



MASS Journal

Spring 2020

The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents



Building Instructional Leadership Capacity

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When the *MASS Advocacy Committee* selected the theme for this issue, there was still snow on the ground. With all that has occurred over the past few months, this seems like a lifetime ago. The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) would like to applaud the entire education sector in Manitoba and across Canada for the leadership and diligent work that has been done since COVID-19 changed everything we were familiar with in our effort to connect with students, their families, and our communities. The problem solving and visioning that everyone has and is currently engaged in is providing support to our students and their families. We also appreciate and value our partnerships with Manitoba Education, the Manitoba School Board Association, Manitoba Association of School Business Officials, Manitoba Teachers Society, and the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of the *Journal*. Its theme, Building Instructional Leadership Capacity, will always be a topic of importance. Perhaps now, even more than before. Thank you to the authors who took the time to contribute. I look forward to connecting with all of you in person, when we're able. Until then, stay healthy and stay safe.

Barb Isaak, Executive Director



We know that building capacity for learning will help to ensure our schools are increasingly innovative, progressive, and responsive to the needs of our students.

As Minister of Education, I am pleased to bring greetings to the members of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS). I applaud MASS for selecting the theme, “Building Capacity for Learning,” inviting educators to share important insights that are certain to strengthen our mutual efforts to provide a high-quality education for all Manitobans.

We know that building capacity for learning will help to ensure our schools are increasingly innovative, progressive, and responsive to the needs of our students. We also know that in order to increase student achievement across the province, we must continue to engage in practices that support the growth and development of our teachers. The training and use of instructional leaders is one way that school divisions are helping teachers to become more effective practitioners, thus building their capacity for success.

Teachers and other school personnel play vital roles in helping our students develop their individual skills and abilities and foster a love for learning. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize MASS for its support in this area and for its continued contribution to educational excellence.

Honourable Kelvin Goertzen
Manitoba Minister of Education

Nous savons que le développement de la capacité d'apprentissage permettra de rendre nos écoles de plus en plus innovatrices, progressistes et adaptées aux besoins de nos élèves.

À titre de ministre de l'Éducation, je suis heureux de présenter mes salutations aux membres de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS). Je félicite la MASS d'avoir choisi comme thème « le développement de la capacité d'apprentissage » et de donner ainsi l'occasion aux éducateurs de faire des observations importantes qui certainement renforceront les efforts mutuels que nous déployons pour offrir à tous les Manitobains une éducation de grande qualité.

Nous savons que le développement de la capacité d'apprentissage permettra de rendre nos écoles de plus en plus innovatrices, progressistes et adaptées aux besoins de nos élèves. Nous savons également qu'afin d'améliorer la réussite scolaire à l'échelle de la province, nous devons continuer d'adopter des pratiques qui favorisent le progrès et le développement de nos enseignants. La formation et la mise à contribution des leaders pédagogiques est une façon pour les divisions scolaires d'aider les enseignants à devenir des praticiens plus efficaces, en développant, ce faisant, leur capacité d'obtenir de bons résultats.

Les enseignants et les autres membres du personnel scolaire jouent un rôle central en aidant nos élèves à développer leurs compétences et leurs capacités individuelles et suscitent le goût d'apprendre. Je voudrais saisir cette occasion pour remercier la MASS de son appui dans ce domaine et de sa contribution soutenue à l'excellence en éducation.

Kelvin Goertzen
Le ministre de l'Éducation

Our focus, year to year, should be on persevering with the strategies that we know are effective for student success and achievement and fine-tuning them to the specific needs of our learners, while also identifying and removing strategies that have been less successful over the long term.



Année après année, nos efforts devraient être axés sur la continuation des stratégies que nous savons efficaces pour assurer la réussite scolaire et sur le perfectionnement de ces stratégies en fonction des besoins particuliers de nos apprenants, tout en repérant et en éliminant les stratégies qui se sont avérées moins fructueuses à long terme.

As we continue with the theme of instructional leadership in this issue of the *MASS Journal*, I'm pleased to share some thoughts with you on this key topic in education.

Moving from a school into the role of a system leader is not for the faint of heart. Most educators, in their initial studying at the university level, do not envision themselves leading an organization with dozens of schools and hundreds, if not thousands, of employees. Their own education and training are focused on being in the classroom and working directly with children, or possibly as a leader in a school.

Being an excellent educator is unquestionably an important skill for system leaders. Other key skills include the ability to receive and understand data in such a way that we can identify effective strategies to support staff and implement appropriate programming for students. As system leaders, our role is to know what needs to be done because we are knowledgeable about the research, such as collective efficacy, spirals of inquiry, and brain development studies.

Our focus, year to year, should be on persevering with the strategies that we know are effective for student success and achievement and fine-tuning them to the specific needs of our learners, while also identifying and removing strategies that have been less successful over the long term. We cannot subscribe to the "flavour of the month" mentality and then expect to see continuous and evidence-based improvement.

The articles in this issue of the *MASS Journal* provide greater understanding and depth about how we can build capacity in instructional leadership within our own system leadership teams and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents' role in supporting the learning of system leaders.

Pauline Clarke
President of MASS
Chief Superintendent/CEO, Winnipeg School Division

Toujours sous le thème du leadership pédagogique dans ce numéro de *MASS Journal*, je suis ravie de partager avec vous quelques réflexions sur aspect important de l'éducation.

La transition de l'école à un rôle de dirigeant de système n'est pas une mince affaire. La plupart des pédagogues, au début de leurs études universitaires, ne s'imaginent pas à la tête d'une organisation composée de douzaines d'écoles et de centaines, voire de milliers, d'employés. Leurs propres études et leur propre formation sont axées sur l'enseignement en classe et le travail direct avec des enfants, ou peut-être à titre de dirigeants d'une école.

Il va sans dire qu'il est important pour les dirigeants de système d'être d'excellents pédagogues. Parmi les autres compétences essentielles, mentionnons la capacité de recevoir et de comprendre des données de manière à trouver des stratégies efficaces pour appuyer le personnel et mettre en place des programmes appropriés pour les élèves. En tant que dirigeants de système, notre rôle est de savoir ce qui doit être fait, parce que nous connaissons les concepts de recherche, comme l'efficacité collective, les spirales d'interrogation et les études sur le développement du cerveau.

Année après année, nos efforts devraient être axés sur la continuation des stratégies que nous savons efficaces pour assurer la réussite scolaire et sur le perfectionnement de ces stratégies en fonction des besoins particuliers de nos apprenants, tout en repérant et en éliminant les stratégies qui se sont avérées moins fructueuses à long terme. Nous ne pouvons pas adhérer à la mentalité de la « saveur du mois » et nous attendre à voir une amélioration constante et fondée sur la preuve.

Les articles dans ce numéro de *MASS Journal* aident à comprendre à fond comment nous pouvons renforcer la capacité de leadership pédagogique au sein de nos propres équipes de direction du système, ainsi que le rôle de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents pour appuyer l'apprentissage des dirigeants du système.

Pauline Clarke
Présidente de MASS
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Mission:

MASS provides leadership for public education by advocating in the best interests of learners and supports its members through professional services.

MASS believes that our mandate is to be leaders of learning, in our local school systems and in the broader domains of provincial, national, and global public education. MASS believes a quality education empowers the whole child to constructively participate in global society.

We model learning that is:

- Active and visible;
- Based on robust research;
- Tested through purposeful application in the field; and
- Evaluated using a wide range of meaningful data.

We take responsibility for our own continuous learning and the learning of everyone we lead:

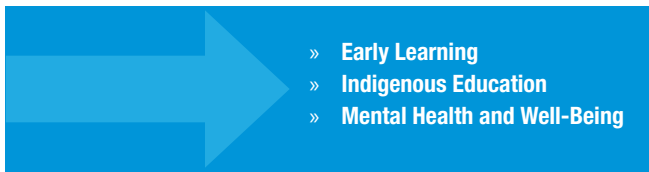
- Creating and fostering safe, supportive, inclusive, and challenging environments;
- Ensuring essential learning for each and every child; and
- Preparing others to go beyond our own learning.

We are guided by our learning in shaping policy and practice to achieve what is best for the children in our care.

MASS believes that improved achievement and well-being for all of our students requires a shared commitment to raising both equity and quality.

- A conscious and persistent commitment to equity, system-wide and across sectors, leads to poverty reduction, greater inclusion, and an appreciation for the riches that diversity brings.
- A purposeful and sustained commitment to quality education for every student increases the capacity for teaching, learning and leading throughout the system.
- A strong grounding in literacy and numeracy and a rich learning experience involving inquiry, curiosity, creativity and artistic expression enables all students to achieve success and to flourish in life, academics, and career.
- A respect for and openness to authentic youth voices and support for meaningful student action are critical for building capacity and self-efficacy in our students.

MASS actively works towards equity and quality throughout the public education system, with a special focus on three action areas:

- 
- » Early Learning
 - » Indigenous Education
 - » Mental Health and Well-Being



The **Early Learning Committee** will take leadership to ensure that MASS:

- Advocates for full implementation of the Calls to Action in the MASS position paper on Early Childhood Education.
- Participates actively on the Provincial Educaring Committee.

The **Indigenous Education Committee** will take leadership to ensure that MASS:

- Builds capacity in MASS and school divisions to address the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- Promotes ever increasing academic achievement, graduation, school completion, and positive life outcomes for Indigenous students, informed by collective inquiry into evidence.
- Actively supports the teaching of Indigenous perspectives, corrective history and culture and the use of Indigenous languages.

The **Mental Health and Well-Being Committee** will take leadership to ensure that MASS:

- Advocates for an implementation of a comprehensive provincial Children and Youth Mental Health Strategy.
- Collaborates with The Education for Sustainable Well-Being Research Group at the University of Manitoba and Manitoba Education and Training to develop tools and indicators for assessing the well-being and well-becoming of students in schools.
- Pursues inter-sectoral liaisons with public and mental health organizations and agencies.
- Contributes to a national voice on mental health through CASSA and through input into the Canadian Mental Health Strategy.
- Promotes Mental Health Literacy in mental health for all educators and pre-service educators.
- Renewing MASS Mental Health position paper and calls to action.

