

MASS **Journal**

Spring 2021

The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

Innovation and Resilience

**During the
COVID-19 Pandemic
Part 2**



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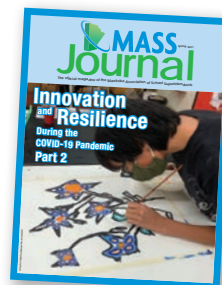
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On the cover: This Grade 7 student from Joseph H. Kerr School, Snow Lake, is working on an art project called "Flowers in the Style of...". The class was challenged to express the theme of "flowers" by combining their style with that of a famous artist – in this case, Norval Morrisseau. The student spent time researching this Indigenous artist and created a PowerPoint presentation about the artist's life and painting style, then created an original composition using style cues from the artist he studied. He combined angular shapes (from a favourite video game) with colours and images typical of the "Woodlands School" started by Morrisseau to paint his untitled flowers. He worked very hard on this project and received an outstanding overall grade. This photo was provided by Frontier School Division. You can learn more about how this Division is connecting with students, who are often remote, during the pandemic. Turn to page 20.





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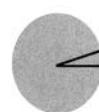


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Professional leadership starts here



Assurer un leadership professionnel

Over a year ago, the Province of Manitoba asked members of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) to step up and take a leadership role in the fight against COVID-19 in our province. They asked us to do the legwork, the planning, the preparedness, and the delivery of Public Health guidelines and Manitoba Education protocols in our schools. MASS members made it possible for Public Health and Manitoba Education to eventually develop a toolkit and guidelines that continue to be used in our schools as we now find ourselves in a third wave of this pandemic.

Our members have cooperated with the province at every turn, providing professional leadership to our staff, students, and communities that has included compassion and strength, while also ensuring safety and continued learning in our classrooms. There is a toll to leading through a global pandemic for more than a year, and the MASS membership is feeling that toll. And yet, we persevere, because we are professional, we are strong, and we are committed to the needs of our students and families.

MASS members have proven day after day, throughout this pandemic, that we can lead our schools with innovation and resilience. We have proven that we can provide our students with education, supports, and programming that will help them to become confident and successful learners throughout their lives, even while navigating through a global pandemic.

We will continue, as MASS members, to support one another and learn from our peers in order to provide the leadership our staff, students, and families require.

Pauline Clarke
President

Il y a plus d'un an, le gouvernement du Manitoba demandait aux membres de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) de passer à l'action et de jouer un rôle de leadership dans la lutte contre la COVID-19 dans notre province. Le gouvernement nous a demandé de nous occuper du travail sur le terrain, de la planification, de la préparation et de la transmission des directives de santé publique et des protocoles du ministère de l'Éducation du Manitoba dans nos écoles. Avec la collaboration des membres de la MASS, la Santé publique et le ministère de l'Éducation ont pu éventuellement développer des outils et des directives qui sont toujours utilisés dans nos écoles, alors que nous traversons la troisième vague de la pandémie.

Nos membres ont collaboré avec le gouvernement provincial à chaque tournant et ont exercé un leadership professionnel auprès de notre personnel, des élèves et des communautés, tout en faisant preuve de compassion et de vigueur et en veillant à la sécurité et à la continuité de l'apprentissage en classe. Le fait de prendre en main la lutte contre une pandémie mondiale pendant plus d'un an a des répercussions et ce poids se fait sentir sur les membres de la MASS. Malgré tout, nous persévérons, car nous sommes des professionnels, nous sommes forts et nous sommes déterminés à répondre aux besoins des élèves et des familles.

En pleine pandémie, les membres de la MASS prouvent jour après jour que nous pouvons diriger nos écoles avec innovation et résilience. Nous avons démontré que nous réussissons à offrir aux élèves l'éducation, le soutien et les programmes qui les aideront à apprendre avec confiance et succès tout au long de leur vie, même en traversant une pandémie mondiale.

Les membres de la MASS continueront de s'entraider et d'apprendre les uns des autres afin d'exercer le leadership dont notre personnel, les élèves et les familles ont besoin.

