model’s definition of disability. This perspective asks society to see disability as a construct that is placed upon people who do not fit the societal definition of “normal”. Disability is no longer seen as a problem to be fixed but rather a social construct that is placed on people who do not conform to the majority’s definition of normal. Instead, ‘disability’ is placed on a person from their outside environment; it is not seen as something that they were born with or comes from within them. When this definition of disability is fully understood, the barrier of disability no longer lies within a person but outside the person. Inclusion is an environmental issue that must be addressed. This is illustrated in the example of a sighted person attempting to live in a non-sighted environment. A non-sighted environment would be designed to support non-sighted people. Items such as lights, environmental print, televisions etc... would not be deemed important or relevant. The environment would not be accommodating to the sighted person and consequently the sighted person would be seen as “having” the disability. Disability becomes the inaccessibility of the social and physical environment in which we live. Since our society is built on the majority’s needs and wants from the surrounding environment, Disabilty Studies in Education focuses on bringing the experiences and needs of non-normative persons to the forefront of the discussion.

I would highly recommend this course to all teachers, as it provided valuable and important information, which helped me better understand the Inclusion philosophy.

Fundamentals in EAL Instruction University of Manitoba (TEAL Program)

by Jacquie Neufeld, Language Support Teacher

This introductory course is the first of seven EAL courses offered through The University of Manitoba's Teaching English as an Additional Language program (TEAL). The program, new to the university in the summer of 2017, provides students with opportunities to earn a Post Baccalaureate in Education specializing in English Language Teaching.

Fundamentals in EAL Instruction consisted of 13 classes that explored language teaching methodologies, curriculum planning and instruction, teaching listening and viewing, pronunciation, reading, vocabulary development, writing and grammar. The teaching of academic English was also highlighted. The course also presented helpful approaches for assessment.

The course itself was interactive and provided learners with an opportunity to engage in meaningful and robust discussions. Course participants came from a variety of teaching contexts and cultural backgrounds. It was helpful to share ideas and perspectives, build on known and new content knowledge and problem solve together. Students were given choices around assignment content dependent upon area of need and interest.

I look forward to continuing my learning at the University of Manitoba as I work toward completion of this program.

Legal Aspects of Education class at the University of Manitoba

by Jennifer McGonigle, CSNC

Legal Aspects of Education covers the historical and contemporary legal issues affecting the organization and administration of schools. School safety, cyberbullying, copyright law and use of media are covered extensively. Additionally, isolation and restraining laws involving students with disabilities, landmark cases involving equal pay, freedom of expression, truancy and school vouchers—virtually every topic of concern to today's educators—is covered with integrated cases.

Throughout the course, students were to have read all the selected readings presented in the class as well as those introduced by other students. Students were to write and share short commentaries on specific issues that they felt were important in the articles. All objectives were covered with small group and large group discussion. Individual and small group presentations were used to further develop ideas, including leading a seminar for a major issue stemming from the class discussions, in an interactive and invitational way.

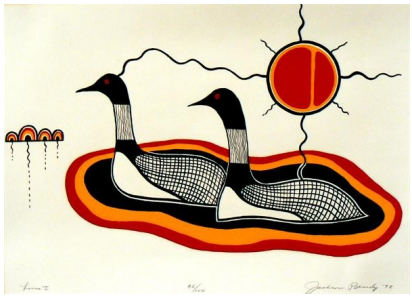
By the end of the course students should be able to describe the legal framework in which school districts operate, identify school law issues currently faced by school administrators, examine the functions of school board and district administrators in policy making, understand the legal implications recognizing diversity in a multi-cultural society, demonstrate knowledge of the Manitoba Education Act and other related legal documents, and make ethically grounded administrative decisions.

I found this course beneficial to those who are preparing entering into the Educational Administration stream and field.

Indigenous Languages of Manitoba Inc. Presents Honouring Our Languages: Educators Workshop October 24

As Indigenous Education Chair I am continuing to identify what my role is as chair. I am always searching for new knowledge to share with my colleagues, and ways in which as an educator I can better my students in having knowledge of Indigenous Education. I have had many opportunities and suggestions to attend a variety of professional development seminars and workshops that are usually ran and given by the fabulous professionals at the Manitoba Teacher's Society. I am currently part of a self-directed university course at the University of Winnipeg learning and researching the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for Education. Throughout this path of learning I have never attended a Professional Development Day like the two day Indigenous Languages of Manitoba's Honouring Our Languages: Educators Workshop.

Day One began with a keynote speaker Maureen Matthews Curator of Cultural Anthropology at the Manitoba Museum and she talked of using art within lessons of Indigenous education, and the power of the stories that are embedded in Indigenous art. She spoke of artist Jackson Bready and the famous loon that sits in an exhibit at the Manitoba Museum. She then told of How the loon got a flat back. She talked of the Indigenous Group of Seven.