Leaders are Learners: MASS Supports Superintendents' Learning



By Leanne M. Peters, Sunrise School Division

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) is an organization of leaders and learners. Over the last eight years, the MASS Professional Learning Committee has consciously and deliberately focused superintendents' learning to enable leaders to ably and capably lead the school systems of the future.

Dr. Andy Hargreaves expounded on the need to develop professional capital to ensure that school systems continued to improve outcomes for all learners. "Capital relates to one's own or group worth, particularly concerning assets that can be leveraged to accomplish desired goals" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. 1). Hargreaves and Fullan discuss what it means to teach like a pro. This includes continuously inquiring into and improving one's own teaching practice, planning, and improving not in isolation but as a part of a team of learners, and contributing to the larger teaching profession.

Hargreaves shared that school systems not only need to focus on leading the work in isolation but in creating systems that have professional and social

capital to carry on the work in between sessions. High performing systems allow people to be supported at the school and classroom levels in between professional learning opportunities. Systems with high social capital have structures in place where teachers are supported with implementation, have an opportunity to ask questions, and receive feedback as they consider how to implement within their own specific context.

At a past MASS event, Pasi Sahlberg, noted Finnish author, policy maker, and thought leader, led superintendents to deepen their thinking about education systems that are both high quality and equitable. Sahlberg noted that, "The Finnish Way" is focused on collaboration, personalization, trust-based responsibility, and equity which leads to public good. The was compared to the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM), which zeroed in on competition, standardization, test-based accountability, and choice leading to privatization.

Much of the success of Finland's education system came down to this: "Because Finnish educators and policy-makers believe schools can change the course of children's lives, these schools

must address the health, nutrition, well-being, and happiness of all children in a systematic and equitable manner" (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 28). Sahlberg left superintendents with five Finnish lessons for Manitoba:

1. Strengthen teacher professionalism and leadership;
2. Make equity a concrete aspect of policy agenda;
3. Enhance lateral collaboration and learning;
4. Invest in empowerment; and
5. Sharpen the shared vision (Sahlberg, 2013).

These challenges continue to inform superintendents' conversations and practices as we think about educating all of Manitoba's children. The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents' submission to the Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education (2019) highlights the ongoing desire to focus on teaching and learning for all students and supporting an equitable, democratic platform for all through education.

In 2014, MASS began its longstanding and ongoing relationship with Dr. Simon Breakspear. Breakspear (2014) kicked off the MASS Summer Institute by saying, "Our challenge is to both incrementally improve and to radically redesign learning at the same time...." He led superintendents through sessions designed to help us consider the global nature of education and how to lead school systems that provide thoughtful, carefully curated learning experiences for each child in our care with a specific emphasis on leading for equity. Breakspear continued to encourage superintendents to lead in ways that honour risk-taking, learn from failure, and increasing the quality of teacher practice across systems.

The following summer brought Dr. Öslem Sensoy to Manitoba from the University of British Columbia (UBC). Dr. Sensoy continued with the theme

of equity and quality by having participants consider how society comes to understand concepts such as gender. She posed the following questions to superintendents: “Is Elmo a boy or a girl? How about Cookie Monster and Big Bird?” This generated lively table discussion as we considered how early children become attuned to gender differences. Superintendents were challenged to consider their positionality in the world in terms of race, gender, socio-economic status, positions of power, and privilege. How does that positionality impact decisions and leadership of school systems?

Dr. Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn journeyed to Manitoba from Ontario in 2016 to talk about creating a cohesive system that supports teachers and students. They presented the Coherence Framework from their book *Coherence*, which includes four dimensions: Focusing Directions; Cultivating Collaborative Cultures; Deepening Learning; and Securing Accountability (Fullan and Quinn, 2016). Superintendents unpacked this framework and in collaboration with their colleagues, considered ways to use this framework in local contexts to enhance student learning outcomes. They provided ample opportunities for school divisions to explore and think about how to continue to build high quality, equitable systems.

The following summer brought Dr. Simon Breakspear back to Manitoba in a deliberate effort to support superintendents to go deeper with their thinking and move to action. Breakspear challenged superintendents to consider the agility of school systems and how the people in systems respond to making improvements in teaching and learning, which are not linear processes that are removed from the human element. As stated by Linda Darling-Hammond et. al. (2009), “Overall, the kind of high-intensity, job-embedded collaborative learning that is most effective is not a common feature of professional development across most states, districts, and schools in the United States.” This sentiment could also extend to a Canadian, and, more specifically, a Manitoba context.

Superintendents were introduced to the concept of Teaching Sprints – using short, iterative cycles to maximize impact

and focus on teachers’ expertise. By framing it as “Small is the new big,” Breakspear (2017) encouraged participants to explore solutions in context and once “incubated” follow up by “amplifying” the solutions that work and embedding those into practice. Then the process continues with a small, new piece of pedagogy in which teachers will enhance their expertise. This notion of Teaching Sprints resonated with superintendents and formed the foundation for a longer-term partnership with Breakspear which continues as MASS engages in ongoing work to support leaders in developing systems where teachers, principals, and superintendents can focus on their own expertise.

Focusing on the Canadian context and Canadian research, Dr. Steven Katz, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, came to Manitoba during the next two summers. Katz took superintendents on a journey to interrupt humans’ propensity to follow a path of least resistance. Introducing a “Learning Conversations Protocol,” Katz showed leaders how disrupting natural thinking and response patterns could lead to deeper and more meaningful conversations around a problem of practice and open up the possibility of leading to innovative solutions.

Katz (2019) also focused on the topic of the superintendent visit to schools which, in his words, is sometimes a “Swiss army knife” with no real impact. He challenged superintendents to consider the impact of their visits and suggested that, “Structure, i.e. the actual visit, sometimes precedes function or the purpose of the visit. Sharing stories of work done with District Leaders in Ontario, Katz challenged Manitoba’s superintendents to consider their next learning moves in relation to their own problem of practice. In other words, what is it that superintendents need to learn next?

If there are two threads that run through superintendents’ learning through recent summer institutes, they are an ongoing focus on equity for all children in Manitoba and a development of the ongoing work to create and sustain quality, high performing school systems across the province. Each presenter has focused on equity for all learners and left

challenges for superintendents to continue to grow and learn as chief educational leaders in Manitoba. As an organization, MASS continues to invest in professional learning for its members and recognizes that it is through ongoing, sustained learning that change happens. ■

Leanne M. Peters, EdD, is the Assistant Superintendent, Learning and Instruction Development at Sunrise School Division. She can be reached at lpeters@sunrisesd.ca or you can follow her on Twitter @leanne_petersl.

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Recalculating Route:

Building Alignment and Capacity Towards a Shared Vision

“When something works, it’s because it’s a vision that the students find engaging and challenging and have a voice in; the teacher deeply believes in it; and the principal and superintendent support it.”

— Dintersmith, 2019

By Kelly Barkman, Karen Boyd, Jason Drysdale, Tammy Mitchell, and Mark Bruce, River East Transcona School Division

We all have been on road trips where we carefully have entered our destination into our GPS and reviewed the route. Once we start driving, the common refrain of “recalculating route” is heard as the system adjusts for roadblocks, detours, or congestion. We respond to these changes, confident that we will still arrive at our required destination one way or another.

As the Senior Administration Team (SAT) of the River East Transcona School Division, our journey to build alignment and capacity towards a shared vision has felt similar. Influenced by professional learning with Hattie, Katz, Donahoo, and Breakspear, we have worked to ensure that our vision – our destination – is clear, articulated, and shared. Most recently, we have created new structures that allow both for our system to move towards that shared vision but also to recalculate the route so that we are responding to everyone’s voice and input on the direction towards the destination. This article shares our journey to this point.

The Hechinger Report (2011) notes that, “... while school leadership is essential, consistent, strong leadership at the

district level must not be overlooked. While principals create conditions that encourage great teaching, superintendents can create conditions that allow principals to become even better leaders.”

Our senior administration team includes six members with very different portfolios: superintendent/CEO, secretary treasurer, and four assistant superintendents. In the past, the assistant superintendents worked mostly within their own portfolios without systematically connecting with each other’s work on a deeper level. From an efficiency lens, this model works well. Each of us had control of our areas and could make decisions when and as needed.

Sometimes, these decisions aligned and at other times, the field wondered about our consistency. Often, the field would sense some misalignment before we would as they were engaged with each of us. We knew that we could not make every decision collaboratively, neither time nor expertise suggested this was a model that would work. However, without a clear understanding of our destination, making any decisions was inefficient. We needed a new structure that encouraged this type of connection and collaboration; an interchange that allowed ideas to flow. This new structure, established

by the superintendent, called the Learning Council, had the mandate to ensure that the education priorities of the division are implemented and monitored by:

- Providing the overall leadership toward improved student learning and the development of inspired, skilled, responsible citizens.
- Providing the educational direction toward excellent programs and services that meet the needs of our students within the parameters of our funding.
- Ensuring that alignment and efficiencies across all departments under the purview of the Learning Council members are considered and enacted.

