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Fall 2021

The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents



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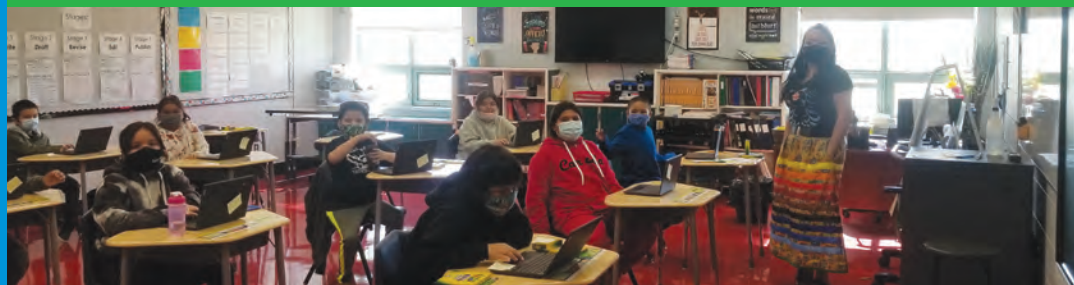
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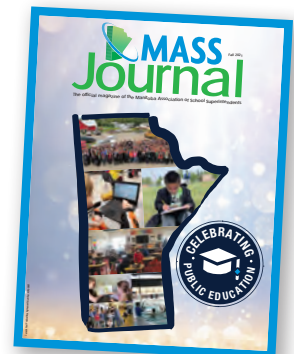
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On the cover: The Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 editions of the *MASS Journal* will provide an opportunity for the province's 37 school divisions to share their stories and successes. What a wonderful way to celebrate public education, our staff, our students, and our communities!



As we enjoy the beautiful days of fall under a looming fourth wave cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is much to be thankful for and proud of in education in Manitoba. Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) members have worked diligently in the last year and a half to ensure that the quality of education that our public have come to expect continued.

Reopening schools safely remains our primary focus, but much effort has gone into ensuring the work of our school system continues. School divisions set priorities for work in areas of importance to their students and community needs. While many of the priority areas were paused last year, there is a resurgence of energy to get back to the work we are all passionate about: children and their education.

MASS is a humble group and continues to lead public education in the province. As the Co-President of the MASS organization for the 2021/2022 school year, I am pleased to present the first of two journals where school divisions will highlight the excellent work happening in Manitoba schools. You will read stories of adaptability as divisions changed course and adopted new ways of being during the pandemic. Several divisions discuss their work to support authentic, division-wide implementation of board priorities, and one will share their story of supporting trades and technology programs for students. Highlights also include a focus on indigenous language learning and partnering with our Indigenous neighbours to increase outcomes for First Nations students.

Our province is diverse, and the stories represent that diversity. They also represent the work that MASS members are leading in Manitoba. Reading these stories makes me proud to be part of the public education system in Manitoba. Our students are well served, and I trust that the MASS voice will be present at the table to ensure outcomes for students remain in the forefront of any change initiatives.

I have confidence in our public system and trust that throughout the challenges that have been placed before us, MASS will emerge a stronger entity. Thank you to all school divisions for sharing your stories this year. It is evident that even through a pandemic, learning continued to occur and support for students and families remained strong. Thank you to all MASS members for your service. You are appreciated.

Krista Curry
Co-President



Au moment même où nous profitons des belles journées d'automne malgré la menace d'une quatrième vague de pandémie de COVID-19, nous avons tellement de raisons d'être reconnaissants et fiers dans le milieu de l'éducation au Manitoba. Les membres de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) ont travaillé diligemment au cours de la dernière année et demie pour s'assurer de maintenir la qualité de l'éducation à laquelle s'attend notre public.

La réouverture sécuritaire des écoles demeure notre principale préoccupation, mais beaucoup d'efforts ont été déployés pour veiller à ce que le travail de notre système scolaire continue. Les divisions scolaires établissent des priorités de travail dans des domaines qui sont importants pour les besoins de leurs élèves et de la communauté. Bien qu'un grand nombre des secteurs prioritaires aient été mis en veilleuse l'an dernier, on observe un regain d'énergie pour reprendre le travail qui nous passionne tous : les enfants et leur éducation.

La MASS est un modeste groupe et continue de diriger l'éducation publique dans la province. En tant que coprésidente de la MASS pour l'année scolaire de 2021-2022, je suis ravie de vous présenter la première de deux éditions du Journal, où les divisions scolaires décriront l'excellent travail qui se fait dans les écoles du Manitoba. Vous y lirez des récits soulignant la faculté d'adaptation des divisions, qui ont dû changer de cap et adopter de nouvelles méthodes pendant la pandémie. Plusieurs divisions discutent de leur travail pour appuyer la mise en œuvre authentique et à l'échelle des divisions des priorités du conseil, et l'une d'entre elles expliquera comment elle a soutenu les programmes de métiers et de technologies pour les élèves. Parmi les points saillants, mentionnons également un accent sur l'apprentissage de langues autochtones et un partenariat avec nos voisins autochtones en vue d'améliorer les résultats pour les élèves des Premières Nations.

Notre province est diversifiée, et les récits représentent cette diversité. Ils représentent également le travail que les membres de la MASS dirigent au Manitoba. En lisant ces histoires, je déborde de fierté de faire partie du système d'éducation publique du Manitoba. Nos élèves sont bien servis, et je suis convaincue que la voix de la MASS se fera entendre pour que les résultats des élèves demeurent à l'avant-plan de toute initiative de changement.

J'ai confiance en notre système public et je suis convaincue que malgré toutes les difficultés que nous devons surmonter, la MASS en ressortira plus forte. Merci à toutes les divisions scolaires d'avoir partagé vos histoires cette année. Il est évident que malgré la pandémie, l'apprentissage a été maintenu et que le soutien des élèves et des familles est demeuré robuste. Merci à tous les membres de la MASS pour leur service. Nous vous en sommes reconnaissants.

Krista Curry
Coprésidente



When the advanced planning for the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Fall *Journal* occurred in the spring of 2021, the provincial landscape looked somewhat different than it does currently. At that time, the *Education Modernization Act* (Bill 64) had been brought forward in the Legislature. This *Act* projected the elimination of school boards by July 2021. Not knowing the structure of the 2022/2023 school year, the Advocacy Committee believed that the celebration of the current 37 school divisions and districts was fitting. Even though Bill 64 is to be withdrawn, the importance of acknowledging the work of and celebrating with school divisions remains.

MASS has spent time in dialogue about the purposes of public education (<https://mass.mb.ca>). Two of those listed resonate when thinking about the context of the Fall *Journal*.

1. To assist children to view themselves as capable of contributing to the public good and preparing them to do so, and
2. To encourage in children a balance of intellectual and social development, social consciousness, and preparation for life.

To achieve these purposes school divisions provide an environment which provides a safe, caring, and welcoming learning environment for all children while engaging all students in learning to their individual capacities.

As divisions continue to work through the challenges related to the pandemic, the focus continues to be on engaging students in rich learning opportunities. The initiatives shared by school divisions provide a small glimpse into work being done with students across the province as they navigate their learning journey together.