Pauline Clarke
La présidente

The Spring issue of the *MASS Journal* brings with it connections to celebration and accomplishment. This is the time of year when students and families celebrate academic success and Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) members celebrate the many accomplishments in areas such as student learning, staff professional development, and leadership in the province.

MASS exists to provide leadership for public education by advocating in the best interest of learners and by supporting our members through professional service (<http://mass.mb.ca>). The past year has challenged us to provide leadership in ways never dreamed of as we led the public education system through the waves of the coronavirus pandemic, with all its intricacies. Working with numerous new structures and partners to support the health and wellness of students and staff, and keep schools open as much as possible, has been a herculean task. The unwavering commitment to serve our communities has been appreciated and acknowledged by families we serve as they too have been navigating change.

MASS members have also supported each other in ways that have added to our repertoire – regular virtual meetings have become the most consistent way of connecting with others regardless of agenda. The opportunity to learn together during our Leadership Development and Professional Learning sessions this winter provided the occasion for dialogue and expanding our thinking. Though unable to see each other in person, connections have been forged and strengthened as we work towards our common goals of providing leadership to public education and supporting our members.

The remainder of this school year and the upcoming 2021 – 2022 year brings with it new challenges for leadership. As stated in the ‘MASS Statements of Belief in Public Education’:

Public School is the only societal institution where children from diverse backgrounds gather for a common purpose – to become educated. The challenge of educators is to define what we believe about education in a manner that encompasses the values of a democratic society, respects the inherent uniqueness of the individual student, and at the same time provides equity of opportunity and ensures achievement for all.

MASS members will continue to put students and their learning first as we navigate new waters together. Thank you for the leadership that you provide.

Barb Isaak
Executive Director



Le numéro du printemps du *MASS Journal* apporte un vent de célébration et de réalisation. Durant cette période de l'année, les élèves et les familles célèbrent les réussites scolaires et les membres de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) célèbrent les nombreuses réalisations dans des domaines, comme l'apprentissage des élèves, le perfectionnement professionnel et le leadership provincial.

Le rôle de la MASS consiste à exercer son leadership dans le secteur de l'éducation publique en faisant valoir les intérêts des apprenants et en soutenant ses membres par des services professionnels (<http://mass.mb.ca>). La dernière année nous a poussés à exercer notre leadership d'une manière inattendue, alors que nous avons guidé le système d'éducation publique à travers les vagues provoquées par la pandémie du coronavirus, dans un contexte complexe. Nous avons dû accomplir la tâche herculéenne de travailler avec un grand nombre de nouvelles structures et de nouveaux partenaires afin de veiller à la santé et au bien-être des élèves et du personnel et de garder les écoles ouvertes, dans la mesure du possible. Notre inébranlable détermination à servir nos communautés a été appréciée et reconnue par les familles, car celles-ci doivent aussi faire face au changement.

Les membres de la MASS s'entraident aussi en utilisant des moyens qui s'ajoutent à notre répertoire. En effet, des rencontres virtuelles régulières nous permettent de rester en contact pour diverses questions. Durant l'hiver, la possibilité d'apprendre ensemble durant les séances de développement du leadership et de formation professionnelle nous a permis de dialoguer et d'approfondir la réflexion. Même s'il n'est pas possible de nous voir en personne, des liens sont forgés et renforcés alors que nous travaillons pour atteindre nos buts communs qui consistent à exercer notre leadership au chapitre de l'éducation publique et à soutenir nos membres.

Le reste de la présente année scolaire ainsi que l'année 2021-2022 apporteront de nouveaux défis à relever en matière de leadership. Comme il est mentionné dans les déclarations de principes de la MASS concernant l'éducation publique :

L'école publique est la seule institution sociétale qui réunit des enfants de divers horizons dans un but commun : s'instruire. Le défi que doivent relever les éducatrices et les éducateurs consiste à définir nos convictions en matière d'éducation afin de refléter les valeurs d'une société démocratique, qui respecte l'unicité inhérente de l'élève, tout en offrant l'égalité des chances à tous et à toutes et en veillant à leur réussite.