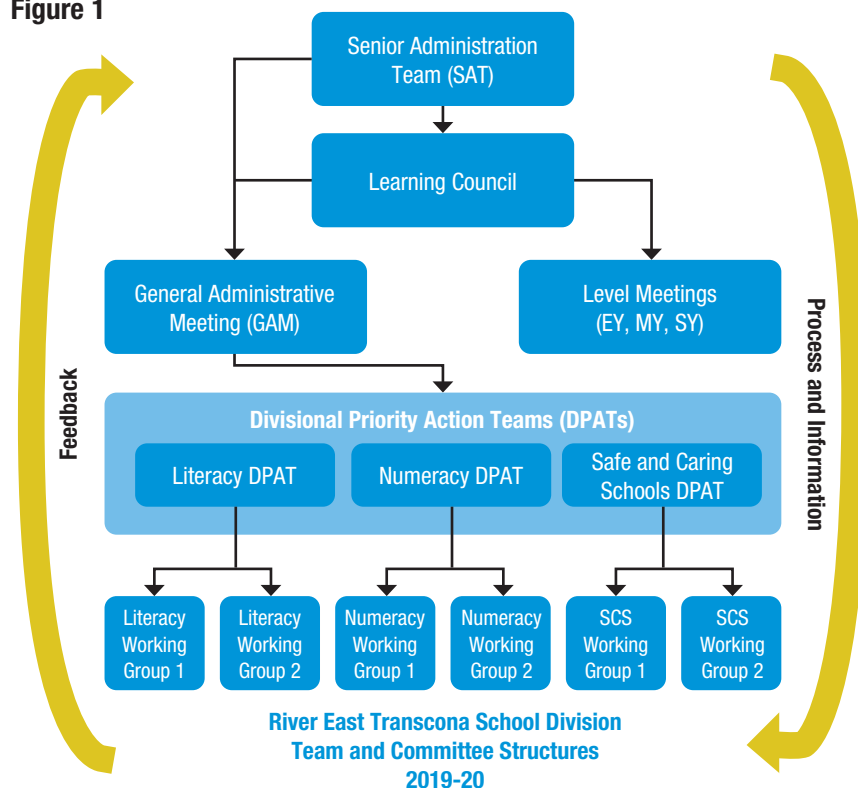
The Learning Council met weekly and was guided by an external critical friend. We tried to keep these meetings at a high level with a focus on our mandate. Keeping this focus and staying on route was easier said than done. While we knew how important it was for the educational leaders of the division to talk about education, it was so tempting to discuss issues, hot spots, and managerial concerns. Just breaking the habit of devolving to those types of conversations took several months of meetings.

In addition, we also had to establish a framework for decision making. Our first roadblock came when we assumed that we were all “on the same page” about the central work of teaching and learning. While we were close, the need to be clear and explicit, surfaced tensions. Through facilitated and strategic meetings, assigned readings, and open and honest conversations we were able to develop our *Learning Principles*. These principles formed the framework for the decision making that we did together or alone. Our common understanding is that our actions are grounded in these beliefs:

- Everyone has a right to be in appropriate and rich learning environments;
- A positive mindset and beliefs are critical for learning;
- There is strength in the diversity of knowledge and perspective;
- All students come to us as competent young human beings; and
- Learning is a collaborative social activity.

Although our destination was becoming clear to us, it needed to be shared with

Figure 1



a system that could begin to move in that direction in a consistent way. Donohoo (2018) speaks to the importance of this collective understanding, saying, “Team members’ confidence in each other’s abilities and their belief in the impact of the team’s work are key elements that set successful [school] teams apart.” While the Learning Council was committed to the vision and the guiding principles, the system needed to be equally committed.

Once the Learning Council was committed to the vision and the guiding principles of our work, we needed to consider how this structure would move to our system. Our 42 school communities are complex and diverse. There is increased pressure to identify flexible, creative solutions to the various aspects of emerging literacy, numeracy, and social emotional challenges for all of our students.

To move forward, we needed to strengthen the relationships between school leadership and senior administration to ensure that all leaders saw themselves as change agents in our division. We needed our educational leaders to see the whole system and to understand the patterns operating within the system. We knew that for

this process to be authentic, we had to ask questions instead of supplying answers, and acknowledge that we really didn’t have the answers.

As Hargreaves (2018) reminds us, “Leading from the middle is not, in this sense, just about incremental adjustments among levels, developing more coherent systems, or improving performance in the abstract. It is about supporting those who are closest to the practice of teaching, learning, and well-being.” Our guiding principles essentially functioned as the roadmap to support those people closer to the work on the path to our destination. We also began to map out the other structures that were needed to strengthen the school leadership and senior administration alignment (Figure 1).

- **Senior Administration Team:** Superintendent, secretary treasurer, assistant superintendents meet weekly to ensure that the strategic priorities of the division are implemented and monitored.
- **Learning Council:** Assistant superintendents, overseen by the superintendent, meet weekly to ensure that the education priorities of the division have overall

leadership, educational direction, and alignment.

- **General Administrators Meetings:** All principals, vice principals, consultants, directors, and managers meet bi-monthly to engage in professional dialogue, action team meetings, and educational research.
- **Level Meetings:** Divided by early, middle, and senior administrators, and connected consultants and supports, who meet monthly for professional learning specific to the level, discussion, and business updates.
- **Divisional Priority Action Teams:** All members who attend general administrative meetings have chosen to sit on one action team that is aligned with one of our priorities. These teams specialize in the priority area and represent the action team on sub-committees tasked with doing divisional work.
- **Working Groups:** Divisional work is taken up in these working groups that have representation from all the action teams. Working groups are established with clear mandates and

defined timelines share completed work with the Learning Council.

This map reflects our commitment to increased voice, alignment to our priorities, and shared responsibility for divisional work. It also highlights the focus on professional learning within each structure. This is our plan to develop a process, not a checklist, and through that process create a new culture and new ways of thinking with our educational leaders where our educational priorities are at the forefront, and common beliefs direct our decision making.

Trusting the voice in your car when it says "recalculating route"

takes a bit of faith. These structures encourage us to have faith in the routes that our educational leaders will take in order to get to our shared destination. We are learning that just a focus on reaching the destination can limit the unforeseen but amazing ways to get there. ■

Kelly Barkman is Superintendent/CEO of the River East Transcona School Division (RETSD). Karen Boyd, Jason Drysdale, Tammy Mitchell, and Mark Bruce are all Assistant Superintendents in the RETSD.

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Learning Growth Teams and the Use of Data Walls to Guide Improvement

By Michael Borgfjord, Seine River School Division

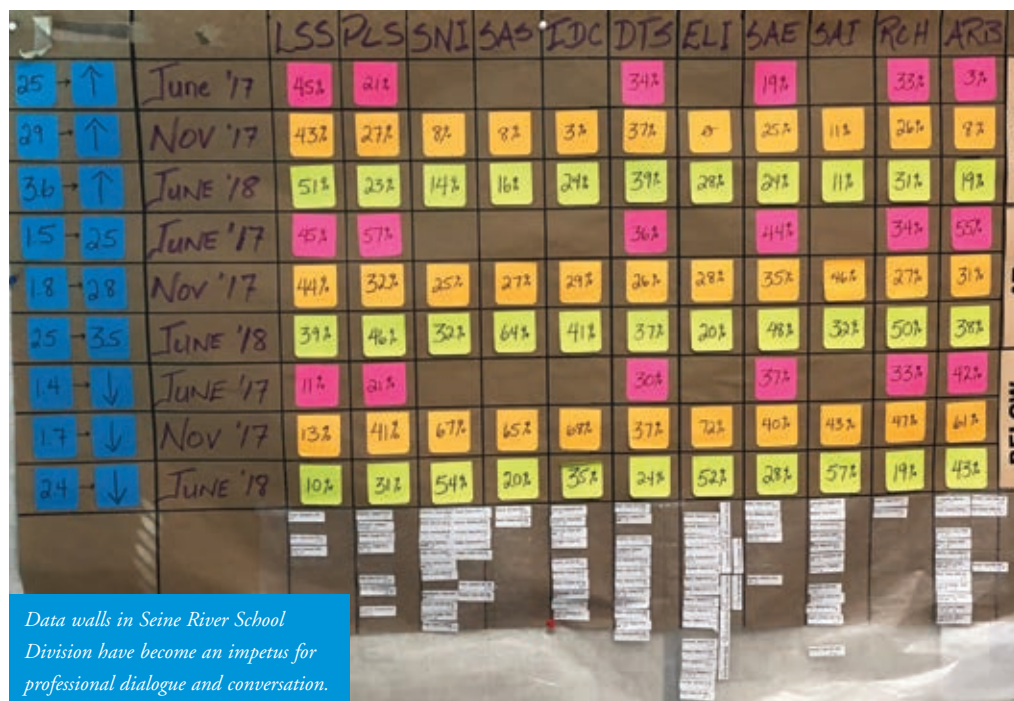
School systems are inundated with data, evidence, and information that can be used to create a strong picture of strengths, opportunities, challenges, and areas of surprise and wonder. Seldom is this large amount of information concisely used in a manner which guides deep reflection, deliberation, and as a means to build a culture of inquiry. Seine River School Division is a largely rural school division with 15 schools and approximately 4,500 students in south eastern Manitoba that has embarked on a journey to utilize various data sets to stimulate professional inquiry, build collaborative networks, and to reinforce a system of continuous improvement.

We believe that effective analysis of data can steer teams to a more focused approach to learning challenges and opportunities. We are striving to create a non-judgmental environment where staff feel safe to take risks and openly discuss challenges. “If you never have that vulnerable moment, on the other hand, then people will try to cover up their weaknesses and every microtask becomes a place where insecurities manifest themselves” (Coyle, 2018).

This is why it has been imperative for leadership to inspire trust, and be humble, non-judgmental, and demonstrate a strong vulnerability towards the learning process. “The lack of opportunities for honest dialogue and creative give-and-take lies at the root of today’s dysfunction” (Muller, 2018). This has been the basis of our work with our school leaders and staff as we build a strong learning organization that centers on relationships, shared goals, and shared accomplishments.

Where did we begin?

In 2010-11 our division used individual student reading data, from Fountas and Pinnell, report cards, and



numeracy data sets to identify learning moves for teachers, school teams, and the division. School leaders were provided with grade reading profiles and were able to identify patterns of growth over time using the information to develop literacy/numeracy plans. Prior to our use of data walls, anecdotal comments from schools, teacher reflections on different strategies used, and the list of professional development opportunities for teachers were the primary tools for system evaluation.

