

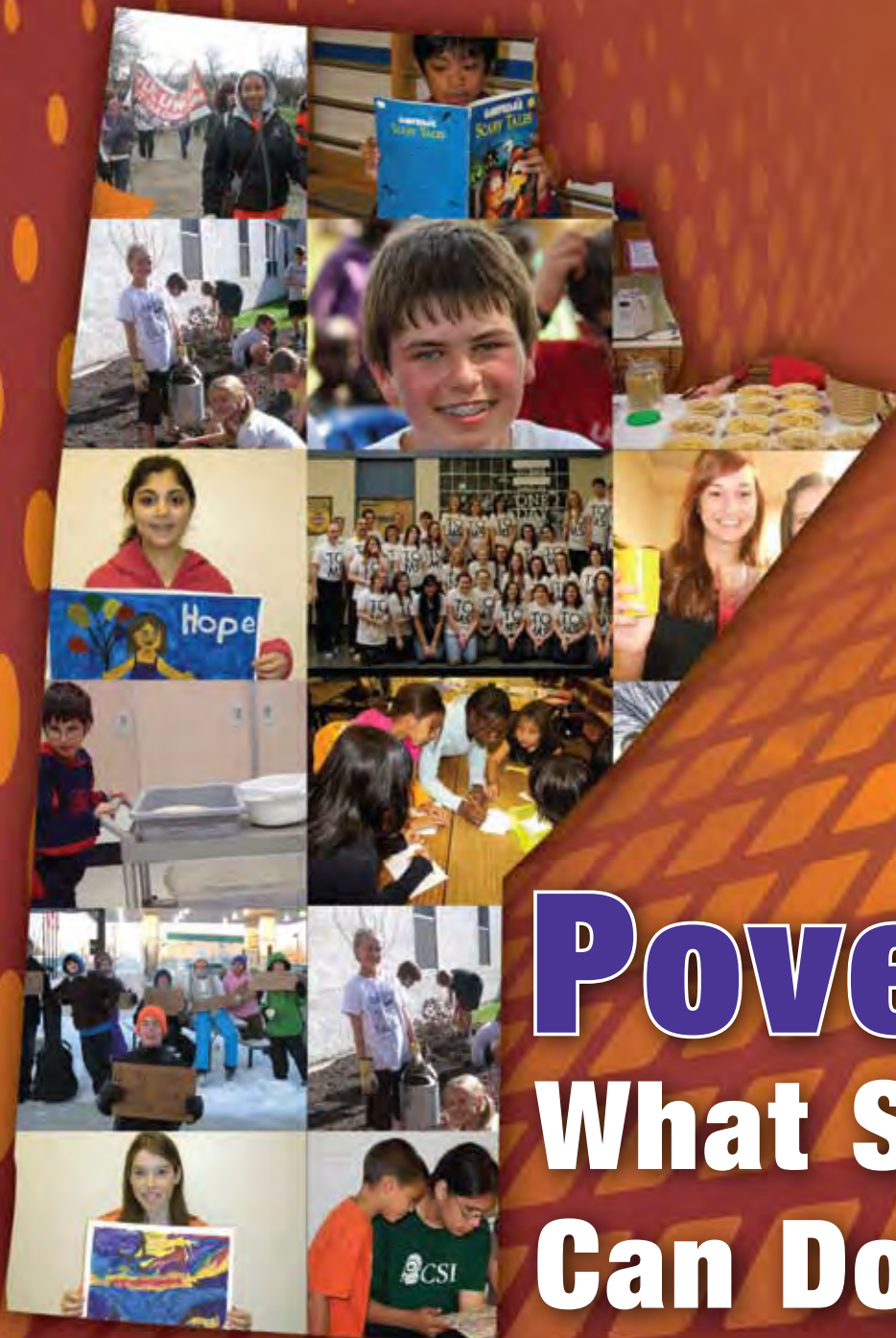


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Fall 2011

Journal

The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents



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Beijing



Beijing Sun Village - The village is now a home for over 100 children of incarcerated parents aged from 1 year to 18 years. The sun village was set up 1995 without any government aid. The head of the village Mrs Zhang Shuqin is the founder of Sun Village.



Chuanxidi Village - Chuanxidi is known for its architecture and natural beauty. It is home to 500 well preserved courtyard homes dating to the Ming and Qing dynasties. Many of these homes have been converted into inns offering food and lodging to travelers.



Mutianyu Great Wall - Mutianyu is a section of the Great Wall of China located in Huairou County 70km northeast of Beijing. The Mutianyu section of the Great Wall is connected with Jiansou in the west and Lianhuachi in the east.



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Bob Fleischmann
Director at Mesa Public Schools
Phoenix, AZ

Thank you ever so much for the wonderful opportunity your company as provided for our family and our first visit to China. It has been an awesome experience as well as an educational one! What a welcoming country China is, highlights for the visit to the Great Wall, and many sights. We feel very well taken care of by your tour guides. They were always as helpful and willing to make accommodations, I would highly recommend this to my fellow teachers.

Patti Berry, Principle
Wye Elm School
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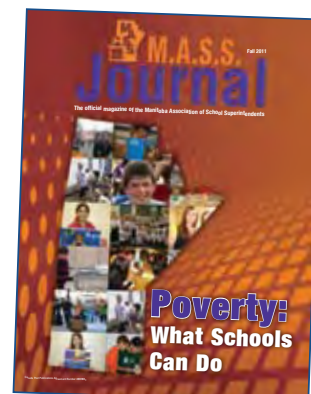
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Students, teachers and school boards across Manitoba work to mitigate the affect of poverty.



FRANÇAIS • Primaire et secondaire

<p>MON DICTIONNAIRE DE TOUS LES JOURS 1^{er} cycle du primaire Renée Leblanc Morin (64 pages) 2^e cycle du primaire Renée Leblanc Morin et Claude Brien (152 pages) Pour apprendre, mémoriser et utiliser des mots qui enrichiront le vocabulaire et amélioreront le français écrit de vos élèves. LA PENSÉE</p>	<p>J'ADORE LE FRANÇAIS Collection Mille sourires 1^{er} cycle du primaire Nathalie David et Sylvie Monette Série A 12 livrets (8 pages chacun) Guide d'accompagnement (160 pages) Série B 12 livrets (8 pages chacun) Guide d'accompagnement (186 pages) Un son (phonème) est mis en évidence dans chaque livret. LA PENSÉE</p>	<p>J'APPRENDS À ÉCRIRE Mon programme d'orthographe et de grammaire 1^{re} à 6^e année du primaire Par un groupe d'enseignants Ces cahiers respectent les données fondamentales de l'apprentissage de l'orthographe et de la grammaire. LIDEC</p>	<p>GRAMMAIRE FRANÇAISE DU 3^e MILLÉNAIRE Secondaire Michel David[†] Cette grammaire est particulièrement complète. Elle présente la langue, la grammaire du texte, la grammaire de la phrase, les classes de mots et l'orthographe. Exemples tirés de la littérature québécoise • 393 articles • 411 exercices et corrigés • 26 tests (592 pages) LIDEC</p>	<p>DICTIONNAIRE DE L'ÉCRIVAIN EN HERBE Jacques Beauchesne[†] Voici l'outil pédagogique idéal. À la fois interactif et évolutif, il vise à décrire plus aisément les choses, les personnes, les animaux et les situations qui les entourent. Cet ouvrage aidera n'importe quel écrivain, jeune ou moins jeune, à bien s'exprimer tant à l'oral qu'à l'écrit. Ce dictionnaire est dédié d'abord aux élèves des 2^e et 3^e cycles du primaire, aux enseignants du 1^{er} cycle et à toutes les personnes qui vivent l'appel de l'écriture. (192 pages) GUÉRIN</p>	<p>LE BREVIS DICTIONNAIRE ORTHOGRAPHIQUE AVEC BRÈVES DÉFINITIONS Nathalie Elliott Ouvrage de consultation de tous les instants Comptant près de 70 000 entrées, c'est un ouvrage de référence complet, mais beaucoup plus facile et rapide à utiliser que les dictionnaires courants. (1440 pages) GUÉRIN</p>
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Brian O'Leary
*Superintendent of Seven Oaks
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We all know there is a strong correlation between socio-economic status and school success. We know there are lifelong social and economic consequences that flow from inadequate education. Success in school enhances life prospects. Failure diminishes them. As educators, we know we can make a difference and we know that we need to make a greater difference. The 2004 study by the Manitoba Center for Health Policy (Brownell et al., 2004) documents the effect of socioeconomic status on education outcomes. In summary: "The poorer the neighbourhood, the more likely children are to have difficulties in school, fail standards tests, fail a grade, quit school and have shorter lives."

By contrast, the oft-cited follow-up study on the Perry Preschool and home visiting program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, finds profound lifelong benefits to early childhood and parent education: "At age 40 those who had the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool."

Pathways to Education, an after-school tutoring and mentoring program in Toronto's Regent Park, has succeeded in raising the graduation rate from 44 to 88 per cent in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Canada.

As educators we can feel justifiably proud of these contributions to improving outcomes for students in poverty but we must also look at our schools and ask some serious questions of ourselves.

This program is now being replicated in Winnipeg's north end with equally impressive results.

Both the Perry Preschool and Pathways programs demonstrate that socioeconomic barriers can be overcome by maintaining high expectations and providing additional support to students in a way that really engages them and extends and accelerates their learning. Nursery programming, parent/child centres and programs, full day kindergarten, extended school days and extended school years are other examples of these approaches at work in Manitoba.

As educators we can feel justifiably proud of these contributions to improving outcomes for students in poverty but we must also look at our schools and ask some serious questions of ourselves. Are we investing enough in what we know, and research evidence would support, as effective practice? If our greatest challenge is to

make a difference in the lives of those children who most need a difference made, are we putting our best talent and every last dollar we can free up towards that goal?

As former Manitoba and Ontario Deputy Minister of Education Ben Levin, speaking to a recent gathering of Manitoba superintendents and trustees, put it: "Poverty affects outcomes. But it does not determine everything. Schools cannot do everything. But they can do something."

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What Schools Can do for Children in Poverty

Schools alone cannot eradicate or overcome all the effects of social inequalities and poverty, but they can make a difference. Good outcomes happen when educators focus on good teaching practice, strong community connections, and an optimistic view of what students and families can accomplish.

By Ben Levin

Children's socio-economic status, however measured, continues to be the single most powerful predictor of education and other life outcomes. This relationship is one of the most consistent findings in all of the social sciences. The circumstances and family in which we grow up have powerful and life-long effects on us.

Educators see those relationships at work every day. Schools see the difference between children who grow up in families that are able to provide for all the child's needs and families that cannot do so. They see the difference between children who are encouraged to be thoughtful and inquisitive, and those who do not get such encouragement; between those who come to school knowing about libraries, books and ideas, and those who have had little exposure to such things; between those who have good nutrition and decent housing, and those who do not; between those who are accepted into society and those who feel outcast from the start. Martin Thrupp (1999) has described well the extra challenges schools face when they have high concentrations of students from poor families and communities. Everything is harder, even getting to the same starting point.

In the face of these influences, it is no surprise that committed and hard-working educators can feel frustrated and angry, and schools can feel powerless in the face of poverty. It is tempting to see the problems of poverty as too big and



too intransigent for schools to tackle. It's tempting to blame the problems of low achievement on the parents, the families, the community, and the government. And, of course, each of those parties does play an important role.