A heartfelt thanks to each MASS member and all school communities as you continue to work together with boards of trustees, staff, and communities to lead and serve the students of Manitoba.

Barb Isaak
Executive Director

Au moment de la planification de l'édition d'automne du *Journal* de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) au printemps 2021, le contexte provincial était un peu différent de ce qu'il est aujourd'hui. À ce moment-là, la *Loi sur la modernisation de l'éducation* (projet de loi 64) avait été déposée devant l'Assemblée législative. Cette *Loi* prévoyait l'élimination des commissions scolaires d'ici juillet 2021. Sans connaître la structure de l'année scolaire 2022-2023, l'Advocacy Committee estimait que la célébration des 37 divisions et districts scolaires actuels était de mise. Le projet de loi 64 sera retiré, mais l'importance de reconnaître le travail des divisions scolaires et de célébrer avec elles demeure.

La MASS a entretenu un dialogue au sujet des objectifs de l'éducation publique (<https://mass.mb.ca>). Deux des objectifs énumérés sont particulièrement pertinents dans le contexte du *Journal* de l'automne.

1. Aider les enfants à se sentir capables de contribuer au bien public et les préparer à le faire et
2. Encourager chez les enfants un équilibre de développement intellectuel et social, de conscience sociale et de préparation à la vie.

Pour activer ces objectifs, les divisions scolaires offrent un environnement qui offre un milieu d'apprentissage sécuritaire, bienveillant et accueillant pour tous les enfants, tout en incitant tous les élèves à apprendre au mieux de leurs capacités individuelles.

À mesure que les divisions continuent de surmonter les difficultés liées à la pandémie, on continue de s'efforcer d'intéresser les élèves à des possibilités d'apprentissage riches. Les initiatives partagées par les divisions scolaires donnent un aperçu du travail effectué avec les élèves dans toute la province à mesure qu'ils progressent dans leur parcours d'apprentissage ensemble.

Nous remercions chaleureusement chaque membre de la MASS, vos conseils et les communautés scolaires, à mesure que vous continuez de collaborer avec les conseils d'administration, le personnel et les communautés pour diriger et servir les élèves du Manitoba.

Barb Isaak
Directrice générale

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Division



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**Professional Learning
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Superintendent
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Executive Director



Karen Wohlgemuth
Executive Assistant

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:*

- 
1. Early Learning
 2. Indigenous Education
 3. 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.

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.
- Sharing of Mental Health & Well-being paper with community and provincial partners. ■



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A Recipe for Learning Through the Pandemic

By Scott Hill, Evergreen School Division



I knew a teacher once who liked to compare lesson-planning for his students to carefully and lovingly preparing a meal for important dinner guests. I've always liked that. Over the past 18 months, every educator has been challenged in ways that, to embrace a perhaps unbearable lightness, might suit that analogy.

Imagine that your special occasion or dinner party includes obstacles such as:

1. You can't use your trusty slow-cooker, oven, or even microwave. There's an appliance with which you are much less familiar – you'll have to use it if you want to serve your guests.
2. You've had no desire or intention to go the Julia Child route, but smile – you're on camera!
3. You have some essential new ingredients delivered and – oops, some of it is expired.

4. Oh, did I mention your guests aren't coming? Or they might be coming half-at-a-time: you better get used to delivering!

There are probably 60 or so additional obstacles to consider, but those four alone are quite enough, aren't they? I mean, a dinner party is stressful enough at the *BEST* of times. So, in Evergreen, as I'm sure it has been throughout the province, our energy levels and our resilience have been fed by our staff and colleagues, who just keep cooking in spite of it all.

With this in mind, I'll share my best interpretation of a recipe that reflects one hopeful effort that's actually *gained* momentum for us through the past 18 months: a revisit to our work in early reading. I'm not the chef, but I'm lucky enough to be able to pop into the kitchen from time to time for a taste, and to see if I can help in any way.

Our key ingredients:

1. Teachers who are open-minded to new ideas about teaching and learning.
2. School leaders who are dedicated to finding new ways to support teachers and students.
3. Division staff who are passionate about research, continuous improvement, and student success.
4. Time.
5. Resources, research, and literature.

Directions:

Blend... Our division staff, in some ways, found enhanced opportunities to connect in the early days of the pandemic. Our consultants and Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP) brought together research and literature about early reading that helped inspire and deepen our thinking about interventions and core instruction, and our need to continue to 'bridge' the areas of student services and curriculum. We've got some new ways to think about, teach, and assess

phonological awareness while respecting current practices in our 'balanced literacy' approach.

Incorporate... Our Kindergarten to Grade 8 principals are obsessed with early reading and with finding ways to help kids who struggle. It is essential to bring their experience and perspective to this conversation. Each of them has student-specific data that tells us that while most kids are doing well, our repertoire of reading interventions, and some of our core instruction, just does not work for as many kids as we want to help.

Fold in... In the spring, we had the great fortune of some of our Kindergarten teachers taking on more contract time in order to try out, track, and reflect with us on some of the new approaches and resources we've been learning about. This level of willingness to try something new and conduct some action research is really a gift. Some of our student results look very promising.

Time is always in short supply. We've needed to *create* some, and to *leave* some. These ingredients need time to rest among the folding, incorporating, and blending.

We have also paused between every dash of research and dollop of resources: for us these included a virtual professional development session with reading researcher David Kilpatrick, some materials from www.Heggerty.org, and some books such as *Speech to Print*, by Louisa Moats. You'll likely substitute these seasonings as context and local orthodoxy require. We've also appreciated seeing examples of practice relevant to our journey from other school divisions, and we are grateful for their willingness to share.

We look forward to continuing our learning, and I hope to expand our conversation about early reading within and beyond our school division in the coming year. I invite any MASS member to get in touch to share thoughts or ideas on our journey! ■

Scott Hill is Assistant Superintendent for the Evergreen School Division.



Celebrating Dakota Culture and Language in Western Manitoba

By Barry Pitz and Mike Thiessen, Fort La Bosse School Division

Morley Taylor, a graduate of the Fort La Bosse School Division.



The division's annual powwow ties cultural activities with celebration, which many of the students participate in. This celebration of community and culture is enjoyed by all the students and staff. During the powwow, there is traditional food served, traditional Dakota games played, singing, and dancing.

The infusion of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum is an important part of the FLB Indigenous Framework. Every student in every school in FLB will be given the opportunity to learn Indigenous perspectives and traditional learning. Every teacher, Kindergarten to Grade 12, will teach a minimum of five lessons that contain Indigenous perspectives into their daily classes.

Language is a vital part of every culture. With the support of Chief and Council, Dakota language classes are provided for the students of Canupawakpa Dakota Nation in the schools that they attend. Goulter School and Virden Junior High have both established themselves as leaders within the division for being inherently rich schools of cultural celebration. At the high school level, a Cultural Exploration Class is offered to students in the senior years. This course provides Indigenous perspectives and explores many aspects of the Indigenous cultures of the people in Canada.

Throughout the school year, our students participate in Dakota cultural events and activities. One of these

activities is the highly-anticipated seasonal feast. Our Dakota students take great pride in being the host as it is a time to showcase their traditional foods. These feasts are held in the same classroom as the Dakota Language classes. Students are encouraged to wear culturally appropriate clothing and contribute to the feast by bringing a plate or bowl of traditional Dakota food. These feasts are a wonderful way for students to celebrate the Dakota culture but also for their guests (other students) to be able to learn about traditional foods and cultural practices of the Dakota people.