In time, we recognized that the mere collection of data alone was not a driver of system improvement. We asked ourselves: How can we use data to be the focal point of teacher inquiry, professional collaboration, innovation, and system improvement? Simply put, rudimentary use of data sets supported confirmation of personal biases in practice and planning.

In the fall of 2015, educational expert Dr. Lyn Sharratt facilitated our school leadership teams to develop a

clearly articulated plan of data utilization as a means of inquiry and growth. We understood that data was being utilized to identify gaps in learning, monitor impact of programming over time, and to create a catalyst for professional learning identifying targeted professional teaching practices that supported student learning. It was also challenging for school teams to dig deep into specific focus areas and develop strong theories of action based upon careful analysis of student evidence. Too often, focal points were broad, hard to identify, and the evaluation of impact of practices was too difficult to determine. Reflection of improvement focused more on how students responded to learning strategies rather than the specific learning improvement that occurred. School leaders needed opportunities to use data in a concise manner to co-identify their next learning moves.

At our leadership retreat, Dr. Sharratt divided school leaders into 10 teams and



Data walls like this help teams identify and articulate learning patterns that are occurring in their schools.

provided each with the same data sets from three different grade levels. Teams were asked to create a data wall that represented each and every student's literacy achievement. Through this process, teams identified the following key elements of an effective data wall that captured every student by:

- Grade level;
- Literacy growth;
- Gender;
- EAL (English as an Additional Language);
- Students with IEPs (Individualized Learning Plans);
- Students from different groups;
- Indigenous students; and
- Must reflect the school learning needs.

The educational discourse from this process provided leaders with the key ingredients to co-construct their own data walls with their respective school staffs. One thing we learned is that this process needed to “put faces” on the data to ensure that we know which students were stuck and not moving, who were below level, or who were accelerating at rates faster than others.

Our teams and our teachers needed to be curious about the learning of all their students and the skills needed to examine the conditions that caused these occurrences. We wanted them to ask questions building off the strengths of individual students, which allowed them to examine their own practices in a safe and supportive environment. Teams needed to be able to identify and articulate learning patterns that were

occurring in their schools. We wanted to provide structures for our principals to be knowledgeable about high-impact practices and to be the lead learners modelling continuous learning, curiosity, and the use collaborative inquiry to improve. The data wall needed to be a place where everyone could see the challenges, develop plans, and be a specific place for staff to celebrate accomplishments.

Where did we go from here?

Data walls are not new; many schools have utilized various forms of data methods to create learning plans. For us, we wanted it to become a central part of our learning culture that had meaning for every staff member. “Every school leader and every classroom teacher must be able to define the data that represent their students’ growth and achievement in multiple ways” (Sharratt, 2016). Our purpose was to create spaces where leaders and teachers could efficiently dialogue about learning moves that mattered and become a central component of the learning culture.

The senior leadership team also developed and constructed three data walls at the division office to identify literacy levels of all the students in Grades 2, 5, and 8. This allowed the senior team to see divisional trends and made us aware of the individual students in each school who needed more attention. It allowed us to ask questions about specific students when we visited schools as we divisionally “put faces” on the data modelling that we too were interested and curious about. Dialogue with school teams at their data wall provided us with more efficient learning walks and talks, and impacted resource allocation to individual schools.

Deep collaboration

The data walls have become an impetus for professional dialogue and conversation both in the schools and within the division. Professional learning teams start their meetings at the data wall and track student growth, identify areas of curiosity, and develop learning plans. This process continues to evolve as staff co-construct what is meaningful for them and as they ask more questions, this solidifies their learning and sense of inquiry. School teams are

making stronger connections between the reciprocity of writing and reading and the impact on critical thinking.

They notice patterns and identify characteristics of students needing intervention and target their next learning moves based on evidence. Teams are going beyond mere data scores and are digging deeper into learning behaviours, needs, and strengths of individual students. It is assisting schools in re-writing their learning story and allowing all teachers to own all of the students in their schools.

School leaders have been provided opportunities to model and develop their skills in:

- 1. Case management meetings:** A systemic, scheduled forum to discuss and debate internal intervention. Teachers or teams identify a student from the data wall and identify student interests, strengths, identifications, observations, and other important learning information. Through a short learning team meeting student work samples are discussed using a learning conversation protocol and a short-term learning plan is developed and subsequent instruction impact is followed up upon.
 - 2. Learning walks and talks:** School leaders have been provided opportunities to conduct systematic learning walks and talks. These are non-evaluative approaches to knowing what is happening in every classroom in each school. They start at the data wall with conversations about school plans and areas of strength and challenge. They are meant to be “growth promoting and collaborative” and give us insights into what students and teachers are learning.
 - 3. Learning fair:** Our division hosted our second annual learning fair where every school presented their year-long action research project based upon data and inquiry. Learning teams are learning from each other and the focus and precision is getting stronger.
- As a senior leader it is quite humbling to visit a school and to have a focused conversation with a school leader on the learning moves that are occurring in their school. We still have a lot of work to do to continue to foster a learning culture that allows leadership to expand and challenging

learning goals to become more focused. The data wall has become an accelerator of focus and precision and has created larger networks within and between schools.

Teachers are talking the same language and see themselves as part of the bigger picture. It has allowed leaders to become more open with their non-evaluative challenges to thinking and practice, and has created a greater connection to central office. School teams have indicated that they know all of their students better and feel a greater sense of urgency. Ironically, while the work gets harder and the conversations more difficult there is an overwhelming satisfaction from markedly seeing growth and successes that were hard earned. The data helps chart an improvement story with the greatest connection being every staff member working towards improvement for all students. ■

Michael Borgford is Superintendent of the Seine River School Division.

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Designing Learning...

A Collaborative Journey for Building Capacity

The journey is the reward. – Tao Expression

By Jamie Hutchison, Grant Park High School, and Julie Smerchanski, Winnipeg School Division

Winnipeg School Division (WSD) has committed to the teaching and learning of mathematics as a key priority for many years and recent professional learning experiences have embodied the expression found above. Our journey began with a question: “How do we move mathematics learning to conceptual understanding, rigorous reasoning and genuine problem solving?”

The simple fact was that our students were not performing well

in mathematics, according to teacher feedback, local and global measures. This data served as the impetus behind our need to do something different. Looking for solutions to this problem was, and still is, a challenge, especially when considering bringing understanding, conceptualization and thinking to scale.

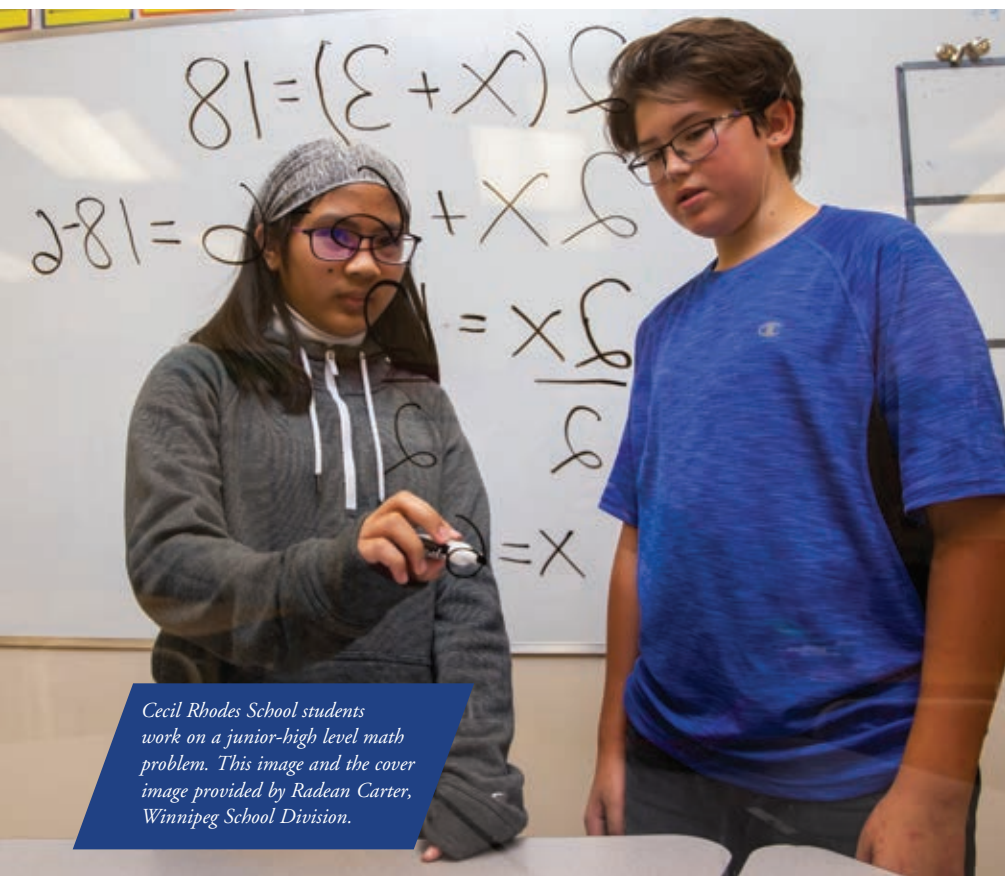
We began with division leadership teams entering into an inquiry focused on why we were not observing sustained impact and improvement for our students. Beliefs about mathematics learning, division assessment tools,

data analysis, a review of professional learning opportunities and resources provided to staff all became a part of the exploration. Staff participated in focus groups and completed surveys to support us in determining teacher needs.

The analysis of these data showed that the premise for much of the previous professional learning had focused on the belief that supplying teachers with information would result in improvement. While previous professional learning sessions had been interesting, well-received, provided research-based pedagogy and resources, the ideas shared had remained superficial, discarded or forgotten by many teachers. As a result, change, relative to classroom practices, were minimal.