That being said, the argument I make in this article is that while schools are not



responsible for problems of poverty, and schools alone cannot solve these problems, there are important things that schools can and should do that can make a difference to the children we serve. Even in the face of all the intractable inequalities in our society, we should never lose sight of the potential contribution we can make. It is not going to be everything but it will be something meaningful, and for a significant number of young people, we can change their lives for the better.

Why be optimistic?

What provides the grounds for this optimism? Three things. First, the whole



history of education is one of finding that education systems can transcend what were thought to be the limits of students' ability. Over the centuries we have steadily expanded our understanding of what young people can do and how much they can learn—for women, for minorities, for people with disabilities,

and for children in adverse circumstances. Today, more people reach higher levels of achievement than would have been thought possible only a few decades ago. Another way to put this is to say that we have much evidence that we have not yet reached the limits of human capacity.

Second, performance among schools and systems, even in similar conditions, is highly variable. Internationally, some countries (including Canada) have less inequality in their school outcomes than other countries, some of which—such as the United States—are richer. Every study that looks at performance across schools or systems finds that there is a very large range of performance among schools with similar demographics. On average, schools with more poverty have lower performance but in virtually every situation some high poverty schools outperform some low poverty schools. Dozens of studies in many different places have found this same pattern (this evidence is reviewed more fully in Levin, in press).

Third, a rich literature on resilience (e.g. Ungar, 2004; Barton, 2005) shows that most young people are able to overcome even very serious challenges and deficiencies in their upbringing if they have a few key supports. Although teachers believe that they can predict which students will succeed later in life and which will not, the evidence is that such predictions are often inaccurate (Levin, 2011).

In international comparisons (e.g. OECD, 2010), the most successful countries are those that support and encourage this resilience, allowing more students to outperform the predictions based on their demographics. And one of the most important predictors of resilience is students' having at least one important adult in their lives, possibly a teacher.

Taken together, this substantial body of evidence tells us that while the negative effects of poverty are great, we should continue to push the limits of what is possible in our schools.

What to do?

A school facing high levels of poverty among its students faces many different challenges. There is a great temptation to try to address what seems to be the most urgent issues, or to try to do many things

at once and not necessarily to focus on the relatively few things that seem to have the most impact.

I want to suggest three areas of focus for schools in high poverty communities: high expectations for students, attention to daily teaching practices and strong community connections. Together they provide an approach that is likely to give the best results related to effort made.

High expectations

Holding high expectations for students is now a mantra in schools but as with many mantras, it is more honoured as a statement than as a practice. We have much evidence that expectations for students remain lower in high poverty schools. Often this is done for the best of reasons—because we feel for the problems students have and do not want to exacerbate them by pushing them to work harder and learn more. It's not that teachers believe these students are less capable but that out of a desire to help and protect them, we end up expecting and demanding less.

Although it is true that we should expect students to work to their own potential, the evidence is strong that we often underestimate that potential. This is the message heard so clearly from schools that have experienced significant improvement (Leithwood, Harris & Strauss, 2010) and that I have heard personally many times: "We didn't believe our kids could do this level of work."

The requirement for high expectations is particularly difficult to meet because it can be seen to conflict with our caring for students. Surely if we care we should not heap additional burdens on them! But the reality is this, if we don't teach them these important skills, they won't learn them, and if they don't learn them, they will not have the education and life outcomes they and we want them to have. It is simply essential to believe and expect that poor students can reach the same standards of achievement as do other students.

Teaching practice

It is ironic that everyone in schools thinks that the work teachers and students do together is the most important

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thing about schooling, yet at the same time we do not want to tell anyone how to teach. Those positions are logically incompatible. If teaching is so important—as I believe it is—then surely every school has an obligation to make sure that ALL teaching practice is as good as it can be. And surely every educator has an obligation to seek to improve his or her practice by being familiar with research, and by getting feedback from colleagues and students.

Yet we know that in most schools, teaching practice can vary greatly from one classroom to another, that results also vary greatly, and that nobody really does anything about this. If you don't believe this, just ask some students or parents. I have asked many groups of school leaders about the variance in teaching practice. They all admit it is there, and very few of them are doing anything about it.

If teaching is a real profession—and I believe it is—then it must engage in what other professions do, which is the pursuit of high quality practice every day and by every single person in the profession. This means not just sharing knowledge, but agreeing, based on evidence, on what counts as good practice and expecting everyone to be guided by those agreements.

I want to emphasize that I am not talking about principals or school boards issuing orders to teachers on how to teach. That is managerialism, not professionalism, and it is inconsistent with what we know about building good practice. I am talking about teachers collectively owning their practice and expecting all colleagues to do what is right for students. "I've always done it this way", or "that way doesn't work for me" is no more legitimate for a teacher than it would be for, say, a dentist to avoid giving a patient a lead cover when taking an x-ray (or any equivalent professional practice). Personal preferences cannot be allowed to override collective professional knowledge.

A commitment to common practice does not at all take the spontaneity and creativity out of teaching any more than requiring 14 lines takes the creativity out of writing a sonnet or requiring punctuation takes the creativity out of writing prose. Indeed, as Campbell pointed out

years ago (1972), a high level of technical skill actually increases the potential for creativity, not reduces it. You have to be good at something to be creative at it.

Our knowledge about teaching is still limited in many ways (e.g. Hattie, 2008), so there are many areas in which there is no agreement on good practice. But where we do know about effective practices, such as using formative assessment, or giving students input and choice, or starting with an assessment of what students already know, or encouraging students to read in their first language. There can be no room for educators to decide they just don't want to do these things.

What this means for schools, especially in high poverty communities, is a constant effort to ensure that instruction is challenging, student-centred, builds on students' real lives and knowledge, recognizes them and their community as valued, engages their experience, and gives them choices and opportunities to improve. In short, that it reflects the best we know and believe about good education. And these practices should be visible, to students, every day in every classroom. The most needy students deserve the same enriching, engaging and demanding teaching as do our most able students; indeed, they may need that rich teaching much more than more advantaged students.

Community connections

It is a truism that school success is deeply connected to support from families and communities. One of the biggest frustrations of educators in high poverty communities is what is seen as the unwillingness or inability of parents and families to support their children. And yet, while some educators claim that the parents don't care, parents of children in poor communities often make exactly the same claim about teachers and schools—that "they don't care about our kids." The reality is that parents do care, just as teachers do, but all of us are human, and sometimes we do not express that caring in ways that are evident to and understood by others.


Building relationships with parents takes time and effort. It is not something that people can just add on to jobs that are already demanding. Schools and


systems have to plan for and resource parent and community engagement efforts. At the same time, there is quite a bit of knowledge about how to do this work effectively, even in high poverty communities (e.g. Harris & Goodall, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007). Examples include holding events with childcare and translation into other languages, by making good news calls to parents, by making home visits, by engaging students in engaging their parents, by working with other community agencies that already have ties to families, and so on.

Community engagement is not just about parents and families, either. Even very poor communities have resources that can be used to support students, from ethnic associations to religious groups to sports organizations to businesses and employers, to elders who can serve as examples and mentors. Working from a strength-based approach can allow a school to identify those potential supports and work with them in the best interests of students and the community.

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Finally, working with a community in a high poverty neighbourhood requires educators to be involved in supporting development and community political action. Because educators see firsthand the negative effects of poverty, we have to be among those calling for better public policies, and have to be open to working with local communities on important issues such as housing or crime prevention or access to healthy food or employment. Because the fate of the school and its students is so strongly linked to the welfare of the

community, schools cannot stand aside from the wider issues.

None of this is easy to do. It all makes the work of educating in a high poverty community harder, more demanding. But the other side is the potential benefit. In many of our schools, children will do well almost no matter what happens to them each day in the school. In high poverty communities, schools matter more. The work is harder but the potential contribution is bigger. In that world teachers and schools can be—life savers in the true sense of that word.

Most people become educators because we want to make a difference in people's lives. In high poverty schools and communities, we have that opportunity. If we stay focused on the things that really matter, we can make a bigger difference than we may think. ■

Ben Levin is professor and Canada Research Chair in education leadership and policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.



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One Day Without Shoes Helps Ethiopian Children

By Morgan Coates and Andrea Thidrickson, Gimli High School

Gimli High School (GHS) students take an active role in social justice activities, specifically poverty. GHS offers a social justice course and club that is engaging students to take an initiative towards tackling issues they see around the world. As students, we are not only taking part in school activities but we are showing independence and are taking on challenges on our own.

The past two years a few of us have decided to bring an international awareness event to Gimli. The event, "One Day Without Shoes", is an annual event hosted by the company TOMS Shoes. With every pair of shoes a person purchases, TOMS will donate a pair of new shoes to a child in need, one for one. In September 2010, TOMS had given away their millionth pair of shoes in Ethiopia. Children from all over the world suffer from infection and disease due to the lack of proper footwear. The purpose of the event is to raise awareness of the impact a single pair of shoes can have on a child's life, which is what we have tried to accomplish at Gimli High School.

We spent many hours advertising, scheduling venues/entertainment, and designing t-shirts/buttons (which we sold). We also secured sponsorship from businesses in the community.

At the event, we walked barefoot throughout the town of Gimli, which led everyone to the Gimli Theatre. There, the audience was educated by videos produced by TOMS. Everyone took their seats before the entertainment section of the agenda began. Entertainment included three bands that each played a barefoot set for everyone to enjoy. Overall, this turned out to be a great success and students look forward to participating in One Day Without Shoes in 2012. ■



Students Inspiring Change

Students Protest Poor Conditions on Canada's Reserves

By Tayler Schenkeveld and Kadin Zaffino, Dakota Collegiate



We are students from Dakota Collegiate and this year was the first time that our school offered the Current Topics in First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies course. As a class, we have learnt a lot about the problems Aboriginal people have faced in the past and the present. Recently, we have become aware of poor conditions on the reserves. We were very surprised and disappointed to find out

that many of the reserves lack clean running water and are actually living like people in the developing world. It really bothered us that people in Canada have to live like that since Canada is one of the richest countries in the world.

No clean drinking water means that the elderly, sick people and children have to rely on others to get their water for them. It also means that disease spreads more easily. They have no clean drinking water and the federal government has ignored their requests for far too long. Their solution was sending them a bunch of pails to collect rain water. These are obscene conditions for residents living in Canada. After hearing about the Empty Drinking Glass Campaign, our class got inspired to join. This campaign is a protest where people are encouraged to send empty drinking glasses of any sort to the government. This way, they cannot be shredded or thrown away. With our class's efforts, we have collected a total of 15 drinking glasses as well as letters from every student in our class to send to the government. We hope that this issue will be dealt with in the near future so that our country can truly be a nation to be proud of from sea to sea. ■



Students Inspiring Change

Poverty in Manitoba: **Is There a Way Out?**

If a person is low-income or they are poor, they generally have a whole list of problems, from not having a decent education to not having decent housing, to not having any connection to their neighbourhood...[and] not having the self-esteem or the capacity to say, "I deserve a decent life" (CCPA-Mb 2006:19).

By Shauna MacKinnon

Individuals who are poor know that the effects of poverty reach far beyond the wallet. Poor people, especially those experiencing long-term and inter-generational poverty, often come to believe that there is little hope for a better future. For many this is a reasonable assessment. Research shows that the longer people live in poverty, the less likely they are to escape it (Lang 2007).