Our school division is proud of our past and we are very excited about our future. To kickstart the 2021/2022 school year, a copy of the book *Truth and Reconciliation in Canadian Schools* by Pam Rose Toulouse was provided to every employee as a summer read.

On the National Day of Remembrance for the victims of the Canadian Indian Residential School System, FLB hosts a divisional Orange Shirt Day. Students and staff are encouraged to wear an orange shirt and teachers provide lessons that build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

Into the future, FLB will continue to build capacity in our students and staff in the areas of Truth and Reconciliation. It is through teacher training, celebration of culture and language, and by providing a safe inclusive environment of empathy, understanding, and mutual respect for all people that we will thrive as a division today, tomorrow, and into the future. For more information please visit: <http://www.flbsd.mb.ca>. ■

Barry Pitz is the Superintendent, and Mike Thiessen is the Instruction Curriculum Technology Co-ordinator for Fort La Bosse School Division.

Fort La Bosse School Division (FLB) has had a long standing unique and special relationship with the community of Canupawakpa Dakota Nation, whereby students within our schools have had their lives enhanced by the rich culture of the Dakota people.

FLB recognizes the importance of every child that attends our schools. Our goal is to help all students feel safe and learn every day. Our division's Indigenous Education Framework, which was created by a committee of dedicated educators, school board members, elders, and community representatives, provides the framework to bring the rich culture and the respect to the Dakota Peoples and all people.

Recovering What We've Lost, and More

By Reg Klassen,
Frontier School Division



As we step into the 2021/22 school year, we do so filled with hope that our future is brighter than it seemed a year ago. Our collective understanding of this virus is much greater, we have a vaccine that works, testing that we can administer ourselves, and we know how to keep it from spreading. Armed with this knowledge and the excitement that our students are returning, we are eager to begin the year. For Frontier School Division, we hope this means no more alternate days, no more locked down communities, and no more remote learning in an untenable internet environment, leaving us with uninterrupted learning.

With the many interruptions to learning last year we know our students will require a significant amount of recovery learning, particularly in reading development. In response, we have partnered with The Learning Bar in a pilot project entitled “Educational Prosperity.” This strategic partnership outlines an ambitious three-year plan designed to markedly improve the reading skills of the children in our division. The research is clear: children that become skilled readers by age eight or nine make a successful transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” We are beginning with nine schools.

The plan includes professional learning for teachers and instructional coaches, assessment and monitoring systems, literacy training for families, effective interventions, and learning activities. Our first phase began this spring with sessions on leadership development for our Senior Administrative team with a focus on the following topics: achieving focus; prioritizing the student; establishing and maintaining organization; building shared instructional leadership; and using evidence for decision-making and action. We included school administration and this fall teachers were included in the sessions so they could begin their own professional learning journey. Our vigorous plan focuses on closing



A student from Frontier School Division does his schoolwork outside.

the existing gap between Indigenous learners and non-Indigenous learners.

A second initiative that does not yet have feet on the ground is the design of a vigorous Indigenous language program that will involve community, Indigenous ways of learning, better support for current language teachers, and the grassroots development of language teachers. In our division we have five of the seven officially recognized Indigenous languages that are spoken in Manitoba. One important outcome of this vision is to achieve a future where school communities communicate with one another in Indigenous language, just as well as they do in English. Quite simply stated, our division intends to move from our current place as an Indigenous language instruction participant to an Indigenous language instruction leader.

This much needed transformative strategy includes four commitments, each with a detailed rationale and measures of success in a five-year plan for implementation. They are:

1. Real revitalization of Indigenous languages, in all areas of life, for all Frontier School Division families;
2. Honouring Indigenous language teachers;
3. Academic excellence through Indigenous ways of learning and knowing; and

4. Using seven evidence-based language teaching methods that work.

This robust plan demonstrates our division's commitment to respecting Indigenous languages and to the reclamation, revitalization, preservation, and promotion of them. We are also aware that each community is at a different place of readiness and language planning, and we hope to work alongside the communities to engage students, support language teachers, and to create the space for Indigenous Languages to be the foundation in all schools. Our goal is to strengthen the relationships between language and the stories, animals, and lands, and to one another.

It has made for a busy and challenging fall, especially as we establish protocols for health and safety that are again different than when we were last in school. That said, we are excited to move forward. ■

Reg Klassen is the Chief Superintendent of Frontier School Division, the immediate Past President of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA), and the Past President of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS).



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A Mile in Your Shoes: Learning Alongside Principals Through School Visits

By Tyler Moran, Interlake School Division



“I can talk you through our school’s improvement in literacy achievement or I can share how we navigated half a dozen funding applications to start our new breakfast program for students. Or, I can teach you how to disarm a flooding urinal in 30 seconds flat. Your call. Either way, I’m glad you came to visit. We’re going to have a really good day together.”



This greeting, shared with me by a now-retired public-school principal during a school visit I participated in years ago as an aspiring administrator in desperate need of mentorship, rests firmly, and fondly, in my memory. On that day and in the many days that have followed, it is increasingly clear to me that schools are at the heart of our communities and play a unique and impactful role in the lives of students and their families. And, principals are the heart of schools.

Years later in a new place and in a new role, opportunities to learn with and from principals are a core strategy in the pursuit of continuous improvement for the Interlake School Division (ISD). ISD’s Superintendent’s Department is in year three of an ongoing series of full-day school visits twice per year to each school in the division. Spending time alongside diverse and talented principals engaged in their craft in real-time is essential to better understanding their work and its impact on students and communities.

Though a full day visit to a school offers only a snapshot in time, the view is truly fascinating. We spend time in classrooms with students and

their teachers, meet with specialist staff groups to learn about school-specific opportunities and challenges, and we sit or walk and talk with principals to reflect on all we’ve seen and heard throughout the school and to consider the supports needed for ongoing success. To be clear, each visit to a school begins with a thoughtfully scripted plan and then unfolds as school days do, coloured by each environment’s personalities and with a spotlight on the critical role of the principal within it on full display.

We see teaching principals in our smallest schools shifting from classroom responsibilities to student services roles to outdoor playground duty in full winter gear. We see principals in mid-sized schools modelling and co-teaching in multi-age classrooms while engaging parents, volunteers, and special guests in full stride. We see the principals of our largest schools leading their staff teams through new health and safety protocols while ensuring meaningful opportunities for student and community voice at every turn.

A mile in the shoes of each principal in the ISD varies dramatically despite the division being relatively small and connected by population, geography, and focus. Though the

snapshots collected during school visits differ distinctly, evidence of principals flourishing as creative, passionate, and empathetic leaders is common and familiar regardless of location.

To end where this submission began – with the words of the principal who graciously hosted my first school visit years ago – I recall that we did, in fact, talk through the story behind the school’s literacy programming and its winding road to success. I did walk away with a handful of notes which have helped me to navigate funding applications over the years. And, though we skipped the tutorial on flooding urinals, I have a feeling the crescent wrench tucked safely in the principal’s drawer was passed on to their successor with clear instructions for the inevitable moment of need. Looking back on it now, we did have a really good day together that day and I was glad I went to visit.