The morning continued with a presentation given by The Assembly of First Nations. Dakota Kochie spoke of the Indigenous Languages Initiative and spoke of how there is a need for change in the funding model as needs and languages in communities are so different, and languages are changing and developing as knowledge is being shared of the history of language.

To conclude the morning four elders spoke about why Indigenous Language Education is essential to sustaining Indigenous culture. The hour and half of stories of their teaching experience and their personal education was incredibly powerful.

The afternoon workshops highlighted the Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures Curriculum document. The afternoon concluded with developing lessons plans with the guidance and knowledge of Kevin Tacna and Tamara Tacan–Daniels.

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(Honouring Our Languages cont'd from page 17)

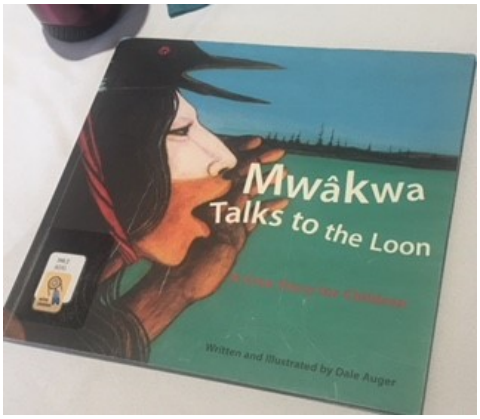
Day two began with a presentation from Darrick Baxter who is from Wasagamack First Nation. Darrick is an Anishinaabe from the Treaty 1 Ojibway territory. He is North America's leading language revitalization technologist and delivered a presentation about the key role technology plays in effort towards language revitalization. The morning continued with Carol Beaulieu and her ten basic strategies for teaching language.

1. Leaving English Language behind.
2. Use non-verbal communication for communication
3. Teach in full sentences.
4. Aim for real communication in your target language.
5. Language is culture.
6. Focusing on listening and speaking, rather then writing and grammatical analysis.
7. Explore activities for teacher and learner to do together
8. Use audio and videotaping
9. Be an active learner.
10. Be patient and proud of each other and yourselves

During lunch entertainment was provided by the Norman Chief Memorial Dancers. The entertainment was phenomenal. The lead dancer in the group was Kevin Chief. The afternoon entertainment was energizing and motivational for learning in the afternoon.

The two day workshop concluded with a focus on Land-Based Learning. Land-based learning is our outdoor classroom. Victor Harper, Emma Harper and Connie Singleterry emphasized the importance of learning from the land the animals, the plants, and water that surrounds communities. Like all educational programs they also acknowledged the strong involvement of community and having the support of parents. They talked of the integration of all curricular areas.

The two day workshop concluded with a presentation of utilizing resources. "Indigenous Language is verb based and therefore approaching teaching language needs to be different than teaching English which is noun based", Roger Roulette. There is sarcasm in Indigenous language and sarcasm cannot be taught without hearing it. He expressed the importance of using, and learning words that you use everyday.



In attending this two day workshop I have learned about the variety of diverse needs and struggles that teachers face in teaching and preserving Indigenous language and a culture. The past two days have reconfirmed the importance of infusing Indigenous teachings throughout daily lessons . This also reconfirms the importance of working with community members and seeking out the amazing resources that are out to support teachers and to keep learning and sharing the stories that have created and built Canada's history.

Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence and Teaching Excellence in STEM

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence have honoured exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines since 1993, with over 1,500 teachers honoured to date. Teaching Excellence Awards recipients are honoured for their remarkable achievements in education and for their commitment to preparing their students for a digital and innovation-based economy. The Teaching Excellence in STEM Awards honour outstanding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics teachers that help develop the culture of innovation Canada needs today, and in the future.

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence
These awards honour outstanding and innovative elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines for their remarkable educational achievements and for their commitment to preparing their students for a digital and innovation-based economy. The recipients' monetary awards are funded by the RBC Foundation.

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence in STEM
New this year, awards will also recognize inspirational Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) teachers at the elementary or secondary school level who keep students engaged in STEM learning and who help develop the culture of innovation that Canada needs today, and in the future.

For more information visit the awards website at https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/pmate-ppmee.nsf/eng/h_wz00010.html

Upcoming Dates

SRTA Council meeting:
February 13, 2018 @ SNAC, 4:30 pm

SRTA Executive meeting:
January 23, 2018 @ DTMI, Lorette, 4:30 pm

MTS Provincial Executive:
January 18-19, February 26-27, 2018
McMaster House

SRSD Board Meetings:
January 9 & 23, February 13 & 27, 2018
SRSD Boardroom

MTS Presidents' Council:
January 20, 2018
McMaster House

ESJ Chairs Winter Seminar:
February 23-24, 2018
Holiday Inn Airport West

MTS Workplace Safety & Health Seminar:
February 24, 2018
McMaster House

PD Chairs Winter Seminar:
February 9-10, 2018
McMaster House

HAPPY HOLIDAYS