Definitions of poverty vary. When viewed in context of the society in which a person lives, poverty is best understood as, "people's inability to participate in the customary life of society...their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities" (Levitas 2003). This paper examines poverty in the context of Manitoba.

Manitoba's poverty rate in 2009, as measured by the Low Income Cut Off (LICO), was 13.8 per cent before tax and 8.9 per cent after tax. While Canada does not have an official poverty line, the LICO is most often the measure used. It is an income threshold that Statistics Canada calculates using the 1992 Family Expenditures Survey as a base, and then factoring in Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rates. Statistics Canada calculates both before- and after-tax cut-offs for various family and community sizes. This is important because it shows how the

redistribution of income through our tax system can help improve the economic situation of low-income households.

As shown in Chart 1A and Chart 1B, both the national rate and the Manitoba rate have declined in the past twenty-five years. Manitoba's after-tax rate dropped significantly when compared with Canada as a whole, especially in the past 10 years. Between 1999 and 2009, Manitoba's after-tax rate dropped by 6 percent compared with 3.4 percent nationally. This is a result of measures taken by the province to reduce taxes paid by lower-income households.

In addition to knowing the number of people living in poverty at a particular time, it is also important to know the depth and duration of poverty. The average income of those living below the LICO in Manitoba has risen slightly but remains well below the LICO. Further, income inequality has increased slightly with the highest income quintile earning 41.6 per cent of all income compared with 5.6 per cent for the lowest income quintiles (Statistics Canada Cansim Table 202-0703). The distribution of incomes is important because, as noted by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), the social problems in wealthy countries are directly related to, "the scale of material differences between people within each society being too big. What matters is where we stand in relation to others in our own society" (p 25).

The geographic and demographic face of poverty

The north/south divide

While poverty exists across Manitoba, some groups are more affected than others. The most recent Census data (2006) show a definite north/south divide. For example, in 2006 the median income of all individuals 15 years and over in Northern Manitoba's Burntwood region was \$15,395 compared with \$24,194 in all of Manitoba. Unemployment in the Burntwood region was 15.7 per cent compared with 5.5 per cent in all of Manitoba. People in the Burntwood regions are younger in general—the median age is 24 years compared with 38 years across Manitoba—and they have lower levels of education. Fully 47.7 per cent of individuals between 25 and 34 years in the Burntwood region "have no certificate, diploma or degree" compared with 16.4 per cent of the same age cohort in all of Manitoba.

Aboriginal poverty

At 29 per cent, the rate of Aboriginal poverty is almost three times Manitoba's overall poverty rate. In Winnipeg, Aboriginal people make up approximately 10 per cent of the population, yet constitute 25 per cent of those living in poverty. The median annual income for Aboriginal workers aged 15 or higher in Manitoba was \$15,246, a mere 63 per cent of the median income of \$24,194 for the overall population. At 15.4 per cent, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was almost three times the Manitoba rate.

The situation was worse on reserves, where the unemployment rate was 26 per cent. Although they make up less than 13 per cent of the working-age population, Aboriginal people represent over 30 per cent of the unemployed in Manitoba.

Aboriginal women are consistently poorer than Aboriginal men (Donner et al 2008). In 2006, Aboriginal children were almost three times more likely to be poor than non-Aboriginal children. Aboriginal children under six had a poverty rate (based on before-tax LICO) of 56 per cent compared to 19 per cent for non-Aboriginal children under six.

Improving education outcomes for Aboriginal people is a necessary component of a poverty reduction strategy. We know that education is increasingly important to securing well-paid employment. Fully 38 per cent of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 34 years

have no certificate, degree or diploma compared with 16 per cent of the overall population. Only 13.5 per cent of the Aboriginal population has a university certificate, diploma or degree compared with 23 per cent of the general population.

The lack of adequate, affordable housing is another critical issue, and one that is closely tied with education attainment and family stability. Aboriginal households are two to three times more likely to be overcrowded than non-Aboriginal households. The lack of affordable housing for the Aboriginal population in Manitoba creates lengthy waiting lists for social housing, helps to explain why 75 per cent of the emergency shelter population in Winnipeg is made up of Aboriginal people (Laird 2007), and why children are moving from school to school.

The number of Aboriginal children in foster care is an important measure

of Aboriginal social and economic well-being. Aboriginal children comprise upwards of 70 per cent of those living in foster care (Blackstock and Trocme, 2004) and the majority of children placed in care come from poor families (Child & Family Services Standing Committee 2007).

Note, the Aboriginal poverty statistics in this section are taken from Census 2006 Aboriginal Population Profiles.

Gender, age and family type

Although overall poverty rates have decreased in recent years, more women are poor than are men. This holds true for all family types and age groups (except for males under eighteen). Elderly and Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and mental illness, and female newcomers are among the poorest in our province. More senior women are poor than are senior men, as are women aged 18 to 64 in families where women are the main earner (Donner et al 2008).

Women's poverty is partly attributable to income disparities between men and women. The median income for women is only 67 per cent that of men—\$27,700 compared to \$42,900 (Census of Canada, 2006). Aboriginal women, immigrant women and women living with disabilities earned even less (CCPA 2009).

Child poverty is particularly concerning because, as Ross and Roberts (1999:36) have shown, children who grow up in poor families are, on average, less likely to do well in life. The lasting effects of child poverty are considerable and costly, ranging from poor health outcomes to low scholastic achievement, and in later years, fewer employment opportunities and a persistently low economic status.

Although the child poverty rate in Manitoba continues to be unacceptably high, it has declined quite significantly when the redistributive effect of the tax system is considered. In 1999, Manitoba had an after-tax rate of 19.5 per cent compared with the national rate of 14.6 per cent. In 2009, Manitoba's after-tax rate dropped to 9.1 per cent compared with the Canadian rate of 9.5 per cent (Statistics Canada Cansim Table 202-0802).

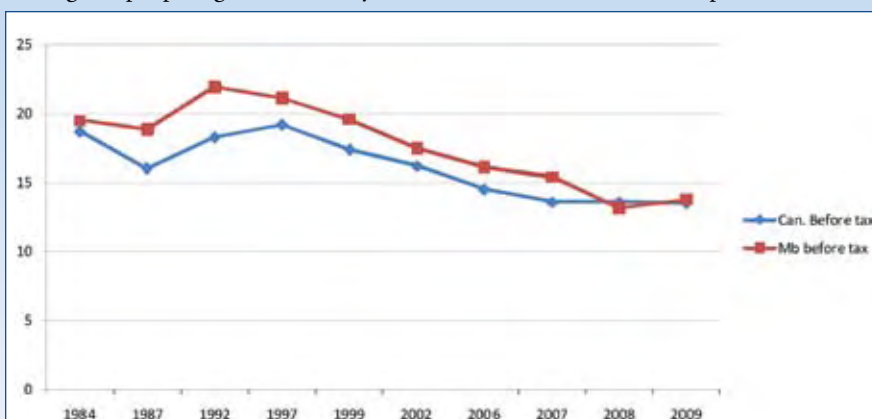


Chart 1A. Canada Manitoba Before Tax Poverty.

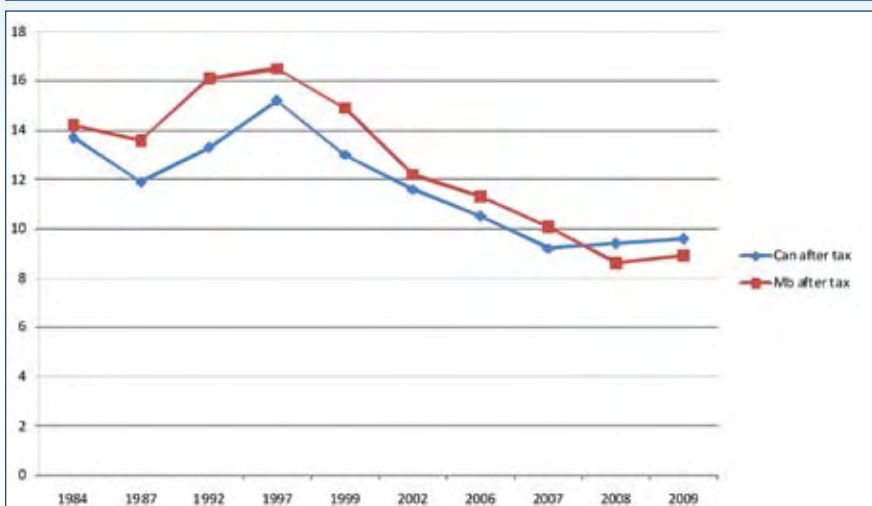


Chart 1B. Canada Manitoba After Tax Poverty.

Source: Statistics Canada Cansim Table 202-080.

Recent immigrants

Manitoba is home to an increasing number of new immigrants (arriving in the last five years) as a result of provincial government targets for 20,000 new immigrants over the next 10 years (Ghorayshi, 2010). New immigrants are more likely to live in poverty compared to both the overall population and to established immigrants—defined as those who have been living in Manitoba 15 years or longer.

In Manitoba, 32 per cent of recent immigrants were living in poverty in

2006 (Census of Canada 2006). In part, this is because of the difficulty newcomers have integrating into the Manitoba labour force. Reasons include a lack of Canadian work experience, language barriers, and difficulties related to the transferability of qualifications. Some newcomers end up in low-skill, entry-level, low-wage positions for which they are overqualified. Although incomes can improve over time, many new immigrants cannot cover the costs of their basic needs, forcing them to rely on social assistance and food banks to make ends meet.

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are over represented among the poor. As of 2006, 170,000 people in Manitoba have a disability and 16 per cent of all persons with disabilities are living in poverty (CCPA 2009: 18). Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion because of inadequate disability supports in education, facilities and workplaces, but also in other areas that prevent them from fully participating in community life.

Those unable to work are particularly disadvantaged. Current provincial disability benefits are simply too low to meet even the minimum costs of living in Manitoba, let alone the extra costs of living with a disability. A single person with a disability receives an average annual welfare income of \$8,652—48 per cent of the poverty line (CCPA 2009:42).

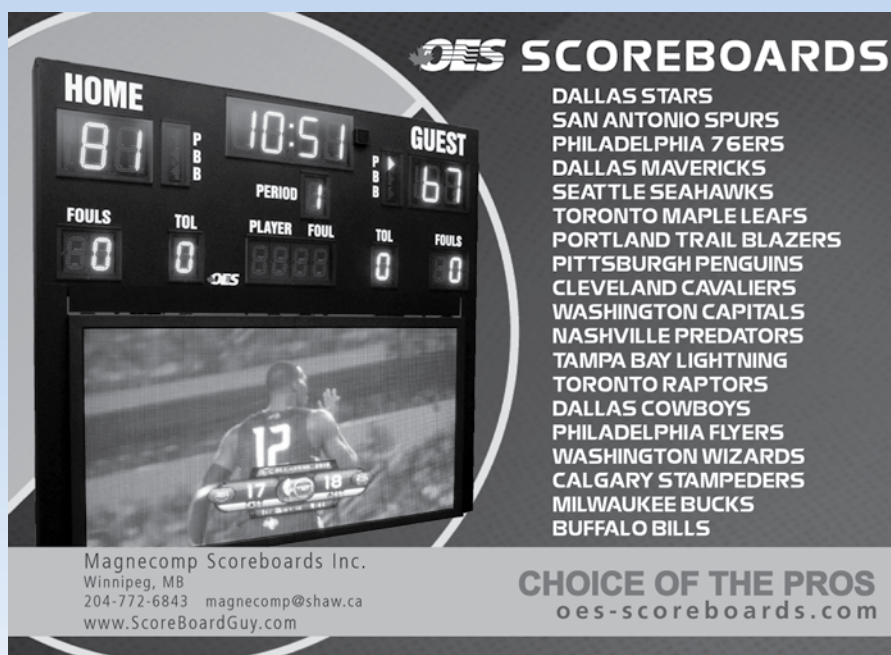
Urban poverty

Just as poverty is concentrated in First Nation communities, it is also concentrated in cities. Pockets of poverty are found in many Winnipeg neighbourhoods as well as in smaller cities like Thompson and Brandon. However, the most concentrated urban poverty can be found in Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods. Spatially concentrated poverty is particularly damaging as individuals and their families tend to be trapped in an intergenerational cycle of poverty that is difficult to escape (Sampson, 2009).