The learning opportunities had included research and sessions planned according to it, yet significant improvement was still not materializing in the various student data sets. An analysis of the staff feedback highlighted teacher requests for support in improving their own learning about mathematics content and pedagogy.

We took the information and used it to develop a divisional math plan focused on building teacher capacity, starting with building content knowledge, pedagogy and ultimately, confidence in mathematics. WSD had excellent math consultants and they suggested we needed external expertise to work with us and support our teachers. After outreach and exploration by our staff, we connected with Kim Langen, a Canadian mathematics teacher and principal,



Cecil Rhodes School students work on a junior-high level math problem. This image and the cover image provided by Radean Carter, Winnipeg School Division.

whose passion is to release the genius in others. Kim agreed to collaborate with WSD to build a professional learning program for our teachers. Together, we identified the course subject matter and used research emphasizing effective strategies for adult learners to determine the approach.

The course consisted of online modules, in person sessions, and small group and individual learning opportunities that ran from September to May each year. The learning targets included building teacher content knowledge and use of appropriate pedagogy in programming, as well as building student fluency in mathematics. With the content and delivery of the course finalized, WSD contacted the University of Winnipeg and teachers were informed they could receive six credit hours towards their post-baccalaureate in mathematics once they completed the course.

Each participant received an online tutor to provide feedback on assignments and support their learning throughout the course. The division ensured they provided time for teachers to learn independently and collectively (five in-person professional learning days, four and a half days of release time for course work, and additional time as requested). We defined measurement tools to assess impact of the course on teacher content knowledge and pedagogy (pre- and post-tests at each session, surveys, self-reflection and anecdotal feedback).

The WSD Mathematics Course was unique in approach, as educational staff from all levels became a learning collective working on the same content (director, principals, vice-principals, support teachers, classroom teachers). Teams from 21 of our highest needs schools volunteered to participate in the first year to provide feedback as we piloted the course. The feedback was invaluable and supported us in updating the course to better meet the needs of the adult learner.

As participants gathered for the initial class, we felt a tension in the room ... we had chosen to begin with introductions and a test! Leading with a pre-test required courage and

calculated risk. How else though, would we really know what the adult learners needed? Once participants had completed what they could, noted any questions and learning needs, there was an audible buzz with many differing emotions expressed, questions shared and support provided. Each participant had shown vulnerability, taken risks and walked together as learners. The data collected from the pre-test served as a baseline and was the starting point for the planning of future sessions.

During the third or fourth session of the course, there was a shift and the teachers reported they no longer felt anxious and were fully engaged in their own mathematics learning. It was at this point we knew that we had created a vehicle to help teachers be learners first and develop the belief that they were good at mathematics.

It was the learning between the formal sessions at schools, where the real magic began. The principal walked with their staff, listened to understand, acted as a school resource, modelled being a learner, prompted, cued and supported staff as necessary. Teachers sought each other as resources for their own learning, strategies were shared and explanation of thinking became commonplace. School-based meeting formats shifted with a significant portion of time focused on sharing of learning, reflecting on student learning and recognizing strengths of individual learners, both adult and student. Several principals reported a movement from a “me” to a “we” mind-set.

These quotes highlighted how this opportunity supported capacity building in both teacher and principal learners:

- “I found it helped me rethink how I structured math lessons and planned for learning.”
- “The booklets were a huge help on assignments and a great resource for use in the future so I can better explain concepts to students.”
- “I appreciated the time provided to work with colleagues to support me when I faced difficulties, discussing, clarifying or even sharing answers. Helping know when I was on the right track was beneficial.”

- “I was math phobic and would avoid math lessons if I could. The course has helped me know I can do math and I can teach math; it is quite fun!”

Approximately 420 Grade 5 to 9 teachers completed the WSD Mathematics Course during the years 2013-17. For many teachers, the course provided a needed focus on mathematics and developing personal knowledge with learning supports in place. However, not all teachers fully supported what we had put in place for their learning and regular feedback, discussion, problem solving and planning occurred between the course participants, Winnipeg Teachers Association and WSD. We used data gathered to adapt and amend course content and delivery to meet teacher-learning needs more effectively. An updated WSD Mathematics Plan is now in place and we continue to build on the learning from the WSD Mathematics Course.

Creating an impact on all levels of learners in the school division has been the result of the sum of the parts of our journey. After four years of implementation and feedback, we believe this course was an essential step in building the foundation for “learning schools” and educator capacity in mathematics.

The WSD Mathematics Course has been a leg of our long-haul journey in the division focused on an intentional and system-wide commitment to building mathematical thinking and autonomous learners. Looking ahead, we take our bearings and chart our future course recognizing, as philosopher John Dewey so eloquently put it, “Arriving at one point is the starting point to another.” ■

Jamie Hutchison is the Principal at Grant Park High School. Julie Smerchanski is the Director of Assessment & Instruction for the Winnipeg School Division.

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Social Work Clinician Builds Capacity for Student Success

By Tim De Ruyck, Turtle Mountain School Division

Over the past 25 years, the scope of public education has broadened greatly; this is not news to those who have been serving in education since the mid '90s or earlier. During this time much has changed, as has our understanding of what is needed to truly promote the success of our youth. Our focus has evolved and now, more than ever, we better understand the need for a holistic approach when meeting the needs of students and promoting their success.

Abraham Maslow published his theory *Hierarchy of Needs* 77 years ago (Maslow, 1943). The concept that basic and psychological needs must first be met before meaningful learning can take place is not a new one. We have known this for a very long time, and within the context of dwindling resources we are continually working to strengthen the system we work within to meet the needs of all.

Educators better understand, and attempt to mitigate, the impact poverty has on the development and education of our youth. In referencing the Pan-Canadian Assessment Report, as well as findings from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Molly McCracken (2019) writes: "The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP) finds that we need to go beyond educators to get to the root causes of Manitoba's ratings. Marni Brownell and Nathan Nickel found in 2014 that 86 percent of Manitoba's students perform at the expected level. MCHP attributes the 14 percent who do not, to poverty and family dysfunction. Manitoba consistently has one of the highest rates of child poverty, which is a much more significant indicator of school success than prenatal health, health at birth and preschool health according to the MCHP."

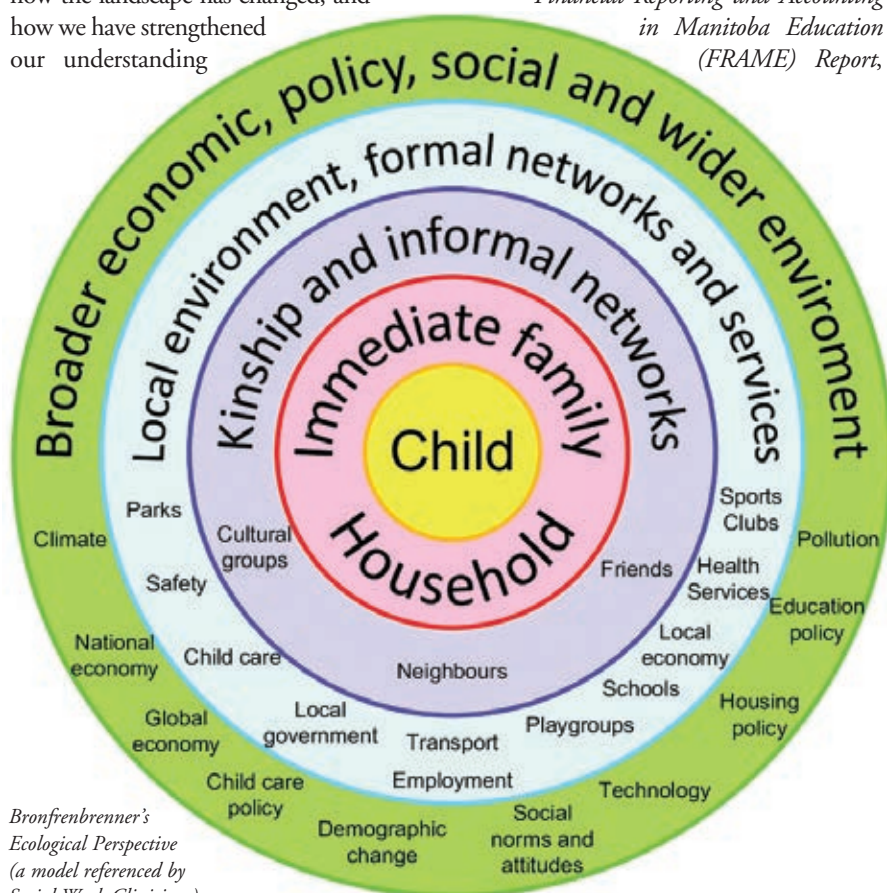
We know we have children coming to school hungry on a regular basis and the demand for breakfast programs continues



to rise. We have an increasing number of newcomer families who need help navigating their new world in so many ways. We have more single parent families than the Canadian average (Healthy Child Manitoba, Child and Youth Report, 2017). We understand far better today the importance of truth and reconciliation efforts. These are just a few examples of how the landscape has changed, and how we have strengthened our understanding

of how the context and reality of our youth affects their success.

We have been in a "do more with less" mode for the last several years, thus necessitating careful and thoughtful use of our existing resources. McCracken (2019) writes: "The share of provincial funding going towards education is declining. According to the *Manitoba Education Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) Report*,



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Perspective (a model referenced by Social Work Clinicians).

provincial share of operating funding is down from 63 percent in 2016-17 to 60.3 percent in 2017-18 to 59.8 percent in 2018-19. Total provincial contributions to education are down from 74 per cent in 2015-16, to 72 percent in 2017-18 and 71.4 per cent in 2018-19. This financial offloading by the province onto school divisions will continue in the 2019-20 school year.”