Our families and communities put their trust in public schools and the principals that lead them. We leave each school visit confident of many more really great days to come. ■

Tyler Moran is an Assistant Superintendent for the Interlake School Division.

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pc.gc.ca

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Learning in Limbo: How Local Control of Education Counts in a Crisis

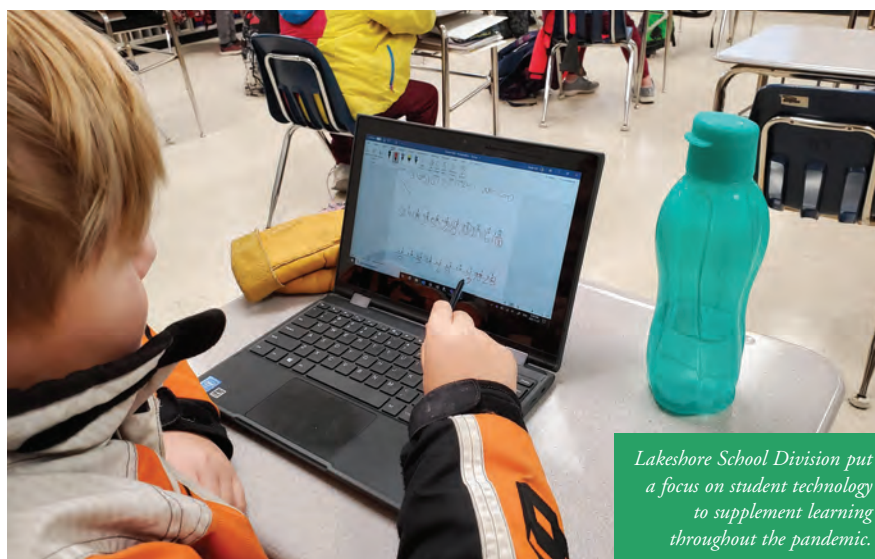
By Darlene Willetts, Lakeshore School Division

Inside the Lakeshore School Division board room in August 2020, we were listening to the daily press conference with Dr. Brent Roussin when he announced that the number of daily COVID-19 cases went from 0 to over 100. Our blood pressure also went up as text messages started flying between senior administrators as we asked: what should education in Lakeshore look like for the 2020/2021 school year? Should we stick with the plans that were already in place, or did we need to revisit them? How could we leverage what is unique in Lakeshore to make it through the year with minimal disruption?

We describe our division as a small school division with big ideas, and we believe that we can create thriving communities and individuals through education. The world is changing and how we do education needs to change, too. We decided that we need to change our thoughts of education for the upcoming year.

In two short days, there was a complete overhaul of our plan. We leveraged the fact that we have a small populations but large spaces. We were able to move all of our classes to accommodate two metres and social distancing. Our director of operations and our maintenance technician set up sample classrooms for principals to be able to visualize what their school would look like. Our custodians hauled out loads and loads of extra furniture and classroom extras. Teachers moved classrooms to gyms, multipurpose rooms, and libraries. Technology was busy supporting the setup of projectors, speakers, and many, many, many document cameras. But through it all, the desire to have all students in our building every day was the guiding light.

For several years, Lakeshore's Board of Trustees have invested in technology for our staff and students. All of our teachers are equipped with their own laptops and have ample technology available to them. We have also put a focus on student technology and all



Lakeshore School Division put a focus on student technology to supplement learning throughout the pandemic.

students in Grades 5 to 12 have their own assigned laptop with the ability for it to be taken home as needed. Since laptops were vital this year, our technology department put together additional laptops for each student from Grades 2 to 12, as well as ones available for any students in Grade 1 who might require one for remote learning.

Grade 5 to 12 teachers set up their classwork on Microsoft TEAMS and spent time preparing students to use TEAMS to house their work, submit assignments, and reach out to their teachers. We focused two of the returned professional development (PD) days on mini sessions on all the technology programs and resources available to teachers. These sessions were hosted by division personnel with expertise in these areas. All sessions were recorded giving staff the ability to return to these sessions throughout the year to support their technology needs.

When the province decided that all students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 would have the option to be in home programming after Christmas, we had a small group of students that chose this option. We held the line all year that while teachers may have to teach across two classrooms, we were not going to add to their workload by teaching

students remotely as well. We had forged a connection with Brandon University's Faculty of Education through other initiatives and we reached out to these students and our local sub pool to hire additional teachers for those two weeks. There was a four-day planning session before Christmas with these teachers so they could start teaching their students right after Christmas. Parents of students who attended this program gave great feedback to all of the teachers in this group.

Throughout Manitoba there were 37 unique approaches to learning in the pandemic as each school division maximized their regional autonomy to maximize student learning. With the support of our board, and the talented teaching and support staff in our school and division office, Lakeshore managed to make it through the whole year with only 17 days of students learning remotely. The ability to make this happen is a testament to the importance of local control of education where the unique factors in each school division are understood by their boards and administration. ■

Darlene Willetts is Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer for Lakeshore School Division.

Using Data as a Flashlight

By Taylor Fenn and Marnie Wilson, Louis Riel School Division



The Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) is committed to using data for progress monitoring and decision making. Data involves a growth mindset and a solid grounding in data ethics as much as it involves proper tools and processes. In line with goal 3.2 of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), LRSD's Data Literacy Initiative was originally launched in the 2019/2020 school year. After a pause due to the pandemic, this important initiative was officially restarted in January 2021.

The Data Literacy Initiative is directly tied to the MYSP's focus on creating a culture of inquiry and responsibility that focuses on ensuring all learners demonstrate the aptitudes, skills, and knowledge to be autonomous and confident in their innate ability to achieve goals and become life-long learners. This is a culture in which all parents/guardians demonstrate support for the MYSP and help nurture inquiry and responsibility in their schools. Staff create and foster this by demonstrating they are members of on-going cycles of collaborative evidence-informed inquiry to improve practices and systems.

This important initiative involves four commitments. On behalf of the students and communities it serves, LRSD strives to be:

1. Data informed;
2. Data ready;
3. Data literate; and
4. Ethical data stewards.

One valuable tool in LRSD's data literacy journey is Microsoft Power BI, an analytics application by Microsoft. Power BI helps create a visual display of data and helps staff easily interact with data while quickly gaining insights.

At the end of the 2020/2021 school year, LRSD launched its Data Discover Dashboard that allows the public to interact with student achievement data. To see more, visit <https://www.lrsd.net/About-Us/Data-Literacy/Pages/default.aspx>. The public-facing web-based tool, which can be found on the division's website, attempts to make data accessible and understandable to everyone in the LRSD community. It illuminates the effects of socio-economic status (SES) and the division's Greatest Areas of Need (GAN).

"Understanding where gaps exist directly impacts our decision making," said Christian Michalik, Superintendent. "Looking to the current data, one can deduce that our work to provide equitable access to supports has been helping improve student outcomes; however, more work is clearly necessary to ensure all students can thrive and flourish in LRSD."