Is there a way out of poverty?

The persistence of poverty and inequality in Manitoba is a symptom of our society's failure to adequately address the failings of a social and economic system that creates exclusion. While statistics show there has been improvement in Manitoba, we have a very long way yet to go.

It is often said that education provides the best means to escape poverty. But for many families living in poverty, the promise of education remains elusive. As described by one individual who dropped out of school at an early age: "Education wasn't necessarily



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discouraged [by parents], but it wasn't encouraged either." This is particularly true for many Aboriginal families for whom the legacy of residential schools has left a deeply held distrust of the education system.

So, while education can help individuals break the cycle of poverty, poor families need extra support and encouragement to ensure that they have equal access and an enhanced opportunity to succeed. The depth and breadth of their barriers must be well understood by educators and policy makers if we are to level the playing field.

While increasing access to education will help, it is only one part of the solution. Poverty, especially when it transcends generations, can be deeply damaging. Many people living in poverty will not be able to work. For these who are most vulnerable, we require a system of support that enables them to live in dignity and comfort.

The causes of poverty are complex and so too are the solutions. Reducing poverty in Manitoba will require a comprehensive strategy that involves multiple interventions, government and non-government participation, and the political will at all levels of government to make it a priority. ■

This article, including all the references, can be found at: www.mass.mb.ca

Shauna MacKinnon is the Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba office.

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My HASTA Experience

By Derek Duncan, Morden Collegiate

Hopeful Aware Students Taking Action (HASTA) is a Morden Collegiate youth group centered on philanthropic activities. I joined the HASTA student initiative in Grade 10, and was a part of it until my graduation.

Meeting once a week (usually) on Thursdays, the student group is led by role model and teacher, Mr. Darryl Toews. The group discusses various topics with particular interest on global poverty. Since my involvement alone, we have raised money and awareness for dozens of causes, usually via bake sale and school-wide gimmicks. I personally like to oversee the sales parts, and do my best to aggressively encourage students and faculty alike to dig deep into their souls to find the courage and cash required to make our sales a success.

Poverty is something that exists virtually everywhere on the planet; therefore our efforts to combat it are generally widespread and not focused to one specific area or location. The most common recipients of HASTA's funds are victims of natural or manmade disasters, and any combination of the two. Flood relief in Pakistan, Tsunami relief in Japan, and our local Christmas Cheer and GuluWalk, are some of the beneficiaries of HASTA's 2010-2011 year.

During the year, HASTA members are privy to a number of conferences and workshops that aim to educate youth to become more globally aware. I have gone to four of these, and can attest to the fact that even though some of the conferences/workshops are fairly basic, the general messages and the enthusiasms generated have helped propel me to be a more globally aware and active person.

HASTA has been on the forefront of raising awareness about poverty in our school, and has done its best to try to make a small difference in the lives of others who are born into worlds that are much less fortunate than that of the majority of Canadians.

Being a part HASTA has changed the way I see and reflect upon the world, it has encouraged me to be an avid fighter against apathy. It has helped me to be a role model for friends, family and members of our community. ■



Students Inspiring **Change**

Scattered Dreams

By Conrad Swanson, Stony Mountain Elementary School

Earlier this year, our school, Stony Mountain School, participated in a project called Brush Out Poverty. Students were asked to create a painting for children living in orphanages in Africa and in return, they would paint as well. The paintings would then be online to purchase as cards, calendars or prints. All funds raised will go towards the children in Africa to provide a better life.

Students at Stony Mountain School were allowed to create their own paintings using their imagination. Many students chose to paint images representing Canada. I chose to be different and created a painting using a variety of colours that I liked and separated them with white lines.

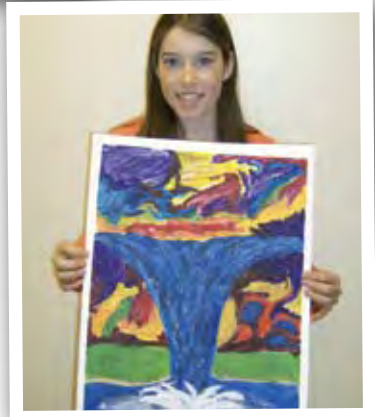
I feel the project went very well because all the students had very creative ideas and paintings. As well, everyone used their time wisely and carefully. Although I was not enrolled in Art this year (I chose Choral for Grade 8), it is a subject I still enjoy very much.

The name of my painting is called, Scattered Dreams. Although my painting looks broken up with random colours, I think each piece or section represents a dream, whether small or large. As well, each colour represents the depth of each dream. The white lines make the colours (dreams) stand out and makes each section just as important as the next. I painted this to represent the dreams forgotten but still alive and forever in our thoughts [editor's note: Conrad's painting was sent to Africa before a photo was taken].

I really enjoyed painting this picture. I felt it was eye opening to think of all the things we have that the children in Africa don't and to think that, if we drew anything they didn't have they would be encouraged. Even though I drew about the dreams everyone has, I thought they would hopefully be inspired.

I wish for this project to be very successful and to be continued for many years to come.

I would just like to end with...although dreams are sometimes forgotten and/or broken, they are still there. Dreams...everyone has them...EVERYONE! ■



Students Inspiring **Change**

Making Sense of Poverty:

Considerations for Our Work

By Duane Brothers

For educational leaders, defining poverty is a tricky but important business. Whether understood explicitly or implicitly, what we think of poverty informs what we believe to be causes of poverty which in turn determines a myriad of policy, political and administrative decisions, or lack thereof (Curwood, 2009). While often equated with the lack of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter ("Poverty," 1995), Townsend (1993) expands the definition of poverty to a lack of skills and attributes or *personal capabilities* (Sen, 1999), to access the resources and amenities that are typically available to members of the greater society.

What constitutes and accounts for poverty?

Arguments can be made that poverty is caused by either moral, social and economic failures at the individual or local community level, or by larger structural dynamics including governmental policy and imperatives of the global market economy that are well out of the control of individual actors. For educational leaders, these diverse starting points lead to dramatically different work: do we help individual students fit into the existing systems, or do we also have a further responsibility to tackle structural impediments that may exist in our schools systems and beyond?

West (1993a), Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003), and Silver (2000) maintain that most of us view poverty through one of two broad paradigms or *shared narratives* (Postman, 1996). The first narrative through which many view poverty is what West (1993a) calls the "conservative behavioralist camp" (p.

11). Within this broad narrative, the behavioral impediments of individuals and groups are deemed to be responsible for an individual or collective lack of social and economic progress (Levitas, 2003; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; West, 1993a) or put another way, a "focus on the waning of the Protestant ethic – hard work, deferred gratification, frugality and responsibility" (West, 1993a, p. 11).

Reflecting upon the impoverished conditions in which many Canadian Aboriginal people find themselves, Flanagan (2000) contends that government largess has resulted in a population that lacks motivation and independence due to "government programs proliferating luxuriantly in their communities" (p. 179). Within this discourse, incorporating the poor into the workforce in and of itself mitigates the effects of poverty and defines success.

Helpful measures include job training regimens and improving the participation rates of people in the economy. From this perspective, poverty is to be decreased by limiting governmental and non-governmental forms of income support that are thought to "destroy initiative, independence and respect" (Levitas, 1998, p. 14).

Assumptions inherent within these perspectives can be problematic for a number of reasons. A number of researchers bring attention to statistics indicating the growing number of working poor (Anyon, 2005; DeGroot-Maggetti, 2002; *Income Trends*, 2009; Lu et al., 2003; US Poverty & Wealth, 2011). A singular focus on paid work ignores the value of unpaid work and caring responsibilities, and also obscures gender, race and other inequalities in the labor market (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002). As well, job training efforts all too often focus on entry level

positions in retail and service industries that are, by nature, low paying and in no way prepare people to participate in other aspects of society.

Implicitly ignored from this perspective are problems arising from a growing income gap in Canada and other countries between those who have and those who do not. Reflecting the neoliberalist mentality pervasive in western democracies during the past 30 years, a "meritocratic social mobility" (Levitas, 1998, p.3) has been championed, or as Margaret Thatcher famously stated, "we believe that everyone has the right to be unequal" (1975, p. 1).

It is assumed we simply need to assist, or force, those less fortunate to join what are essentially unproblematic economic and political systems. Such a view reflects a total ignorance of persistent economic and social inequalities that impact disadvantaged groups including women, people of color and Aboriginal people.

Lamenting the high correlation between African-American heritage and poverty, West (1993a) argues that when historic oppression and discrimination is ignored, "crucial and indispensable themes of self-help and personal responsibility are wrenched out of historical context and contemporary circumstances—as if it is a matter of personal will" (p. 14). His argument translates well in Manitoba when we consider the inordinate high rates of poverty within our Aboriginal communities (Carter and Polevychok, 2009; Levin and Riffel, 2000; "Population Winnipeg," 2010; Silver, 2000).

The second of the dominant narratives West (1993a) calls "liberal structuralist" (p. 11). Within this discourse, political and economic structural restraints, historic political and economic policies and practices, including racism,

job discrimination, inadequate health care and poor education, are responsible for impoverishment today. Poverty and social exclusion cannot be understood outside of coming to terms with the market economy, governmental policy over time, and historic and contemporary racism, sexism and classism.

Silver (2000) identifies a number of structural policy changes that have arguably increased the amount of poverty in Canada, and have been directly linked to massive job losses and downward pressure on wage levels, especially for the relatively unskilled. During the past 30 years, supports for the poor, including housing, training, transportation and child care, have been replaced by a strategy to eliminate welfare dependency by pushing welfare recipients into low paying or, "quasi labor markets of subsidized employment and training placements" (Graefe, 2006).

During the 1980s, federal contributions to provincial social spending decreased by \$150 billion (Silver, 1992); transfers to provinces decreased by \$7 billion less between 1996 and 1998; and since 1995, Manitoba has reduced benefit rates, shelter allowances and raised eligibility requirements for assistance programs (Silver, 2000). After further clawbacks, which have reduced universal social supports to poor people and their children, Myles (1998) concludes that the reemergence of poverty is only to be expected and Esping-Anderson (1999) states that much of the recent employment growth has been in unstable and relatively poor jobs.