Despite these fiscal challenges, there has been much we have already accomplished in order to answer the call. Many divisions have developed and/or strengthened early childhood programs, parent-child programs, as well multi-agency partnerships. We are implementing multi-faceted approaches to supporting the mental health and resilience of our youth. We are working to strengthen and integrate Indigenous programming within our schools. We have strengthened our connections with nursery schools and daycares by providing space within our schools. We are focusing not only on the academic achievement of our youth, but on the development of young people to be resilient, adaptable, and responsive to the challenges they will inevitably face regardless of their paths.

Within our public education system our supports extend well beyond the classroom. Divisionally we staff psychologists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, along with our teams of school-based student services personnel. Clinician caseloads are significant, and this will not subside in the foreseeable future. While the use of Social Work Clinicians is not new for many school divisions, it is a strategy we have employed within our division for the past two and a half years. In this short time, it has added a layer of support and outreach

which has proven to be very complimentary and effective in supporting students and families.

In Turtle Mountain School Division, the hiring of a Social Work Clinician started with a focus on student attendance. In an effort to strengthen graduation rates within the province of Manitoba, in 2011 the NDP government increased the mandatory age of school attendance from 16 to 18 (or upon completion of high school graduation requirements). Subsequently, in 2012 the Manitoba government announced 1.2 million dollars in funding to enable school divisions to secure Learning to Age 18 Coordinators (Minister Allan, 2012): “To support existing and new programs that aim to keep students connected to school even when they are not in regular attendance. The new funding can also be used to support the teacher who will serve as a Learning to Age 18 coordinator to help school staff put together alternative learning plans for students who are not attending school, and to monitor and evaluate their progress.”

We initially used this funding towards supporting a staff member who focused specifically on supporting students who struggled to attend school regularly. We referred to this role as an “Attendance Support Worker.” This role was created to have better outreach capacity than what is normally possible within schools, often involving home visits and support outside the walls of the school.

Within Turtle Mountain School Division, we saw some degree of success, however, the needs of struggling students are vastly varied and complex. We needed someone with a strong knowledge of social services, mental health, the justice system, addictions, counselling, a

knowledge of Indigenous as well as newcomer contexts, and overall family support strategies. Being in a rural setting, we also know these services are often not as readily accessible for youth and families through other means. By using the Learning to Age 18 funding, along with funding allocated from the School Board and other related categorical grants, we were able to secure a certified Social Work Clinician with existing funds. The role of the Social Work Clinician involves:

- Understanding student behaviour from a holistic, ecological perspective;
- Building on family and student strengths to improve the social, emotional, and academic functioning of a student;
- Building relationships with families, communities, and schools; and
- Serving as a student advocate and a liaison between home and school.

The Social Work Clinician also provides proactive support to students and families through information evenings and presentations within classrooms. With regards to individualized support, the Social Work Clinician provides individual counselling and support through a referral process and involves outside agencies as required (Child Family Services justice, addictions, mental health, etc.). Reasons students may be referred to the Social Work Clinician may include:

- The student experiences loss, family illness, or changes to family structure (separation and divorce);
- Parent-teen conflict;
- Anxiety, depression, and/or self-harming behaviour;
- Difficulty with adjusting to the school environment, low self-esteem and self-worth;
- Poor school attendance;



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- Poor connection with school, community, and peers;
- Substance abuse;
- School-age pregnancy;
- Family violence; and
- Students at risk of dropping out of school.

When providing support to families of students, the Social Work Clinician will assist families with things such as securing medical files for the purposes of maintaining medication requirements, connecting families with food banks, and assisting with adding students to insurance for medical/dental/vision benefits. It is really a “whatever is needed” approach in order to support families, and therefore the students.

Along with referrals from the schools, the Social Work Clinician monitors students who do not attend regularly and aids in removing barriers that prevent regular attendance. The Social Work Clinician is also helpful in a liaison and advocacy role, and often is in the best position to help staff in the schools to work effectively with youth who are struggling for a variety of reasons.

The Social Work Clinician also serves as a resource and a divisional representative as needed on various specific and/or multi-agency committees. Within Turtle Mountain School Division two of our schools are within communities that have active newcomer sponsorship committees. The Social Work Clinician serves as a divisional representative on these committees and assists to coordinate ongoing support for newcomer families. There are also two adult education sites within Turtle Mountain School Division, which, at times, are used as alternative

education classrooms for school-aged students who function better in a smaller and less-structured environment. The Social Work Clinician provides support to these students as well.

In terms of measured success, to date the caseload of the Social Work Clinician has involved 20 to 30 students at any given time. Over the past two and a half years, the support provided to students and families by the Social Work Clinician has been successful in maintaining a connection between the student and school in the majority of cases. The Social Work Clinician has been very complimentary to the efforts put forth by personnel within schools, given this role is more flexible and better able to provide outreach beyond the school itself.

As we move forward, two things will continue to be true. First, the needs will continue to be high when it comes to students who require additional support in order to be successful and reach their potential. Second, we must continue to work tirelessly to meet these needs and do so within fiscal restraints.

We must continually look beyond the way we have done things and seek ways to work effectively and efficiently with the resources we have. This is our reality. ■

Tim De Ruyck is the Superintendent/CEO of Turtle Mountain School Division.

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What Do Good Leaders Do?

By Tyler Moran, Interlake School Division

The catalyst for conversation at the first gathering of the Administrator Intern Program (AIP) of the Interlake School Division (ISD) was a question short on words but long on intent: What do good leaders do? And, who better to ask than a cohort of aspiring educational leaders made up of five elementary school teachers, three student services specialists, a teaching principal from a Kindergarten to Grade 4 school, and two teaching principals from Hutterian Schools?

The conversation wandered with purpose toward our own collaborative definition of what good leaders do. In no particular rank order, the sense of the group was that good leaders inspire, support, collaborate, delegate, build relationships, listen, and see the big picture. Thankfully, all 11 participants returned one month later to continue the conversation even after generating such a lofty set of characteristics for further exploration at our first gathering.

Now, two full years removed from the first gathering of ISD's Administrator Intern Program in December of 2017, we can look back on a series of rich learning experiences to respond once more with our thoughts on what good leaders do. What follows is a brief discussion of the model, the delivery and the next steps in our thinking with hope that the story might provide occasion for partners and colleagues to consider elements that resonate as well as opportunities to extend and improve upon our learning.

The model

The AIP was developed in partnership with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), and the MASS field-led course in school leadership provided the foundation for program content. The AIP provided a course of study aligned with all



five domains of knowledge and skills articulated in the Manitoba Certificate in School Leadership guidelines. The course aimed to serve a broad audience and to provide a balanced perspective focused on the theoretical and practical application of knowledge and practice pertaining to school leadership.

An open invitation to ISD's professional staff for membership in the AIP

was circulated in the fall of 2017, and interested candidates applied with a letter of intent and updated resumé. The 11 applicants noted earlier in this article were accepted and endorsed with full support of the ISD's Board of Trustees.

Through deliberate planning and communication, the AIP was accredited at the post-secondary level for participants in pursuit of formal credit for

Figure 1

Year One Topics	Year Two Topics
Program Overview (December)	Instructional Leadership (September)
Leaders in Education: Part I (January)	Using Evidence to Inform Practice (October)
Purpose of Education (March)	Personnel Leadership (November)
Political and Cultural Contexts (April)	Personal Leadership Resources (December)
Ethical Leadership (May)	School Administration (January)
Culture of Collaboration (June)	Student, Parent, Community Engagement (February)
	Leaders in Education: Part II (March)
	Program Summary (April)

When asked if the sense of the cohort was still that good leaders inspire, support, collaborate, delegate, build relationships, listen, and see the big picture, the collective response was quick and in the affirmative.

learning. Though not applicable to all participants, the accreditation process proved worthwhile for some.

The AIP was completed over two school years, beginning in December 2017 and ending in April 2019. Content was organized and delivered over that time span as described in Figure 1.

The delivery

The AIP was delivered largely outside of school hours through evening sessions hosted monthly at a variety of locations dependent on topic. Participants were also supported in attending the Council of School Leaders Winter Conference in both 2018 and 2019 on a voluntary basis to network with current and aspiring leaders from across the province. Finally, each participant was provided two days of release in each year of the program to participate in school visits within or beyond the ISD to partner with practising principals and to develop an introductory sense of school leadership outside of their own school building.

Understandably, a conversation about the purpose of education or ethical leadership extends well beyond a three-hour gathering on a Tuesday evening in March. Cognizant of the diversity of topics to be discussed throughout the AIP and the imperative of accessibility and growth for all, it was necessary to name our purpose and to ensure transparency. Our aim

was to introduce participants to topics in educational leadership through committed group conversation, engagement of guest speakers, consideration of educational research, and, of course, good food.

To more clearly illustrate a typical AIP session, this sequence captures an evening from January 2019 focused on school administration:

- 4:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.: Review of AIP participant feedback from prior session.
- 4:45 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.: A perspective on safe schools with Tim Lee, Principal of Woodlands School (Kindergarten to Grade 8).
- 5:15 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.: A conversation about school planning with Christie Crow, Principal of Grosse Isle School (Grades 5 to 8).
- 5:45 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.: A dive into school budgets with Jason Cassils, Principal of Stonewall Collegiate (Grades 9 to 12).
- 6:15 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.: Large group debrief of presentations with focus questions to guide conversation.
- 7:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.: Small group conversation to link evidence from recent school visits to presentations from the evening, and completion of feedback forms to share with presenters.

In addition to involving current school and divisional administrators in our sessions, the AIP also provided frequent opportunities to engage with a number of partner organizations;

some obvious and others less so, though equally impactful.

We were deeply appreciative for support in delivering course content alongside a number of partners, including the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Council of School Leaders, the Manitoba School Boards Association, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and MASS. Our work as educational leaders invites us to collaborate regularly, and the AIP provided opportunities for participants to make connections that will prove invaluable over time.