While the public Data Discovery Dashboard provides a snapshot of

high-level data, LRSD also launched more detailed divisional and school-specific reports that allow staff to quickly gain insight into student achievement and engagement, recovery learning, attendance, technology deployment, and more. The Data Literacy Leadership Team, which is a group of administrators, teachers, and divisional staff, helped champion the launch of locally focused Power BI reports through Collaborative Learning Cycles and training sessions.

"More than 90 per cent of classroom teachers, student services teachers, and school administrators agreed that Power BI reports will be helpful in supporting tasks such as planning for instruction, identifying students in need of extra supports, making recommendations for class placements and supporting report card writing," said Clarke Hagan, Director of Information Technology Systems. "The hope is that Power BI reports become commonplace in classrooms throughout the division."

LRSD will continue its focus on data literacy to effectively identify improvement, successes and needs throughout the 2021/2022 school year and beyond. Further developing and implementing research-informed teaching practice and learning theory will also be important to remaining responsive to students' specific needs.

"This journey to improvement must be co-created alongside students to ensure they are empowered to self-monitor and adjust their pace and path," said Michalik. "If this work is connected to the development of greater intercultural understanding, compassion, and mutual respect, then our students made most vulnerable by barriers created by systemic racism will experience positive changes in engagement, achievement, and well-becoming." ■

Taylor Fenn is Communications Manager, and Marnie Wilson is Data Literacy Coordinator, for the Louis Riel School Division.



Waywayseecappo First Nation and Park West School Division Educational Partnership

By Colleen Clearsky, Jackie McKee, and Troy Luhowy, Waywayseecappo Education; and Stephen David and Dorelle Fulton, Park West School Division

Waywayseecappo First Nation and Park West School Division entered into a partnership on November 29, 2010, which has greatly enhanced educational outcomes by helping to close the educational gaps of First Nation students and by prioritizing Anishinabe language and culture.

Waywayseecappo First Nation is located within the footprint of Park West School Division, in Treaty Four territory, with a student population of approximately 500 students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12. Prior to the partnership, the community worked hard to provide a high-quality education to its children. This included offering a full-time Kindergarten program, despite only half-time funding for these students. Unfortunately, their efforts were hampered by historic and chronic underfunding by the federal government.

With the start of the partnership, Waywayseecappo School went from class sizes of 33 or more to fewer than 20 students. Funding assistance was provided to ensure that the First Nation School had the same resources and professional development as any other school in the division. Overnight, a chronically underfunded First Nation school reached financial parity with the nearby public schools.

Prior to the partnership, Waywayseecappo received \$3.4 million dollars annually for education funding. As soon as the partnership was formed, funding increased to \$5.3 million. For 2021/2022, the allocation is \$6.7 million. Under the funding model, Waywayseecappo Kindergarten students attend and are funded full time, with Junior Kindergarten attending half time and receiving half time funding. Adult education and off campus students are fully supported with no enrolment caps. A budget is developed in January of each year with approval from Chief and Council.

The governance model for the partnership is based upon the mutual sharing of

A partnership between Waywayseecappo First Nation and Park West School Division has created positive outcomes for the children and community.



expertise by the First Nation leadership, the Director of Education, and Finance Officer. Chief and Council are consulted regularly regarding the education of their students. In addition, Waywayseecappo elects a trustee from the community to the Park West Board of Trustees.

Twice per year, Chief and Council, divisional trustees and administrators and representatives from the federal and provincial levels, meet to discuss strategic plans, review progress, examine literacy and numeracy data, and help identify next steps.

There have been significant positive benefits during the 10 plus years of this partnership. But like many inter-organizational collaborations, there were some early implementation challenges. There existed among some a perceived loss of control by Chief, Council, and community. The partnership has demonstrated that a First Nation can partner with a public school division while retaining its autonomy over educational decisions.

As Director of Education Colleen Clearsky explained, "We get the benefits of being funded at the same level as the public system, we share resources and understandings with our partner, while retaining our autonomy and local control over what is best for our children." She stated that, "Working together collaboratively has resulted in greater accomplishments for both parties as compared to working separately."

The benefits of the educational partnership have been substantial. The First Nation

used the additional funding to invest in staffing, reduce class sizes, and hire specialists. Since the inception of the partnership there has been very little staff turnover combined with a sizable increase in the number of applicants for open positions. There have also been large gains in student attendance rates and a huge reduction in the number of office referrals. And, of course, there have been significant improvements in student performance in literacy and numeracy.

Park West has also benefitted greatly from the partnership. The division now has a greater understanding of First Nation education, culture, and ways of knowing. Economies of scale have been achieved with costs spread over a greater student population. Signing the partnership with Waywayseecappo also countered 12 years of declining enrolment in the division.

Chief Murray Clearsky's early vision has been realized. At the start of the partnership, he was very clear: "Waywayseecappo is perfectly capable of giving its children just as good an education as any public school division. Perfectly capable, that is, if the federal government gave First Nation communities the same funding that public school children receive." ■

Colleen Clearsky is the Director of Education, Jackie McKee is the Financial Officer, and Troy Luhowy is the Principal for Waywayseecappo Education. Stephen David is the Superintendent and CEO, and Dorelle Fulton is the Secretary-Treasurer for Park West School Division.

The Teacher Mediated Option

By Sandra Meilleur, Pine Creek School Division



Eight years ago, Pine Creek School Division implemented a Teacher Mediated Option (TMO), which offers distance learning to any high school in Manitoba. Students dial into an audio teleconferencing system and join the teacher on air for a 50 minute class; all compulsory courses as well as a variety of electives are offered. While the role of the TMO has evolved over the years, the program has done a wonderful job supporting and maintaining the social-emotional and economic academic careers of students, and boasts a 96 per cent graduation success rate.

Currently, the TMO office is located at the Austin Elementary School in Austin, Manitoba. Although the program delivery is in the form of distance education, the synchronous six-day scheduled time-table model is what proves to keep students, under the age of 21, engaged with their course work. This also enables students and families to maintain a positive relationship with a caring school community. The skilled TMO teachers connect with all families virtually through a video platform to deliver instruction and develop relationships, similar to a face-to-face classroom environment. With a focus on accessibility, the teachers also connect occasionally by telephone if connectivity is unstable or unavailable, or with traditional Hutterian Colonies who embrace practices that disallow video.

The families who continue to be positively impacted by Pine Creek's TMO programming are mostly students from Manitoba's remote, rural, and colony communities. This was until we started to see students withdraw from their schools due to COVID-19 nearly two years ago. During the pandemic, we continued to see the significant impact on learning loss and the gaps widening for students across all curricular areas. Pine Creek School Division welcomed the idea of additionally reconnecting and supporting these Manitoban students using our TMO school.

Pine Creek School Division effectively expanded the program as a pilot to serve middle year's students. There were several families from Pine Creek's catchment and surrounding regions that took advantage of the remote learning programming from their homes. These families were able to receive all the benefits that TMO had to offer. These benefits¹ include:

- Synchronous classroom;
- Students engaged in daily classroom routine;
- Staff interact with students in ways that promote personal connection;
- Daily scheduled online classes;
- Students network with peers and are engaged in learning;
- High course completion rate;
- Immediate in class feedback;
- Questioning techniques within the classroom;
- Contact with parents/proctors on a regular basis;

- Family support and connection;
- Opportunity for class discussion, inquiry, analysis, and problem solving with others;
- Collaboration; and
- Student learning is enhanced when students receive and act upon feedback that is given in class.