The consequences for our children

It is within this context that dire conditions exist for many of the children and families that we serve. It is not only the lack of resources, but the lack of any reasonable hope to attain the attributes and capabilities to attain the resources that make poverty and social exclusion especially pernicious (DeGroot-Maggetti, 2002; Laidlaw Foundation website, 2002; Levitas, 2003; Mitchell & Shillington, 2002; Sen, 1992). The consequences of poverty are reflected in the inability of individuals to fully participate, not only in the larger economy, but in all social

The consequences of poverty are reflected in the inability of individuals to fully participate, not only in the larger economy, but in all social and political aspects of a democratic society.



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and political aspects of a democratic society. They are reflected by children in our schools who do not participate in sports programs due to embarrassment of the clothes they wear. They are reflected in the inability of parents

living in poverty to effectively advocate for their children, *or even feel they can come to the school*. They are reflected in a belief that *closing the gap* and getting more students to graduate, *on its own*, will remedy poverty.

From this perspective, success would be a significant improvement in the relative living standards of those who are currently poor, as well as an assurance that people have the *capabilities* (Freire, 1970; Noddings, 1993; Sen, 1992) to think, consider, advocate and act (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002). This is precisely where we as educational leaders can make a difference.



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What we can do

For inclusion to occur, the harmful effects of discrimination in all its forms—based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender—need to be continually considered and addressed. We need not only to connect with students but also with their families and communities in deliberate acts to be *present* (Senge, 2004) in their lives. This requires deliberate work to stop, see and get to know the people that we serve, and the lives that they live. Work needs to be done to assist all people to fully participate in society to discuss, dialogue, advocate and defend for

What Can School Divisions Do?

“Poverty affects outcomes. But it does not determine everything. Schools cannot do everything. But they can do something.” - Ben Levin

By Brian O’Leary

One of the things schools can do is to examine their own practices from the perspective of those in poverty. A comment from a Seven Oaks Trustee, the late Judy Silver, prompted our school division to do just that. Judy asked, “Are we looneying and tooneying parents to death?” As Superintendent, I had to admit that we didn’t have a firm grasp on what we were charging for or what impact it was having.

We went to work. We collected data and we collected stories. We were charging for field trips. We were charging for extra classroom supplies. We were charging a fee to graduate.

And it was having an impact. The impact was captured most pointedly in a story told by one of our teachers. She informed her Grade 6 class that they would be going on a field trip in two weeks and that there would be a seven dollar charge. A student came up to her and told her that she could not come on the field trip that day, that she had to miss it because of a medical appointment. Clearly the student was too considerate to ask her cash strapped mom for money and too proud to ask that the fee be waived.

The fear of being judged negatively by peers is strong. Poverty puts children in that situation all the time and schools charging fees, “looneying and tooneying parents,” makes it worse.

The Seven Oaks Trustees listened and passed this policy:

COSTS TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Costs to parents/guardians for their child’s education and for participation in school related activities will be kept to a minimum.

1. *There will be no charge for participation in required courses and activities. This will apply to costs such as agenda books, locker fees, field trips related to curricular objectives, course fees for lab or project materials, Learn to Swim, Learn to Skate, Arts Camp, Science Camp, elementary, middle years and intramural athletics, high school convocations and the like.*
2. *There will be a modest charge for:*
 - *School supplies, when purchased by the school. Where the school issues supply lists those lists should be costed and reviewed with a view to keeping costs modest.*

themselves rather than having ourselves as well-meaning people do it for them.

After all, personal agency matters. Contemporary people and communities are not static and homogeneous, and we can ignore at our peril the strategies of resistance that impoverished peoples often use, prime examples being a focus upon athletics and music rather than academics in African-American youth culture as a way to claim personal value and empowerment (Noguera, 2003) or the emergence of *gangsta rap* and gang culture in local Aboriginal communities.

Simply placing additional resources into the hands of impoverished peoples, for example, more computers in schools, does not necessarily eliminate problems. A tendency to believe that singular structural remedies will work is limited at best, and counterproductive at its worst.

Frankly, I have often found myself implicitly and explicitly acting upon perspectives that would be at home in both the conservative-behaviorist and the liberal-structuralist camps. I have lamented the sad reality of ugly bigotry that has

manifested in my own family history and have seen “savage inequalities,” to use Kozol’s phrase (1992). I have also, at times, found myself saying, especially about young Black and Aboriginal men, “damn it, why don’t those people dress

properly, pull their pants up, stop talkin’ fool talk and get a damn job”! I certainly heard the same sense of questioning when I talked to school superintendents about their understandings of and experiences with poverty (Brothers, 2010).

Poverty puts children in that situation all the time and schools charging fees, “looneying and tooneying parents,” makes it worse.

- Residential camp experiences, band trips, athletic trips. School will provide parents/guardians with adequate notice. Activities will be planned with economy in mind.
 - Band uniforms, sports t-shirts.
 - Rental of musical instruments.
 - High school interscholastic sports. A budget and accounting will be made available to parents/guardians detailing team and program expenses.
3. Financial assistance can be provided from Seven Oaks school budgets to ensure that no student’s educational participation in the above activities is limited by financial circumstances. Information about financial assistance will be provided through all avenues of home/school communication.
 4. Each year the Board of Trustees will establish a per student grant to cover or defray activities costs to parents. The grant will be allocated on a per capita basis by classroom and program for K – 8 students and on a program basis in Grade 9 – 12 schools.
 5. School budgets will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees to ensure that they are adequate to ensure that this policy is honoured.

Seven Oaks Trustees went further still. They examined school supply lists and found that they were running as high as \$75 dollars per child. A couple of our schools were buying school supplies for their students at a cost of \$30 per child. We adopted this approach system wide. This approach also means we can accept post-dated cheques and sometimes waive the cost. We are not putting parents in the position of choosing between school supplies, and food or rent.

We also provide school breakfast programs, extend our school day for enrichment programming and our school year to prevent summer learning loss. We offer early childhood literacy and parent education programs.

All of these initiatives are answers to the question: “What can schools do in the face of poverty?” We must keep asking that question all the time. ■

Brian O’Leary is Superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division.

It is with much reflection that I now consider that no singular discourse can accurately capture all of the causes of poverty and social exclusion; rather, one needs to be conscious of the multidimensionality of the individual actors, systems and processes which, in turn, informs the varied policy and action responses that we make in our schools.

First, we can agree that “schools can’t do everything but we can do something” (Levin, 2008). This requires that we bring our minds, eyes and most importantly, our hearts, as we attend to the lives of the students and communities we serve (Bates, 2006; Dillard, 1999; Larson & Murtadha, 2004). Second, we are to recognize that culture is structural and “is rooted in institutions such as families, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques and communication industries” (West, 1993a, p. 13). We must soberly acknowledge that our school systems are not neutral, objective institutions, and that we must question the ways in which practices,

for which we are responsible, disadvantage some and privilege others.

Finally, we must come to terms with the tremendous despair that is present in persistently depressed communities that exist, whether we acknowledge it or not, in every school division in Manitoba. Multiple generations of oppression, poor education and poverty have resulted in a subculture of deep malaise, self-loathing and hopelessness, in which violence, the sexual degradation of women and substance abuse are obvious characteristics.

Tremendous work continues to be done in many school divisions throughout Manitoba and beyond to mitigate the destructive ramifications of poverty and social exclusion. Presence (Senge, 1999), the mindful attention to each of the children in our care, is a beginning. A relentless focus upon quality teaching, upon developing the capabilities to question, think, persist and be mindful of our circumstances, while also, yes, becoming full of joy, wonder and expression are all capabilities to be illuminated.

Finally, a growing literature is telling us that transformational educational leaders do what many of us, including myself, have long been considered *new work*, not *our work*. We may consider that to truly address the needs of all towards a truly inclusive and just society, we may ask of ourselves to develop the attitudes and aptitudes to forge new connections and develop new social and political networks with community groups, players in other branches of government and become the “critical organic catalysts” (West, 1993b, p. 22) for progressive development that we are meant to be. ■

This article, including all the references, can be found at:
www.mass.mb.ca

Duane Brothers is an Assistant Superintendent in Seven Oaks School Division, and is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

A Night In The Cold

By Darcie Stanowski, Arborg Collegiate

Poverty, the state of being poor; lacking your necessary needs for life.

A lot of people living in this world live in poverty, and some barely survive. Not only in third world countries does this happen, but also in our very own country and province. Even in your home town, there are people struggling, needing help, but you don’t notice because you don’t need it yourself. Homelessness and poverty would be the hardest thing to go through. Not having a place to call home, a place you will be safe and a place for your family is a heartbreaking nightmare. For some, it is their reality and they need help. Just barely getting by isn’t a way to live but sometimes it’s the only way.

In social studies class, we focused a lot on poverty, homelessness and the causes of it. It was so saddening to hear about all the horrible things that happen to people and what these people have to go through on a daily basis. Consider all of yourselves the luckiest people, no matter what you have or want, that you don’t need.

Having an experience like “Night in the Cold” really opened my eyes. Going through just a night of what some people go through every day was hard. Not being in a warm shelter on cold winter days and nights is torture. We obviously had it better, sleeping in a gymnasium as our shelter and eating good food.

But we asked people for money. Some (that didn’t know we were fundraising), shied away from us, holding their purses and

wallets, refusing to look at us made us feel terrible.

The way some acted around us, it was like we were monsters chasing after them. Some fortunate people can’t see that homeless people *are people* like you and me, that need help. Having just the one night in the cold as a “homeless” person was so inspiring; it makes me want to be just an all around better person.

Helping just one person can make a difference and that’s what I got from this experience. Even though you can’t help the world, you can give someone out there a second chance. This project was the most inspiring, educational and surprising adventure I’ve ever been on.

Next time you see someone homeless, stop, and ask for a story, it might inspire you. Or help some out, give them some money, volunteer at homeless shelter, you’ll feel better about yourself and your outlook on life will change.

Do this. Not only will you know what it’s like, you’ll also be raising money for a good cause, just as we did. ■



Poverty: The Hidden Shame of a Middle Class Middle School

By Suzanne Powell

Imagine sitting in a Grade 8 classroom surrounded by 23 other students. The majority of students are wearing Aero Postale t-shirts, DC shoes, have ear buds hanging around their necks attached to iPods, and are sneak texting friends on their cell phones. If you were similarly dressed or had the electronic gadgets, the room would probably feel comfortable. Now, imagine that you are sitting there with second hand ill-fitting clothing and no electronics, or that you are a newcomer and there is no money to “Canadianize” your wardrobe or purchase the latest electronics. Now, how would the room feel?

Our school has gone through a transformation over the past ten years. The student population has gone from a fairly homogenous group with students having some of the brand-name or consumer items that help pre-teens feel that they belong with their peers, to where one group of students has all the latest and greatest gadgets and name brand clothing, and a second group has none of these things—and if they do, they were donated by a church group or purchased through the thrift shop.

The first group play hockey, soccer and baseball on community teams, many take music lessons, and all assume that this is just the way life is. The second group may play soccer but for the most part, are not part of the extra-curricular world of the school and community.

Through conversations with several children from this second group we became acutely aware of how these children felt about being in school, the things we were doing to help, and the things we were doing which were making the problem worse. The most influential thing we learned was that they held a deep-seated belief that life was never going to get



Students planting a school garden as part of our initiative to build community.



Some of the groceries collected by the students of École Morden Middle School to help stock the shelves of the food bank and breakfast program.



Students, staff and volunteers giving back by helping to clean up the community.

better, but that they still had some measure of hope. It is from this sense of hope we drew the resolve to change this culture in our school.