The next steps

The design of the AIP discussed here is a departure from a related, but fundamentally different, prior model for leadership development in the ISD. As such, the process of soliciting participant and presenter feedback throughout the learning was an intentional and critical component of our time together. Each gathering concluded with an opportunity for participants to weigh in on the design and delivery of content and to make connections to current and future practice. And, each subsequent session began by making the feedback gathered public for the group then discussing the ways in which it might guide our path forward.

Though the ISD will take a break from the AIP until the 2021-22 school year, a number of lessons learned will guide our future learning. The opportunity for small and large group conversation, facilitated through locally developed group norms, is both appreciated and necessary. Exploration of a broad set of topics in educational leadership is essential. Engaging the voices of current principals in program delivery is practical and inspirational. Partnering with regional and provincial organizations throughout the program provides a foundation for critical networking. These findings will form the foundation of our future learning.

Conclusion

We regularly revisited and reshaped our thinking about what good leaders

do throughout the AIP. A working definition helped us to agree upon “look-fors” during school visits and to reflect thoughtfully on the presentations and content delivered during monthly sessions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a reflection during our final session of the AIP in April 2019 yielded little difference from the conclusions drawn during our very first gathering 16 months earlier. When asked if the sense of the cohort was still that good leaders inspire, support, collaborate, delegate, build relationships, listen, and see the big picture, the collective response was quick and in the affirmative. Also evident in our concluding reflections was an enhanced appreciation of what good leadership looks like in practice, who can help us to get there, and how we can make it our own.

Our schools are in good hands with so many good leaders at the ready. ■

Tyler Moran is the Assistant Superintendent of the Interlake School Division. His experience in public education includes learning in the roles of teacher, consultant and school administrator. Moran holds a master's degree in leadership and school improvement, with a focus on professional learning for educators.

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Building Professional Capacity Through the Teaching of Literacy in Lakeshore School Division

By Darlene Willetts, with help from Alison Martilla and Roger McCulley, Lakeshore School Division

During the past few years, Lakeshore School Division has cast a laser focus on the improvement of student literacy. From the data, we have learned that in order to improve student literacy, we must build the capacity of all educators to become teachers of literacy. This process looks quite different in two of our schools.

Fisher Branch Early Years

Fisher Branch Early Years is a Kindergarten to Grade 4 school with an approximate population of 80 students. There is a professional staff of 5.5 teachers, who are in the mid to late stages of their careers. Fisher Branch Early Years experiences little to no staff turnover from year to year.

Due to the stability of staff, Roger McCulley, the school's principal, has been able to create multiyear plans in cooperation with all educational partners that expand the staff's professional capacity to teach literacy through all content areas. Together, they have built a collegial culture in which staff

collaborate to share and support each other in their professional journeys.

One strategy that holds value for the Fisher Branch Early Years team is the use of video and pictures to improve pedagogy; as such, it has become a primary vehicle for teacher improvement. Video or pictures of "exemplary teaching" are captured and shared with teachers during the professional development segment of staff meetings. The host teacher engages colleagues in a "think aloud," highlighting strategies she was using in the video/picture sequence, to enhance her lesson. These visuals often lead to deeper conversations and self-reflection, regarding the improvement of pedagogy.

Teachers at Fisher Branch Early Years School have a multiyear plan to explore four major subject areas through the lens of literacy. Last year, the focus of inquiry was the teaching of mathematics. Staff explored the research of J. Boaler, M. Buehl, M. Fullerton, N. Lang-Raad, R. Marzano, and others. Key premises from these authors were used as the parameters of discussion for school-based professional development. Teachers examined their pedagogy,

purposefully and intentionally, to incorporate numerical literacy strategies into their daily practice. Examples included using math journals to record student wonderings or specific understandings, purchasing related literature to explore specific topics, teaching students how to process expository texts for pertinent mathematical information, and introducing a "problem of the day" to provide students with opportunities to explore atypical problems and possible solutions.

This year, Fisher Branch Early Years School is focusing on the teaching of scientific literacy. Staff are exploring their pedagogy, as it relates to the discipline of science. As Roger performs classroom observations, he is focusing on best practices, specific to scientific literacy. Using pictures and video to highlight best practice, teachers have collaborated to improve the cohesion of science instruction throughout the school. To date, their actions have included the teaching of standard science vocabulary from the Manitoba Science Curriculum, the use of design process and scientific method to frame scientific inquiry, and the ordering

and building of science and literature kits, specific to grade group instructional clusters from the Manitoba Science Curriculum.

Eriksdale School

Eriksdale School is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 facility with an approximate population of 150 students. The staff consists of teachers who are in the early to middle stages of their careers. The turnover of teachers at the early years has been minimal in the last few years. However, this is not the case for staffing in the middle years. Most teachers at this school have three to five years of teaching experience. There are a few veteran teachers who have been at the school for a lot longer.

Eriksdale School has focused on developing their student's literacy skills. The goal for all students is to be reading, with comprehension at the Grade 9 level as they enter high school. With frequent changes in personnel, principal Alison Martilla must be cognizant of starting each year with a fresh plan to quickly develop the capacity of teachers to meet the specific needs of students. Being aware of Hattie's effect sizes, Alison knows that collective teacher efficacy with an effect size of 1.57, is an extremely high-yielding strategy. As a result, Alison works quickly with teachers to build a common understanding of student needs. They pay specific attention to what skills, knowledge, and interests students currently have and what skills they will need to close the gap and raise the bar.

To help support this development, Alison has focused on the creation of grade group teams among her teachers. These include an Early Years team, a Grade 5/6 team, and a Grade 7/8 team. These teams work closely together throughout the school year. They focus on the collective improvement of specific high yield teaching practices that they know will serve to improve their students' overall literacy skills. At the beginning of each staff meeting all teams collaborate for half an hour. During this time, each team looks closely at specific student data. They make professional decisions about what is working – for both students and teachers – and what

specific steps are needed to ensure student progress. Teachers also share exemplary strategies they are currently using with their students.

Alison's grade group teams work closely together during school-based professional development. Alison ensures that her school's professional development plan includes what is needed by teachers, for them to support their students (Breakspear, 2018). During 2019-20, Eriksdale School prioritized writing as a specific concern for student success. Teachers have been working collaboratively to build capacity in the teaching of writing. Educators have been following a planned learning cycle by practicing specific high-yield writing strategies in their classrooms, discussing what they have learned with colleagues, and describing, through new data, the impact this has had on student learning.

Division-wide initiatives

In Lakeshore School Division, a literacy coach is made available to all staff. This year, with efficiency in mind, a mandate was co-created with the coach to set priorities for the year. A list of "priority teachers" was drafted and their inclusion was based on three specific criteria:

1. Teachers of students who were achieving below grade expectations, based on reading and writing data;
2. Teachers who had less than five years of teaching experience; and/or
3. Teachers who were new to a role (for example: teaching Grade 5 for the first time).

Once "priority teachers" were identified, the literacy coach contacted both them and their principal to arrange an initial visit early in the school year. From this point forward, "priority teachers" were granted elevated access to the coach. The coach then entered a collaborative relationship with them to help support and build their capacity as teachers of literacy.

It should be noted that this practice did not remove the literacy coach from duty, where veteran teachers were concerned. Rather, it shifted her practice as coach to a collaborative/consultative resource for veteran teachers, who were able to further enhance their teaching

capacity on a case by case basis, as time or circumstance permitted.

This year, we found that many of our schools began to invite the coach to participate in lengthier residencies (i.e. larger chunks of time – three to five consecutive days in length). This allowed the coach to include both priority and veteran teachers in broad professional learning activities, by differentiating instruction for the entire school team.

With the initial input of Kindergarten to Grade 8 literacy teachers and principals, from 2014-17, the coach has co-written an instructional playbook, organized upon a model suggested by Jim Knight's work, *The Impact Cycle*. Currently, she is sharing Jennifer Serravallo's *The Literacy Teacher's Playbook*, with all principals and teachers. *The Literacy Teacher's Playbook* describes, in detail, a variety of evidence-based teaching strategies and practices, recommended for all Lakeshore teachers. The document includes a list of high impact teaching strategies, a description of and rationale for these practices, their relationship to Hattie's effect sizes, and a checklist for teacher use. The playbook provides a valuable reference for teachers by enhancing the communication of best practices in Lakeshore, through the distribution of a living document. ■

Darlene Willetts is the Superintendent/CEO of Lakeshore School Division. While a math fanatic at heart, she is learning that literacy is pretty exciting too! Thank you too, to Roger McCulley, principal of Fisher Branch Early Years, and Alison Martilla, principal of Eriksdale School, for their assistance in writing this article.

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The Social Justice Coalition

From 2005 to 2019, the Coalition fostered an increasing commitment to social justice and equity in Manitoba's education sector.

By Coralie Bryant

What brought together some 15 to 30 Manitoba educators at 8 a.m. for two hours several times a year?

Issues of social justice, which at the time were not widely mentioned at the board tables of our education organizations. The Social Justice Coalition (SJC) held its final meeting this past May but its passing calls for some recognition of the impact these meetings had not only on individual participants but also on the conversation, and even policy directions, in education in Manitoba.

In the fall of 2005, following a day with Stephen Lewis that included an afternoon with 40 high school students from across the province, three representatives from the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP) and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) met at Pasquale's Italian Ristorante in Winnipeg. Over pizza, they talked about what they could do to support each other's work with high school students and their teachers around the issue of social justice. The time seemed right to band together to strengthen our efforts. We invited the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) to join us, as they were doing some similar work, and they graciously offered their boardroom for meetings.

Those early years were particularly heady. MSIP chaired the bi-monthly meetings for years, in accordance with the initial rules established. All meetings would take place from 8 to 10 a.m. so that we could get on with our day. No notes would be taken and agendas would be set at the end of each meeting for the next. The meetings would be open to any

individuals who felt the discussions supported their work.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) and representatives from Manitoba Education soon became involved, followed by representatives from the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, Community Living Manitoba, the Council of School Leaders, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, and a few high school teachers who could get the release time to come. The email list grew to some 50 people who found these meetings informative and nourishing, but generally there were anywhere from 12 to 25 around the table.