The middle year's pilot lasted for that year, until the programming transitioned over to the Manitoba Remote Learning Center. Pine Creek's TMO continues to thrive, meeting the needs of all Manitoba's remote learning high school students who strive to attain their credits for graduation. This also has been an asset, as mentioned, in supporting the family's mental health and well-being through the school and connections.

Research shows that students learn best from parental involvement, peer-collaboration, interactive environments, immediate descriptive feedback, ongoing effective assessment, interest-based inquiry, and feeling safe in their networking and learning. Pine Creek's Teacher Mediated Option rises to meet all these expectations.

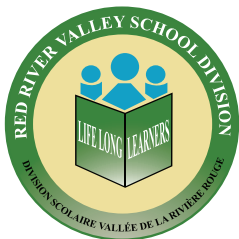
Pine Creek School Division's data is reflective of the increasing graduation rates with our young people who would have likely not graduated if it weren't for the divisional and provincially supported Teacher Mediated Option.

As we continue through the waves of the pandemic, and into the post-pandemic world, we must and will adapt to reach out to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all students, using the most current technology, resources, and best research-based teaching practices. ■

Sandra Meilleur is the Interim Superintendent of Pine Creek School Division.

Reference

1. Teacher Mediated Option (TMO). <http://tmopinecreeksd.weebly.com/info.html>.



Supporting Parents/Caregivers in Red River Valley School Division

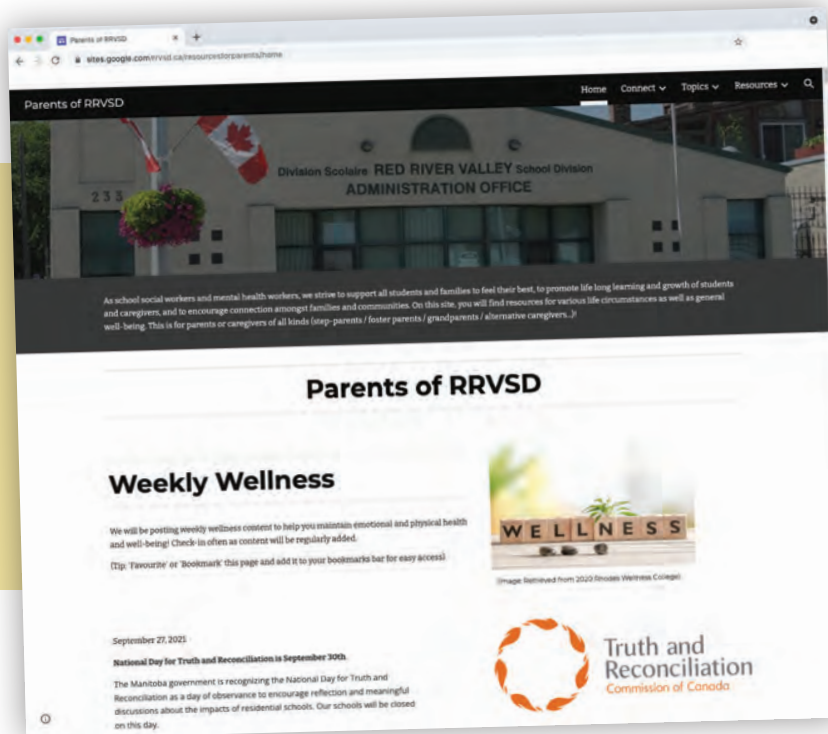
By Darren Skog, Red River Valley School Division

Children who have parents/caregivers who have the capacity to fully support and walk alongside them in their learning journey have a greater chance of achieving their full potential. The concept seems simple, and it makes sense. Life, however, is not that straight of a path. Parents/caregivers of today's children have enormous challenges raising and supporting the children of today. After all, we know that if parents/caregivers are balanced and healthy they can better support the children in their care.

The mission statement of our division states, "The Red River Valley School Division, with the support of families and communities, strives to provide a learning environment that will allow our students the opportunity to achieve to their highest potential in a global environment." We want and need parents/caregivers to be partners with us. It truly does take a village.

So, knowing that one of the keys to our students' success is the ability of parents/caregivers to be active and engaged partners, what can our organization do to help ensure they can truly "be there" for their children? In the Red River Valley School Division (RRVSD), one way this happens is through an initiative called, "Parents of RRVSD." The idea was the brainchild of Jill Siemens, one of the divisional social workers. "Parents of RRVSD" is a Google site that parents/caregivers can access 24 hours, seven days a week to discover strategies to help them on their own personal wellness journey. The rest of the social work team works in collaboration to create and post content. The Google site is updated weekly with a new wellness tip to help parents/caregivers maintain their emotional and physical health and well-being.¹

In speaking with Jill about how the idea came to be, she shared that



Parents of RRVSD includes a wealth of information on everything from wellness to Truth and Reconciliation.

at the start of the pandemic it was especially challenging to connect with parents in RRVSD. She recognized that a parent's role in their child's education tends to be focused on academics but also recognized the importance of the parent's role in meeting the social-emotional needs of their children. If parents are struggling emotionally, children can sense this challenge, which can have an impact on their well-being, including their ability to be successful at school.

The overall objective of the initiative is connection. It is extremely important to social workers that they connect with all parents/caregivers of RRVSD, and not just families who are open to their support. By connecting with all parents/guardians, their hope is to normalize that we all can benefit from support, thus reducing the stigma that sometimes accompanies accessing supports related to mental health. The Google site allows

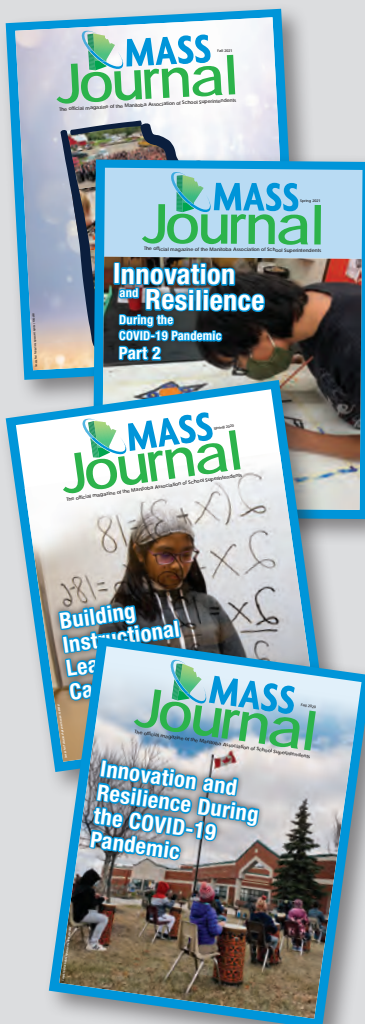
parents to feel connected and they are not alone in this endeavour.