What we learned

The conversations began initially because of conflict between the two groups. Typically, children from the first group hung out together and had little to do with the second group. In the past, there was no real antagonism but the groups did not interact unless directed by the teacher. Certainly during free time the students did not seek out each other. At times there had been conflicts but they were quickly resolved. What was different this year was that the second group became vocal about the disparity and the dismissive attitude of their peers. Initially, the methods they used to express their views were not appropriate but their message was valid and needed to be heard.

This group of students said things like, "Of course you know more about computers. I have computer club and the time I buy at the library. But I don't have a computer at home to play on all night." They are acutely aware of how much everything costs and know that having their own iPod is just not going to happen. They come from families who use pay-as-you go cell phones and do not have land lines, so they have no access to a cellphone with unlimited texting. They are envious of their classmates because it is the family they were born into which determined their social status. And they react to the sense of entitlement their peers feel.

This group of students felt disenfranchised from our school community. If

you feel disenfranchised, why would you follow the rules? If you accept the premise that schools are preparing our children for active participation in society and they already feel that they are not part of it, where does that lead? What does it mean for the future of our society?

What our analysis made clear was that children who are economically disadvantaged opted not to participate in school activities. They were absent from all school events that have a cost associated with it. This is one area where we thought we were doing well but, in actual fact, we were solidifying the divide between the two groups. We have a community organization which pays for all activity costs to ensure that all children can participate in all activities. What we did not factor into this was the dignity issue, the erosion of self-worth for those who require assistance. Although these things were always handled discreetly, very few children and parents are comfortable with this.

For example, our Grade 8 Winter Activity Day involves a ski trip. We overlooked the fact that to enjoy the Canadian outdoors, one needs adequate outdoor gear, so even with the cost of the event covered, the children really could not participate. The ski trip was attended by those who could afford it, and the rest of the students opted for the less expensive activity or simply stayed home that day. For many, this was not a real choice; they wanted to go skiing but the parents would not accept a handout. So, while we thought we were exposing our students to experiences they may not have had the opportunity to try, in actual fact, we were reinforcing the idea that those with money ski, those without don't. To rub salt into

the wound, the next few days back at school were filled with anecdotes from the ski hill and pictures of the adventures.

Good practices in place

There were things in place that we did and continue to do well to help increase the sense of belonging by these children. First of all, we know our children well and we have people on staff with whom these children have made significant connections. This adult acts discreetly on behalf of the child. They do not share all the details of the child's life but make sure important factors are taken into consideration and supports are put in place for the child.

We also have liaison workers in our school who connect with the families and offer support for them because we believe that is one of the best ways to support the child. Parents are very comfortable calling the school looking for help in many areas and this relationship helps build community and supports their children's success.

Secondly, the breakfast program run out of our school is not based on economic grounds. All students in our school division who wish to eat breakfast at the program may. All participants are encouraged to donate money, food or time to help support the program. For this reason, the children at the breakfast table are a mixture of children whose parents need to get to work early, those who need the food, and those who want to eat breakfast with a friend. No child goes hungry in our school. Meal tickets are also provided for lunch, if needed. Again, students are encouraged to pay it back but are not hounded to do so and not belittled for needing a ticket.

Going forward

We want to go further to help level the playing field for these children, to help them gain a sense of belonging and to nurture the spark of hope they still have. Part of this is re-examining the academic programming in our school as education is essential to get out of poverty. The second part of the plan must be to ensure that each child has a charismatic adult in his/her life. The third area is to address the sense of entitlement other students feel.

On November 19, 2009, Doug Buehl, a reading specialist and author of *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*, and *Developing Readers in the Academic Disciplines*, presented on struggles with literacy. He indicated that children from impoverished backgrounds not only lack experiences and resources that more advantaged children have, they also lack educational literacy.

He stated that a child who processes information slowly but comes from an enriched background has an excellent chance of successful college completion, whereas a child from a disadvantaged background who processes information quickly is not very likely to successfully complete college. He stated that children from enriched backgrounds already know or have been exposed to 80 per cent of the material presented, while disadvantaged children often needed to learn 100 per cent of the material. So, in a six week unit that is taught, children are having to learn differing amounts of information in the same amount of time depending on their backgrounds.

The challenge our school took up, then, was to ensure that teachers make sure that all children have all the necessary prerequisite learning for a unit. More emphasis is placed on where a child is and then planning is put in place based on this information to get the child to where he/she needs to go. This also challenges the teachers to program so that children who have all the background material are also actively learning new material. Everyone should be actively involved in learning.

We are also looking at the experiences we want all our children to participate in, and are examining them for roadblocks which would encourage non-participation. Cost is a huge factor, and we are becoming more creative in offsetting costs for all. For example, we fundraise to cover the cost of the event. It is our hope that by having the students work towards raising money for an activity or event, all students will feel a vested interest in participating. We are organizing a new coat and winter gear evening for the fall. It will be open to whoever would like to come and it is our hope that with each coat there will be new mitts and a hat.

The second point of inspiration came from Robert Brooks, author of *Raising*

Resilient Children. We took seriously his idea that every child needs a charismatic adult to help them succeed in life. We talked about every child in our school and identified students who did not appear to have a charismatic adult in their life. We then created a community group that basically identified the needs of these children and matched them with a charismatic adult. This has provided a venue for the children to explore ideas, receive mentoring and receive support to help ensure success. This group draws on people from all walks of life, with various degrees of involvement. It stems from the belief that our children belong to all of us, and that healthy thriving children strengthen our community.

The third problem we wanted to address was the sense of entitlement many of our children feel. This challenge is difficult as many students do not realize they are being exclusive, are increasing the discouragement, or are, in fact, hurting other children. Our school has taken great steps to work on this. We have several cross grade activities which require cooperation and the placing of oneself in another's shoes. Everyone participates and so far they have been positive. We engage

in conversations of "what we stand for" or "what we believe in" at every opportunity to help reinforce that our actions can cause harm, but that we are in control and can choose our actions. Our Grade 7s baked muffins and went throughout the town handing them out to strangers and wishing them a good day. The students were surprised by the reactions of genuine warmth they received. We will continue down this road.

We are a school awakened by the effects of poverty on our children. We are a school in the process of change. Our strength is that we know all of our children well, we make connections with their families, and we have community support for our children. We are not there yet but we are heading down the right path. If anyone is to question why the effort needs to be placed in making all of our children reap the benefits of what an education can offer, one only has to look at the recent riots in London to see the results of disenfranchisement. ■

Suzanne Powell is Vice-Principal of École Morden Middle School in Western School Division.



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The Positive Ripples of CSI:

Summer Learning Enrichment Program



Photos by Travis Bevan.

By Karen Botting

The ripple effect can be limitless when educators work together with community partners and parents. CSI, the Community School Investigators Summer Learning Enrichment Program, has discovered this as it pursues its commitment to reduce the effect of summer learning loss for children living in poverty by working with community partners and families.

The CSI Summer Learning Program was developed under the auspices of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, based on strong research evidence that identifies summer learning loss as a major barrier to graduation for children living in poverty.

As recently as June, 2011, Carolyn Shields, Dean of Wayne State University in Detroit, underlined the impact of summer learning loss as a key factor in increasing social disparity: "During the long summer vacation, children from more advantaged

families enjoy travel with their families, and enrol in a myriad of summer camps, sporting and enrichment activities. The result is that during the summer, they gain an additional three to four months' worth of learning for a total of between 12 and 16 months during the calendar year. Children from less advantaged families do not have the same summer opportunities. They rarely travel; they cannot afford summer camps, art, music or sporting experiences, and often must spend their time inside, watching television, waiting

for a parent to return from work.... Here, the result is disastrous. These children tend to lose between three and four months' worth of learning for an overall total during the calendar year of from four to eight months of learning. Hence the achievement gap grows—exponentially” (Globe and Mail, June 2011).

Background of CSI in Winnipeg

For the past six summers, CSI has been tackling the issue of summer learning loss for children living in poverty. By offering a five-week intensive full day program in a safe and caring environment, the CSI Program enables economically disadvantaged elementary children the ability to participate in a variety of academic, recreational, arts, cultural, educational and field trip activities that the children would not otherwise experience.

In 2005, CSI began in Winnipeg under the umbrella of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg as a pilot project at two inner city schools. Over time it has gradually expanded to include 12 schools in the inner city and north districts of Winnipeg School Division with another site in the south end of the city at Ryerson School in Pembina Trails School Division. In 2010, CSI became part of the Boys and Girls Club of Winnipeg, which had been a partner in recent years. This summer, upwards of 780 children participated in the five-week summer program.

The CSI Program was designed on the principles of community involvement, and is operated as a partnership between the school, community-based organizations, communities and families. The Program's success in working towards its goals is founded on these partnerships, as well as the families' commitment to their children. The goals of CSI are broad:

- To engage children, considered at risk of summer learning loss, in enriching learning opportunities during the summer.
- To improve educational outcomes for children living in poverty.

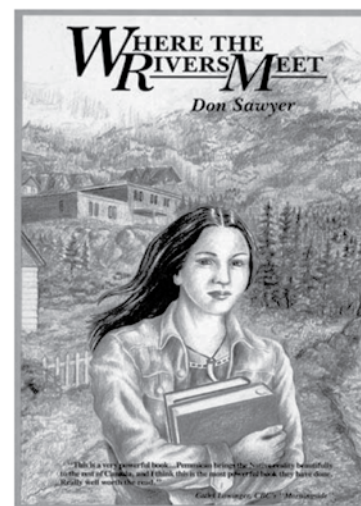
- To enhance the skills and employment experiences of local youth.
- To provide opportunities for students from Faculties of Education to work with children in inner city communities.

The principles of community engagement are illustrated in the staffing and mentorship component of the Program. This past year there were over 60 university students, 50 local youth, 13 food coordinators and 13 teacher coordinators working in the program. The program is staffed by education students from the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba. They are hired from May to August, to train, plan, prepare and implement an exciting educational program for children aged 6 to 12.

High school youth, living in the catchment area of each school site, are hired to act as assistants to the university students. For most of these students, it is their first employment opportunity. They provide positive role models for the children. The high school and university student staff members pick up the children daily and take them home at the end of the day. The breakfast and lunch programs are usually run by a community member, and a teacher from the school site takes on the coordination role during the summer months.

The CSI Program recognized that to be successful, it couldn't do it alone. To have the summer gains become sustainable requires the commitment of families and the community to work together. From the beginning, CSI began soliciting partnerships with a variety of organizations, both within each individual community and within the broader community of Winnipeg, including the Winnipeg School Division, the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, Jazz Winnipeg, the City of Winnipeg libraries, pools and police and the Boys and Girls Clubs. Other partnerships, such as those with SEED and Bright Futures, have addressed some fundamental challenges for families living in poverty.