Early on, we worked out a description of the Coalition:

- We are a group of individuals and organizations interested in promoting a sustained conversation about education for democracy.
- We acknowledge the role of public schools in contributing to a just

society and support social justice as a primary aim of public education.

- We will facilitate opportunities with colleagues, with students, and with the public at large to gain a deeper understanding of social justice issues.

We soon discovered we could use some help with our understanding of social justice, so speakers from the community, universities, the Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, and the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba were invited to share their knowledge. Issues currently before the provincial government and/or the schools were discussed, giving us quite a broad perspective of views. Over time, letters were sent on behalf of the group – two to the provincial government and one to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights – in an attempt to influence policy, sometimes with success.

The Coalition sponsored speakers, such as Bill Moore-Kilgannon from



Public Interest Alberta on how to advocate for public education; a forum on refugees, immigrants, and newcomers in Manitoba schools; and a book launch, for Joel Westheimer, from the University of Ottawa. The Coalition also gave research support to various groups, including the CCPA, the Social Planning Council, the University of Winnipeg, and the University of Manitoba.

We developed questions for candidates in upcoming elections. The Educating for ACTION series of conferences organized by MASS and Manitoba Education from 2006 to 2012 drew strong support from the Coalition, with members providing the core of the planning committees.

Issues pursued over the many years include citizenship engagement, equity of access, the purposes of public education, Indigenous issues, poverty as it affects education, mental health, newcomer education, students with learning challenges, preschool education, LGBTQ community issues in education, student voice, the understanding of bias, the role of the media, the UNESCO Associated Schools Network, and homeschooling.

Whenever a report or position paper was issued publicly by one of our organizations or Manitoba Education, it was put on the agenda for discussion, usually with an invited resource person's input. Underlying it all was the intent to provide opportunities to support high school students and teachers engaged in issues of social justice. Yet, the SJC's impact grew considerably beyond that intention.

Every meeting began with a quick go-around for participants to share what their organizations were currently sponsoring or engaged with that related to social justice. This kept us apprised of activity about which we might alert our own members, but it also opened up opportunities for us to support one another in our work.

As a result of our meetings and what was shared, it became much more the norm through these years for education and some community organizations to work together rather than to work in isolation. For example, the MTS would formulate its committees to organize large

conferences with representatives from many of our member organizations. Prior to 2004, when MASS held its first large conference, this was not the pattern, but in the following years such collaboration grew to become the norm. The SJC contributed strongly to this change.

But perhaps most importantly, the Coalition helped to change the language and understandings in Manitoba around our collective mission to foster teaching and learning that develops a true community of citizens and that addresses the ways in which

policy and practice often prevent that from happening.

In the early days in some of our organizations, one was not comfortable even mentioning "social justice." In a few short years, thanks in part to these conversations around the MSBA boardroom table, it was part of the agendas, the policy and the work of virtually all of them. ■

Coralie Bryant is a past Executive Director of MASS. She held the position from 2004 to 2012.



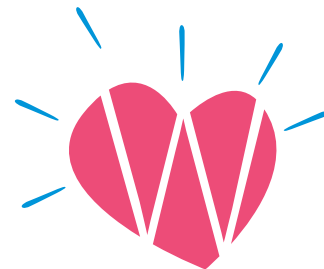
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Educators Step Up During COVID-19



While this issue of the *MASS Journal* was in production, educators across Manitoba were working hard to support their students in very different ways than the usual in-school assistance. Here are just a few stories that illustrate the important role educators are playing during the pandemic. Thank you to *CTV News Winnipeg*, *CBC News Winnipeg*, *Global News*, and the *Thompson Citizen*, for allowing us to publish these stories. If you're reading this in the electronic version, please click the links to their individual websites.

We know that there are many more examples of educators supporting their students and their families – thanks to each of you as you facilitate student learning. These stories will be part of the 'highlight reel' of this challenging time.

WINNIPEG MIDDLE SCHOOL CREATES NUTRITION PROGRAM TO HELP FEED STUDENTS DURING PANDEMIC

By Kayla Rosen, *CTV News Winnipeg*
(<https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca>)
April 16, 2020

A Winnipeg middle school has started a nutrition program to help feed students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Valley Gardens Middle School is offering the program every Tuesday and Thursday. Students and families can pick up the food between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., but if they can't make it, the school will drop it off at their home. The school noted the food is given to students outside the front doors, in order to adhere to physical distancing measures.

"The other day it was ham dinner and sandwiches, along with dairy, desserts, and other staples," the River East Transcona School Division said in a Facebook post.

All students at the school are invited to take part in the initiative, with Valley Gardens noting it has partnerships with Giant Tiger and Superstore that help support the program.

"A group of dedicated educational assistants, teachers, and



administrators form the planning team and schedule meal preparation on Mondays and Wednesdays," the school division said.

"This amazing group of EAs organizes the preparation of all the food/meals."

Some of the school's educational assistants have also been preparing and donating foods for the program.

"It is a wonderful example of servant leadership and speaks to the caring environment that exists at VG," the Facebook post said.

WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION CREATES HAMPER FOR 3,200 HUNGRY STUDENTS DURING PANDEMIC

By Sam Samson, *CBC News Winnipeg*
(www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba)
April 16, 2020

The largest school division in Winnipeg is putting together food hampers to make sure thousands of students who rely on school meal programs don't go hungry during the pandemic.

“We’ve never done this before, so we’re going to learn as we go,” said Karin Seiler, superintendent of education.

Seiler created the division’s “Food Security Initiative,” which will help feed more than 3,200 students and their families during the time of COVID-19.

When schools first closed in March, the division started giving away food they had leftover from its meal programs. More formal planning started soon after the province announced classes would be suspended indefinitely.

“We do support families on a regular basis with food and nutrition, so we knew that many of our families would miss that support,” said Seiler.

Principals in the division sent names of students they thought could benefit from meal help during the pandemic. The list is already at 3,200 students and growing, said Seiler, who was a principal in inner-city schools for 20 years.

“I can only imagine how anxious families are to try and provide food,” she said. “We’ve always been very responsive to the needs of communities around nutrition, so it just makes sense that we do this.”

The division is gathering food and resources from partners like Winnipeg Harvest, Peak of the Market and the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba. It’s also ordering food from distributors who normally supply them with items, such as milk, for their regular meal programs.

Once the food is collected, it will go to one of two commercial kitchens in local schools: R.B. Russell Vocational High School or Technical Vocational High School.

From there, school division staff will make some food, like soups and breads, and assemble about 150 hampers every day for at least two weeks.

Staff are welcoming the work.

“Without students in the building, without that direct contact with students, a lot of teachers are feeling a bit of a void,” said Matt Frost, a culinary arts teacher at Tec Voc.

“To be able to do something meaningful when we’re at a distance from our students is a great thing for teachers, educational assistants and everyone in the school division.”

LRSD TO PROVIDE LAPTOPS, FOOD TO STUDENTS’ FAMILIES IN NEED

*By Sam Thompson, Global News Winnipeg
(<https://globalnews.ca/winnipeg>)*

April 15, 2020

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic means schools across the province are rethinking their approaches to education, but one Winnipeg school division is putting a new focus on what its families need during the crisis.

Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) superintendent Christian Michalik told 680 CJOB his division sent out surveys to students’ families, with the goal of helping fill the gaps in some key areas.

Michalik said the division will provide laptops to homes that don’t have computers so students will be able to stay in touch with their teachers and complete home assignments.

“We’re not waiting to finalize the survey results, so we’ve had a couple of hundred laptops readied for students, and we know that number is going to grow in the coming days,” Michalik said.

We’re also going to learn, in a more precise way through this survey, the number of families that don’t have the Internet, and we’re working on solutions there as well.”

Michalik said providing parents with educational tools to teach their kids from home during the pandemic has been a challenge on its own.

“We’ve got to be really mindful as educators in the design of the learning, to not overburden parents with an instructional challenge.

“Families are challenged enough just responding to this pandemic ... and so in all our efforts, we also have to be thinking of everyone’s well-being and the social, emotional needs of not only our learners, but families as well.”

FACEBOOK HELPS TEACHER AND PUPPETEER EDUCATE AND ENTERTAIN AUDIENCES ONLINE DURING PANDEMIC

*By Ian Graham, Thompson Citizen
(<https://www.thompsoncitizen.net>)*

April 15, 2020

With COVID-19 pandemic precautions shutting down schools and depriving many people of their regular social activities, technology plays an important role in keeping people connected while observing social distancing guidelines.

Among the many people in Thompson using communications tools to keep in touch while staying home as much as possible are a school librarian and a well-known Northern Manitoba puppeteer.

Kathy Pitre, the librarian at École communautaire la Voie du Nord, began broadcasting videos of herself reading French books and stories on the school’s Facebook page when school was suspended throughout Manitoba in late March, shortly after the first positive test for the novel coronavirus in the province.

“I wanted to make sure kids get to listen to a story in French every day,” she said of her 10:30 a.m. weekday ritual. “I’m super happy to get the chance to go to work every day. It’s something easy I can do.”

For Ken Bighetty, who works with the Jordan’s Principle team at Keewatin Tribal Council in Thompson, posting humorous puppet videos on YouTube or Facebook has been a regular pastime of his, along with his three brothers, since long before the pandemic, though he thinks the humour is especially needed now.

“The kids feed off the humour,” says Bighetty. “If the parents are laughing then the kids feed off that.”

He’s also heard from elders that laughing helped them survive previous hard times.

“It was humour that got them through,” he said, which is why he offers offbeat social distancing advice like eating half a can of beans before going grocery shopping so you can just fart to help keep people six feet away from you.

Though their videos are different, Pitre and Bighetty both get their children to help out with their online escapades. ■



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