The initiative also involves connecting parents with reliable and practical resources within Southern Manitoba. The Google site helps simplify the quantity of information and connects parents/caregivers with specific mental health and well-being resources that support them and their child. By supporting parents in these ways, the hope is that they will feel empowered to support their children in reaching their full potential. ■

Darren Skog is an Assistant Superintendent for the Red River Valley School Division.

Reference

1. "Parents of RRVSD." <https://sites.google.com/rrvsc.ca/resourcesforparents/home>.



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Connectivity: A Key to Success

By Carolyn Cory, Southwest Horizon School Division

Southwest Horizon School Division (SHSD) is a rural school division located in the southwestern corner of Manitoba. Immense in geographic size, SHSD consists of 13 Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools, with student enrolments ranging from 11 students to 450, and teacher enrolment from a single teacher in a school to 35. A key ingredient in the success of these small, remote schools spread across 6500 square kilometers has been connectivity, and not simply the technical kind.

As we continue to reinvent ourselves throughout the current global pandemic, we reflect on our steep learning curve and wonder why our SHSD team has continued to pull together during this time of crisis when it could have easily fallen apart. The belief system on which we exist has grounded and focused our work throughout these challenging times. SHSD believes in strong connections and we have always known that positive relationships are fundamental to success. Historically, effort and research has been focused on building these strong connections between staff, students, and families within school communities.

In SHSD, we also believe that fostering strong relationships among staff is a key ingredient in school improvement. We have focused our professional learning on school-based, job-embedded, grassroots work supported by local leadership which has resulted in steady, incremental growth for teachers and therefore, continuous improvement for students. This approach has not always been easy in small schools where most teachers are singletons, and the only grade or subject expert in the building. This is not to say that our schools do not possess the conditions for collective efficacy. The strength of a small staff is that members become experts at working across grades and curriculum and believing in each other's



In Southwest Horizon School Division, we believe that fostering strong relationships among staff is a key ingredient in school improvement. Photo taken pre-pandemic.

ability to make a difference; an all-hands-on-deck approach.

But let's not minimize the power of building these relationships across school communities as well. Over time we have developed layer upon layer of connections, a network of connectivity, through division team building including a cohort of school administrators, a student services team, a clinical team, literacy and numeracy coach cohorts, specialty areas groups, grade groups, and more. These teams consist of a professional from each school who collaborates across a system and not solely from within a single building. Each cohort shares key learnings from their own school's work and each division team member returns to their school strengthened. Building these trusting connections beyond their school increases teachers' knowledge about others' work and builds cohesiveness, influence, and goal consensus.

The numerous opportunities for connection through team building

are by no means unique to Southwest Horizon but we believe it has played a key role in the development of middle leaders, continuous improvement, and has maintained momentum throughout the challenges of the pandemic of 2020/2021. We set out to provide opportunities for staff connection within schools and across schools, both in person and via technology, an environment in which all can work to their personal best. We listened carefully, maintained focus, and stayed true to our beliefs. We have and will continue to work diligently to stay connected, build relationships, and appreciate the amazing professionals with whom we are fortunate to collaborate. The ability to maintain stable, adaptive, and confident teams at both the school and division levels has been and will continue to be instrumental in steady, incremental growth. ■

Carolyn Cory is the Superintendent of Southwest Horizon School Division.

Supporting Whole Child Development

By Senior Administration of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division



Our students' healthy growth and development are central to the programming in St. James-Assiniboia School Division.

Our students' healthy growth and development are central to the programming and overall design of the school experience in St. James-Assiniboia School Division (SJASD). Many engaging and meaningful opportunities for students are incorporated before, during, and after school hours to respond to students' interests, promote connections in our local community, and develop strong scaffolds for healthy emotional and social growth. A snapshot of such unique programs celebrates our diverse neighborhoods and highlights our collective commitment to leading with innovation and being responsive to the strengths and needs in our SJASD community.

Literacy Links

Literacy Links provides support for families of students entering all SJASD Kindergarten schools to build a positive home literacy and numeracy environment to best support their child's development. A play-based approach is modelled so families can see how learning can be woven into all aspects of their day. There is a focus well beyond literacy and numeracy; activities and resources address social, emotional, and physical development.

Programming reflects a data-informed response to tools such as the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which measures Kindergarten children's developmental health for school across several domains of child development. Facilitators demonstrate and provide developmentally appropriate and enriching activities that focus on early literacy and numeracy

development while strengthening fine and gross motor skills, self-regulation skills, and communication skills. Families are provided with a rich home package of learning materials that includes games, activities, books, and resources to support their child's growth and development.

Project 11

Project 11 is inspired by former Winnipeg Jets and Manitoba Moose hockey player Rick Rypien's idea to support young children to gain mental health awareness. The True North Foundation developed Project 11 as an online repository of engaging lessons and videos for teachers to help students grow their understanding that they can positively influence their mental wellness by learning skills and adopting healthy coping strategies into their lives. SJASD implements Project 11 programming in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in both English and French. Project 11 uses concepts such as mindfulness practices, increasing self-awareness of feelings and strengths, and building positive relationships.

Learn to swim programs

In partnership with local community groups, SJASD offers a range of learn to swim programming both during the school day and after school. All Grade 3 students participate in a six-week Red Cross Swim @ School water safety and learn to swim program that allows entire classes to participate at different levels of ability.

In addition, the SJASD Adapted Swim Program provides students living

with special needs access to a weekly swimming lesson program. An instructor and educational assistant help students learn lifelong skills of feeling safe and confident in the water.

As a new initiative, The Newcomer Swim pilot program was developed for families new to Canada who are non-swimmers with children attending SJASD in Grades 4 to 12. This program is planned to launch in 2022. Participants will attend community pools to learn essential aquatic safety knowledge and skills.

Although the pandemic circumstances have not permitted our unique Learn to Swim programs, we look forward to restarting as soon as conditions allow.

The Peaceful Village

The Peaceful Village is an after-school program for newcomer youth and their families, which is facilitated by Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP) centered in a human rights and social justice framework. The Peaceful Village operates at the St. James Collegiate Institute and George Waters Middle School site. The program includes academic, social, and financial supports (scholarships) for youth, particularly newcomer youth (ages 12 to 21). Focusing on developing a strong network, increasing self-identity, and empowering students, The Peaceful Village provides space and opportunities for students to achieve their positive potential in life.

Our communities require students to complete public school with skills for life-long learning. Through partnerships and programming, SJASD is providing our students with unique school experiences that will prepare them to succeed and flourish in an ever-changing world. ■

Mike Wake is the Superintendent, and Jenness Moffatt is the Assistant Superintendent for the St. James-Assiniboia School Division.



And the Award Goes To...

By Cathy Tymko, Sunrise School Division

The category of Best Supporting Actor or Actress is oftentimes overlooked and can sometimes be undervalued. The leadership role in public education can fall victim to the same fate when looking in from the outside. As a superintendent, one of my most important roles is to develop an environment in which strong instructional leadership can impact student learning in positive and beneficial ways. And if done well, I get to proudly watch teachers and students on the red carpet receiving their accolades and awards; knowing that the stage was set, the budget managed, the casting completed, and the script directed by numerous divisional and school leaders.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents work hard to put the right people in the right roles throughout their divisions and Sunrise School Division is no different. Each of our schools has a principal as the educational leader on site, and our larger schools have assistant principals in place as well. At the school level, they are also supported by teachers who take on the task of being a team leader in chosen areas. At the divisional level, they are supported by two divisional principals, one divisional resource teacher, and four program leaders. This layered leadership structure brings classroom teachers, school administrators, and divisional support staff onto the same page when it comes to planning and delivering high quality learning opportunities for all students.