Attention all teachers and educators New teachers guide for popular book

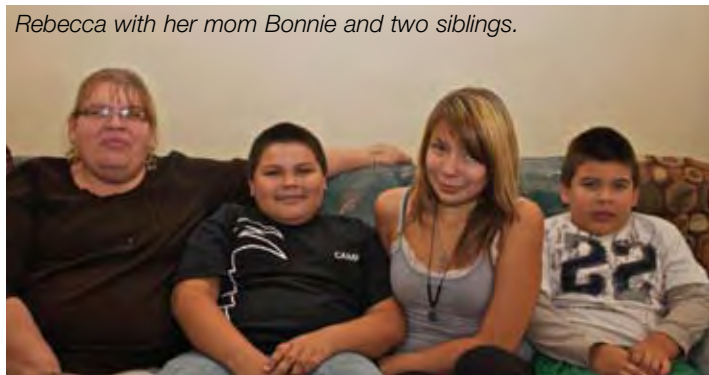


Where the Rivers Meet is one of Pemmican's best-selling titles. Now, in conjunction with the popular book's ninth printing, we have answered the requests of teachers and educators from across the country for a teacher's guide to accompany this compelling young adult novel. The guide, written by WTRM author and educator Don Sawyer, is filled with dozens of classroom-tested activities, from practical writing and research projects to consensus activities and ideas for setting up a blog site, that challenge learners to reflect and extend on the issues presented in the novel. The guide is a compendium of research-based, best practices classroom strategies that will be invaluable in language arts and social studies classes using the book. As well, although the activities are directly linked to *Where the Rivers Meet*, they can be modified for use in a variety of content areas and with many other resources.

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Rebecca with her mom Bonnie and two siblings.



The ripple effect: Rebecca's story and the importance of partnerships in addressing challenges

Shortly after Bonnie, a single mother of three, moved to Winnipeg's inner city, she discovered that a CSI summer program was offered at her children's school, William Whyte. Her daughter Rebecca, now 13, recalls being told by her teacher that CSI was a safe and fun place to go during the summer. Bonnie enrolled Rebecca, then 11, for that first summer in 2009, and attended an information reception for participating parents and children to learn more about *her role*

and the role of families in the program. At the time, Bonnie did not know the impact and ripple effect this experience would have on her and her family.

Rebecca attended CSI in Grades 5 and 6, and speaks highly of the program: "CSI kind of made me focus more on school. We learned fun, educational games.... The best thing about CSI was the leaders. They were so outgoing!" Rebecca soon discovered that her participation in the program gave her opportunities to strengthen her skills and future prospects. During the winter months, for example, she was encouraged to become a mentor in Power Up!, a cross-age mentoring program developed by the Boys and Girls Clubs to increase special skills, attitudes and school success, and to reduce school drop-out.

Her participation also provided her with an opportunity to qualify for an educational bursary to invest in her future, something she had not anticipated. As a regular attendee, Rebecca was eligible to receive a \$400 bursary to put towards post-secondary education for each year of participation in the program. She was there for two years. Over the winter, as a mentor in the Power Up! Program, Rebecca was also eligible to receive a \$1,000 scholarship for post secondary education. The partnerships that enabled these opportunities have been essential to the success of this component of the program.

The year 2009 was the first year of the bursary program, when CSI received additional funds from the Manitoba Government through a program called Bright Futures. The bursary program was developed as an incentive for both the parents and children of CSI to work together to improve regular and consistent attendance. In 2011, there were 720 children potentially eligible for the fund.

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The implementation of the fund presented many challenges for an NGO, especially around the administration of the bursaries and how to maximize the savings for future education. Many questions arose. Who should administer the bursaries? Do the Social Planning Council or Boys and Girls Clubs have the necessary infrastructure? Do we involve the parents?

Based on CSI's commitment to have families as partners in the Summer Learning Program, a decision was made to find a way of administering the bursaries so that parents had the opportunity to invest the money themselves for their children's future education. A partnership with another organization, SEED Winnipeg, proved to be synergistic and enabled CSI to leverage ongoing work to support the same population.

SEED Winnipeg (Supporting Employment and Economic Development) is an organization with a mandate of engaging families in the inner city in investing in Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP) and Canada Learning Bonds. When CSI first met with SEED, the organization was struggling to find a way to get its program off the ground. In fact, Winnipeg's inner city had the lowest uptake of RESPs and Canada Learning Bonds in Canada. Both CSI and SEED knew that the only way to achieve success was to engage families and communities in the process.

As SEED Program Coordinator Jenn Bogoch says, "CSI and SEED formed a partnership that works perfectly. CSI, like SEED, was willing to think that the parents could be competent and engaged in managing the bursary process." Together, the two programs worked through the issue with the support of Bright Futures.

Rebecca's mom, Bonnie, was one of the first parents to engage in the process of investing the bursary money. In 2009, when she attended the CSI Parent Meeting to find out more about the program, Jenn Bogoch, from SEED, was there to discuss how SEED was going to help parents through the process of investing their bursary money in an RESP. Jenn also took advantage

of this opportunity to inform parents of the *Saving Circle Program*, and the *Money Management Program* that SEED offered. Bonnie cautiously joined the *Saving Circle* and *Money Management* programs, while encouraging Rebecca to attend CSI regularly.

But, in the meantime, SEED discovered that many parents, like Bonnie, and their children did not have birth certificates or social insurance numbers. This was limiting their ability to open bank accounts to invest in RESPs. It also limits their ability to get employment. With the support of SEED, Bonnie and her children received their birth certificates and SIN numbers.

This opened the door for Bonnie and her family. SEED, in partnership with Assiniboine Credit Union (ACU), began providing referrals for

CSI parents to open RESPs at ACU for the bursary fund earned through CSI. SEED and ACU have also contributed a "top up" of \$100, as \$500 is the minimum required to open an RESP. Funds deposited to the RESP earn between 20 to 40 percent through the Canada Education Savings Grant. Bonnie was one of the first three parents to open an account with ACU. Rebecca was able to save both her CSI and Power Up! bursary monies in an RESP. Subsequently, Bonnie's sons, Derrick, 10, and Dakota, 7, have attended CSI and also have had RESPs established for them. A second benefit of the birth certificates is the ability for Bonnie's children to obtain their treaty status.

There has been more in the ripple effect of this partnership. Lower income children born in 2004 or later are also

eligible for the Canada Learning Bond. So far, that has meant that younger siblings of CSI children have also been able to open RESPs. Dakota was able to take advantage of this initiative.

Over the past three years, SEED has helped CSI students, parents and siblings obtain 526 birth certificates and 214 Social Insurance Numbers. To date, 800 bursaries have been earned and 161 have been transferred into RESPs. If an RESP is not opened, SEED is holding the accumulated bursary funds for CSI students until age 21.

Other ripple effects

Inspired by her daughter attending CSI and working in the community as a mentor with the Boys and Girls Clubs, Bonnie thought she would like to become a Community Support Worker. She says, "Rebecca bloomed after CSI... she mentors, she is working this summer as an assistant to her disabled cousin who is attending day camp at the Hope Centre (a Community Health Agency

in the Inner City of Winnipeg). Rebecca took a babysitting course and babysits in the community, and participates in a Work Force project learning employment skills." Rebecca is beginning her high school career at Tec Voc this fall and hopes to become a veterinarian. Her bursaries and scholarships will help her achieve this goal.

With her new birth certificate, Bonnie was able to take training at Urban Circle. Bonnie states, "The first step is to get out of poverty." As a result of her training, she was hired by the Winnipeg School Division into the job that she wanted, a Community Support Worker at her children's school, William Whyte.

"What better person to do this job than someone who lives in the community, knows the kids and the needs of the community, than Bonnie," says Jenn, of SEED.

Bonnie, in her new role as community support worker, has become a real champion for CSI and SEED. She says, "In this area people are financially stressed. It

is hard to get parents involved...they feel they are going to be judged. But CSI is not like that. I totally respect the program and how it's run. When it first started I was uncertain, but became more comfortable. It was consistent and staff wanted everyone to succeed. I also liked the extra help and the 'walking school bus' too."

Bonnie is an advocate, a support, a mentor, and a role model for both programs, as is her daughter.

There are many more stories like that of Rebecca and her mother. What CSI knew in theory about the impact of community partnerships and parental empowerment on children's school success has been borne out in practice. As Bonnie said, it all started with CSI being the "stepping stone" and many positive ripples followed. ■

Karen Botting is a co-founder, along with Strini Reddy, of CSI: Community Schools Investigators Summer Learning Enrichment Program.

A Journey to Africa Opens Eyes

By Nathan Bush, Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

This summer two students and a teacher from our school were able to travel to Uganda to see some projects we helped fund by doing the 30 Hour Famine. What amazed me most was meeting kids my age who were living a life I couldn't imagine. Even more amazing was the fact that they were so happy, even though they didn't have the easy access to food and water that I used to take for granted.

I met high school students who worry about things like where their family is going to get their water from and how clean the water is. One of the projects we visited was a well. Something that seems very simple. But this one well has helped improve the lives of hundreds of families—simply by providing them with clean water that is closer to their homes so they can avoid a 2 km walk to get the water they need for drinking, cooking and cleaning. In areas without a well, students my age spend a lot of their time before and after school getting water (and in some cases, they don't have the time to go to school because the walk for water takes so long).

I think it is so important for students to realize that these issues are happening to people their age. While we can't all visit Africa, or meet with people to hear their stories, I think a great way to bring these stories to Canada is by looking

up YouTube videos about what is going on, and looking for stories to share about people our age. It's also important to let teens know that they can make a difference right now.

It was really rewarding for me to see the fact that a fun event we held in our school is changing lives, and meet with teens my age who are better off because of a difference I helped make. ■



Breakfast Clubs Serve up Food and Friendship in River East Transcona

By Wanda McConnell

Friday is always a good day for Jeremiah Stenson. It's when the 11-year-old gets to enjoy scrambled eggs at his school's breakfast club.

Jeremiah has been eating breakfast at Hampstead School in River East Transcona School Division ever since the club got off the ground in September 2007. He and about 40 other youngsters arrive at the school—located in a mixed neighbourhood of Manitoba Housing units and middle class homes—at least half an hour early three mornings a week to sit down to a nutritious breakfast in the company of friends.

Principal Andy Zarrillo says initially, of course, the attraction was the food. But it's become so much more than that for the students. Now, they come for the sense of community that has been created.

Take Jeremiah, for instance. When asked what he likes to eat at the club, it's scrambled eggs. But ask him what he likes best about the club, and his answer comes as a surprise. "I like helping. I come and help get things ready and then I collect the dirty dishes and bring them to the sink so they can have their special rinse before they go into the dishwasher. It feels good to help out."

Danny Zhupanic, who is only in Grade 3, has a similar answer. He likes it when pears are on the menu, but more than that, he likes the feeling he gets from being responsible for taking out the recycling and compost.

And both boys agree they like the friendships they have formed with their peers and the adults who run the club. "Greg is my 'bestest' friend," Jeremiah declares.

Greg is Greg Armstrong, the community outreach chaplain at Eastview Community Church in Winnipeg. He was instrumental in making the breakfast club happen at Hampstead. Little did he know the concept would catch on



like wildfire, spreading to seven more River East Transcona School Division (RETSD) schools within four years.

Armstrong's church already had a presence in the neighbourhood when Gerry Hector, who was principal at Hampstead in 2006-07, first suggested the idea of a breakfast club. Hector knew there was a pressing need in the community, where more than a few students came to school hungry. But he wanted the club to be open to everyone, so there would be no stigma attached to the students who joined.

Hector says the school, and churches like Eastview, had similar goals—to help the community. "And," he says, "we all had limited resources, but by pooling our resources, we knew we could do more."

And so, an idea began to take shape. What if the breakfast club were a joint venture between the school and local churches? What if the school provided the space and local churches provided nutritious food and the volunteers to purchase, prepare and serve it?