Once these roles have been carefully filled, the script needs to be shared with, learned by, and personalized by those leaders. The structures and practices used for rehearsing with the actors are a critical piece owned by the superintendent's team. In Sunrise School Division, like other



Equipping teachers to assess, plan, act, and reflect using relevant student data when designing and delivering quality instruction is the aim across all schools in the division.

divisions, we meet monthly with our leadership team and maintain an educational focus at those meetings. Team leaders from the schools are often a part of the learning journey by attending with their school administrators. Our divisional team members spend the bulk of their time in schools with teachers, but also meet in between the leadership team learning sessions to share the work they are doing in schools, to connect back to the shared purpose, and to assist with planning the next leg of leadership learning needed.

The theme of our current production in Sunrise School Division is the improvement of student learning using data triangulation and responsive teaching practices. The use of school, classroom, and student profiles are anchor practices for all educators, and we use our leaders to help deliver that message throughout the division.

Equipping teachers to assess, plan, act, and reflect using relevant student data when designing and delivering quality instruction is the aim across all schools in the division. Investing heavily in the instructional leaders of our division to work alongside teachers in classrooms as they work towards achieving this goal is a very satisfying and productive role to play.

So, the next time you watch a school play, attend a concert, cheer at a sporting event, pin a report card to the fridge, or send a proud photo to your family and friends, I encourage you to think for a few seconds about the people backstage or behind the curtain. We aren't the star of the show, but we did create the place and space for people to shine. ■

Cathy Tymko is the Superintendent and CEO for the Sunrise School Division.

Hands on Learning at its Finest

By Bev Szymesko,
Turtle River School Division



The new electrical construction facility was completed late Fall 2021.

Hands on learning at its finest with students engaging in areas that they are interested helps to ensure that every student is an active participant in their education and future.

Turtle River School Division is continuing to introduce new trades programming in their division with the addition of a new electrical construction facility. Expected to open late in the Fall 2021, the facility will host their first cohort of students in February 2022. It is exciting news for not only our division but the entire area, as being able to offer this program in our region really fills a niche that was missing. If a student was interested in electrical construction in the past, they would have to move and be away from their family and community in order to take this program, which doesn't make sense when you are still a teenager.

This program will provide students and our region with options that will help them reach their goals and aspirations of working in the electrical trade. Turtle River already offers a strong woodworking, automotive, and human ecology program for students in Grades 7 to 12. Offering programs that support all students is important in Turtle River. As Turtle River is a smaller rural division, it is sometimes challenging to offer students the same variety of programs and courses that can be found in a much larger city school division.

Turtle River is able to offer a lot of programs and this addition will continue to grow our quality educational opportunities for students. Smaller

divisions are able to provide more support and hands-on, one-on-one educational experiences. We are able to offer most of the academic core courses that students need to get into university and college. But with finite resources and access to some of the industries, it is sometimes difficult to provide access to some of the trades. Our neighbouring divisions in our area do a great job in complementing what we have to offer. Now, we will be able to complement them with this new program to our region.

We know that some students are more hands-on than others and some students have aspirations for careers in the trades. The more exposure and experience in a program such as this one will help them determine what career they see themselves enjoying. Hands on learning at its finest with students engaging in areas that they are interested helps to ensure that every student is an active participant in their education and future. Many students and our communities in our region will benefit significantly with this program. As students achieve their qualifications for Level 1 Apprenticeship, it will help support their growth and motivate them to reach their dreams.

Turtle River School Division is appreciative of receiving funding for this almost two-million-dollar project. This is a game-changer for our region and opens the doors to so many trades for students in our region. It is not just the electrical construction but the potential for other programs that can possibly be taught in this facility that complement each other. Carpentry, plumbing, and welding are just some other possible trades that can be branched off of this one program and will support and promote students in seeing themselves working in a trade in their future. ■

Bev Szymesko is Superintendent of Turtle River School Division.



An Authentic Implementation of Board Priorities

By Marianne Fenn, Western School Division

Western School Division's Board of Trustees establish a four-year priorities plan that includes key strategies to help ensure success in achieving these divisional goals. For several years, we have been utilizing a collaborative team process to ensure that we breathe life into the Board of Trustees' planning. The board priorities have been separated into two thematic areas: 1) learning, and 2) culture-based goals.

Correspondingly, we have created Learning and Culture Divisional Teams. Membership in either team is assigned to all school administrators in the division, all senior administrators, senior administrative staff (including secretary-treasurer, supervisor of operations, and human resources manager), and divisional coaches. The superintendent and assistant superintendent move between and provide support to both teams. Each team determines the outcomes they need to achieve and requests and receives funding to make their project plans work. Trustees have enthusiastically supported the teams' requests as they can see their priorities coming to life.

Doing this authentically and holistically requires the dedication of participants and requires prioritizing finding the time in everyone's overfull schedules, to ensure all participants collaborate, vision, research, and plan together. We have created the time to make this work by committing to substantively adjusting our administrative council meetings to significantly shorten business and information items, and dedicating all of the remaining time to our Learning and Culture Teams to allow their thinking, dreaming, planning, and process to take the lead.

The results of the twin team approach have been to see authentic implementation of board priorities into all aspects of school and divisional planning. It has also resulted in increasing leadership development within all staff groups of the division. To support individual projects, ad-hoc team members from any of Western School Division's

staff or stakeholder groups can be invited to join the teams to help support individual projects and endeavours where the invitees' energy, expertise, and/or passions would help contribute to a success.

One example would be in the development of our *Focus on the Future Career Development Continuum*. The team first looked at currently offered programming available across grade levels and sought to bolster those offerings where possible with opportunities found in the school and community. Ad-hoc team members (guidance counsellors, career education teachers, divisional career coordinator, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) contributed. The result is an important framing document that reflects not just the division's opportunities, but our values, our community minded perspective, and our wishes to develop future ready learners and graduates.

Other projects include materials to support hiring such as a promotional video in English and French about the City of Morden and surrounding areas, and reframing interview questions which target both the experience and training and determine the right fit with Western School Division.

We have developed innovations to support the hiring of candidates with desired specialized qualifications (i.e. the ability to teach French Immersion) to ensure we have the right people working for us. Our teams have supported development and sustaining an understanding of high quality project based learning experiences in our classrooms with both training for staff and funding for resources. Other projects include improved design of learning environments, development of creative common spaces, and technology advances.

With our teams' approach, we are able to ensure robust, multidisciplinary perspectives at all phases from design to implementation of projects. We are able to more accurately anticipate concerns or take advantage of efficiencies. Our teams allow us to be confident that the good work we do meets the priorities of the board, and that our students, staff, parents, and communities are served by the teams' efforts. ■

Marianne Fenn is Assistant Superintendent of the Western School Division.

Western School Division's Ready for Life Continuum is one of the products of their divisional Learning Team.





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