Hector says an initial concern was "the optics." This was not designed to be

a church outreach program. And what if the churches quit their involvement after a couple of years? Was this a plan that was sustainable?

Armstrong says he was never worried. Churches were looking for "intentional" ways to live out their faith. They could provide food to fill the stomach and friendship to fill the soul. It didn't have to come with a serving of religion.

"We were there to model our faith: to instill polite behaviour, provide good nutrition and to be friends."

Donna Wiltshire, RETSD's community programming co-ordinator/special projects, says it was "magical" the way it all began.

To ensure continuity in case one church dropped out, the school partnered with three churches. "I didn't think it would happen. But 15 or 20 people from three different churches showed up for a meeting. They all wanted to work together."

And so, in September 2007, the first breakfast club began, with electric griddles and frying pans set up in the family room at Hampstead School. Within the first

couple of days, they'd managed to blow the breakers and an entire wing of the school was without power.

"There were certainly growing pains," laughs Zarrillo, who came on board at Hampstead that fall. They sorted out the logistics and before long, the club

relocated to the stage area in the school, a spot that doubles as the lunch room.

In the four years the breakfast club has operated at Hampstead, it has become the "Cadillac club" in the division. It's fully equipped with a stove, fridge, dishwasher, microwave and storage cupboards. And the three churches that committed to supporting the club in 2007 are still there today.

In the meantime, seven more schools have started breakfast clubs and over 100 volunteers from 17 more churches have signed on to run them. As well, an important third partner has joined the program. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) became involved early on to provide the expertise of a community nutritionist who teaches best practices related to serving nutritious food and following safe food handling and sanitization procedures. As well, the schools benefit from the assistance of WRHA community facilitators who liaise with the schools and the faith community.

Cath McFarlane is the community facilitator in the River East area of the school division. She says there is a lot of interest among churches to become involved in the breakfast clubs that have

sprouted up. "They are telling me 'we want to help out in the community but we don't know how to do that. The breakfast club sounds like a great fit.'"

Working in co-operation with Armstrong, Wiltshire, and the community nutritionist, McFarlane provides orientation for the churches in the River East area, while her colleague Stacey Boone works with Transcona churches. They explain that each church must have a corps of about six volunteers willing to shop for the food, and take a turn coming to their partner school to prepare and serve breakfast at least one morning per week. While each of the eight breakfast clubs in RETSD operate slightly differently, most run Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the volunteers from the three different churches work side by side, making it a wonderful opportunity for ecumenical community service.

The churches must make a commitment of \$1,000 a year towards food costs. However, that cost is reduced to \$500 per year if the church chooses to apply for a matching grant from the Cropo Foundation.

"The Cropo Foundation says it will fund projects that bring faith



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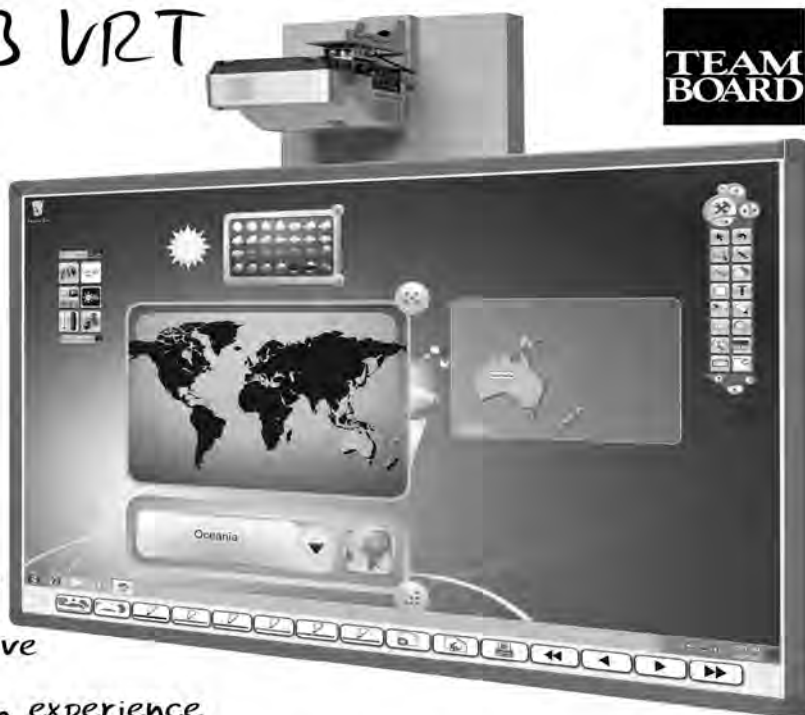
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communities together to serve the needs of the local community. The criteria fit the bill for our program perfectly," says Armstrong.

As well, the Cropo Foundation, Manitoba Child Nutrition Council, the Community Schools Partnership Initiative, and even some churches, have helped cover start-up costs at some of the schools. The money has helped to pay for fridges and dishwashers, small appliances and dishes, for example.

From the beginning, "we wanted to do things right," says Armstrong. That's why there is a very strong emphasis on

choosing the most nutritious foods from at least three of the four food groups. The Canada Food Guide and the Manitoba School Nutrition Handbook are resources used by the nutritionist to develop suggested food lists and menus for the clubs. Clubs serve a variety of hot and cold low-fat, low-sugar cereals, milk, juice, fresh fruit, toast and homemade muffins. Extras like scrambled eggs or pancakes can also be on the menu.

The packaging for the food product, such as the cereal box, is usually left in view so students can see exactly what they are eating. That way, they start

to recognize healthy food choices and can encourage their parents to buy those products when they go grocery shopping.

Armstrong says from time to time, the homemade goodies sent to the breakfast club by well-meaning church grannies have a sugar content that is too high. He has to remind them to go easy on the sweet stuff, he says, chuckling.

The volunteers are also very mindful of proper sanitation. Each group of volunteers is urged to have at least one person who has their food handler's certificate. They are well aware of the rules around

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the proper way to wash dishes, and the safe storage and handling of the food.

Just as important, if not more important, to the volunteers is the "handling" of the children. The relationships they have developed with them are what brings the greatest joy, says Shirley Penner, a volunteer from Eastview who used to pledge money to an international agency that helps children in need.

"Now my help can be hands-on. And the kids are so precious...there are always a couple that really touch your heart," says Penner.

The volunteers, most of whom are seniors, are often like surrogate grandparents, filling an intergenerational void in the lives of some of the students. The volunteers become stable, positive influences who also teach table manners and the social graces.

"There are a lot of kids who say 'please' and 'thank you' that didn't say it at the beginning," Penner says with a grin.

Ken Friesen enjoys chatting with the students as he pours milk for them. "You

need to sit down with these kids and hear what makes them tick. I just talked to a little girl. She doesn't like coming to school because she doesn't get good grades and she gets teased. I told her it was the same for me when I was a kid. She just needs to hang in there."

The food and the friendship have a positive effect on the students' school performance, says Jerry Sodomlak, principal at Donwood Elementary School, where a breakfast club was formed in February 2009. What he sees backs up studies about the relationship between proper nutrition and improved learning outcomes.

"It's observable," he says. Students in the club don't miss as much school and they get to school on time. Because they aren't thinking about being hungry, their attention span increases and their behaviour improves. It means teachers can spend more time teaching and less time managing disruptive behaviour.

The benefits have extended to the families, as well, he says. "We don't see

this as taking away the role of the parents, but rather, supporting them."

Sodomlak says the club takes the financial burden off parents to provide breakfast three days a week. For working parents who have to hurry out the door early in the morning, it's reassuring to know their children just need to dress and get to school, where a good breakfast is waiting. And for parents who struggle to get their kids to want to come to school, the breakfast club is a powerful magnet.

The breakfast clubs are a welcome addition and a huge benefit to the division, says Sodomlak. The churches want to reach out to the community. The parents appreciate the support. The students cherish the friendships they make with each other and the volunteers, and the teachers like how it affects their classrooms, says Sodomlak.

"It's a win-win for everybody." ■

Wanda McConnell is the Senior Communications Coordinator for the River East Transcona School Division.

Student-created Charity Distributes 450+ Shoes to Street Children

By Shea Kosokowsky, Vincent Massey Collegiate

I had had the opportunity to travel to many different countries and was profoundly affected by the poverty I saw. I was particularly saddened when travelling in India. I witnessed many children, running through the streets with no shoes. I could see them stepping on glass, rocks and stones, and worried about the sores and resulting infection these children were dealing with.

I felt strongly I wanted to do something proactive to help children in impoverished countries. Another key objective was to find a way to bring the concept of charitable giving and caring to friends and peers who hadn't had the chance to witness poverty first-hand. While students were often approached for donations, and many would donate willingly, they weren't always getting the "connection. Gradually the idea for Fuze thru Shoes was born.

Students from Whyte Ridge Elementary, Henry G. Izatt and Vincent Massey were encouraged to donate a pair of their own gently used shoes. They were photographed with their shoes. Eventually teachers and students from other schools (Carberry Collegiate and River West Park School) heard about the project and many pairs of shoes were added to the collection.

Thanks to the exceptional generosity of McNaught Cadillac

in Winnipeg, friends Zak Johnson, Ezi Szajt and I travelled to Trujillo, Peru to distribute many of the shoes through an organization called Bruce Peru which helps children in extreme poverty begin to learn to read and write.

In August, 2011, I travelled with three other friends, Mikey Tucker, Daniel Davidson and Derek Stefaniuk, to Santiago, Dominican Republic, to deliver more shoes through Accion-Callejera, an organization that works with street children and others in poverty. In all, over 450 pairs of shoes were delivered to children in need.

I hope to continue the good work of Fuze thru Shoes thanks to an ongoing commitment from McNaught Cadillac and the enthusiasm and generosity of others. ■

BELOW: Recipient of shoes holds photo of donor from Fuze thru Shoes



Congratulations!



On September 14, 2011, Coralie Bryant was presented with the Education Alumni Association (EAA) Dean J.M. Brown Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teacher Education.

EAA president Diane Drawbridge and the award selection committee were struck by Bryant's dedication to a life of learning and educational leadership. "The EAA selected Bryant for this award as a result of her career-long commitment to the professional growth of educators and education administrators in Manitoba. Bryant has been a teacher, principal, program consultant, instructor, adjunct professor, assistant superintendent, and is currently the Executive Director of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS). In each role, she has been instrumental in providing professional development (PD) and mentorship opportunities. In addition, Bryant has also helped to conceptualize and make possible relevant conferences for all educators including the recent Social Justice Conference."

Bryant expressed thanks for giving her cause to reflect on her career and to notice that the work she has completed in Manitoba over the past 48 years. She said, "It was in Manitoba that I had the critical and creative freedom to fully engage me in this profession, and it was the people like Fred Taylor, Jan Schubert, Strini Reddy, John Wiens, Patrick Dias at McGill and Jon Young, all of whom I've worked with closely, and who mentored me whether they knew it or not, and created space for me to work as I wanted to work—with teachers in classrooms, in the professional development of teachers, principals, and superintendents, in research, and in helping to support the growth of communities of learning."



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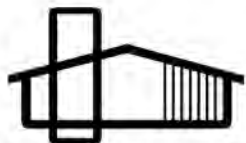
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For more information, please contact info@merlin.mb.ca or visit www.merlin.mb.ca



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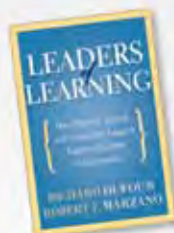
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