Les membres de la MASS vont continuer de placer en tête de liste les élèves et l'apprentissage, alors que nous naviguerons ensemble en eaux nouvelles. Merci de jouer un rôle de leadership.

Barb Isaak
La directrice générale

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Superintendent/CEO
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Division scolaire franco-
manitobaine (DSFM)

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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. ■



LEGO Flex:

A student carries out an experiment at a partner organization's laboratory.

How an Alternative Program Collided with at Home Learning

By Darlene Willetts and Donald Nikkel, Lakeshore School Division

Checkpoints on roads, the hard glare of bare shelves, fear of an unseen contagion, bricks through windows, political unrest.

The year was 1720 and France was reeling from what would be the final major outbreak of the Bubonic plague. Half of the population of Marseille succumbed to the illness and there were not enough living to bury the dead. The pandemic caused severe hardship and devastation throughout the country, not only with the staggering loss of life but also through upheaval to systems that had once bound society together.

Fast forward 300 years and we are once again coping with the effects of a pandemic. Over one year after it first arrived in Manitoba, COVID-19 continues to stretch and stress our societal systems, and we find ourselves once more at a point where we are reeling with loss and change. On the one side are structures that we are familiar with and on the other side is an unknown landscape of challenges. Over the past year in education, we have had to pivot and then pivot again and yet again to adapt to the changes to our scientific knowledge of the virus, infection rates, best safety practices, and then an education review. Through these changes we

have seen educators stepping forward with a remarkable array of creative thinking to address the challenges of how to best teach children in this fluid landscape.

One of the most notable changes caused by COVID-19 over the past year has been a shift from learning occurring in a school building to learning taking place at home. This has taken a number of different forms, from whole scale, short-term system shifts where all students are at home, to medium-term trends of parents deciding to homeschool. While there has been widespread acknowledgement that for the vast majority of students, learning takes place best in person with their

teacher, there has also been opportunity to hone the way in which we deliver education remotely.

As we rounded the corner into the fall of 2020, Lakeshore School Division not only saw the need to provide home based education for students who were medically vulnerable to COVID-19, but also a doubling of home-school enrollments. While accommodating students with medical needs was necessary, the increased interest in homeschooling was concerning. Traditionally, homeschooled students perform quite well academically (Ray, Brian D.) but generally the parents who decide to homeschool do so after careful deliberation and over a period of time where they gather resources and determine what is academically best for their child.

In contrast, when it came to the 2020 – 2021 school year, there was not time for lengthy deliberation and anecdotally, decisions were being made based on perceived risks of COVID-19, with educational needs being a trailing consideration. As a division, we were concerned that these students might not only suffer academically, but given the compound nature of the pandemic and imposed isolation, there was a serious question of how we could support these students and help provide a well-rounded education that incorporated both academics and overall student well-being.

Education in Europe during the Early Renaissance period was limited and focused on a relatively prescribed course of academic study, but as the Bubonic plague raged in France, an eight-year-old Jean Jacques Rousseau was quietly growing older in Geneva. While best known for his book, “The Social Contract,” in which he questioned the authority of monarchs to rule, he also wrote a much lesser-known book entitled, “Emile or On Education.” In Emile, Rousseau outlined the education that he believed would be needed to create the type of person that could participate in a modern democracy. This education included the development of character, hands-on exploration of the world, instruction in a trade, and lastly, how

to make a “loving and feeling being.” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). While math and literature were taught, they were not seen as ends in themselves but rather as tools that could be used to help an individual navigate the world and become the citizens that society needed.

How do we meet the needs of students when they are at home? How do we support a well-rounded education that encompasses a wide variety of outcomes that goes beyond academics and incorporates elements that contribute to character development, well-being, and democratic citizenship?

In order to address this challenge, we reached back to our previous experience of offering alternative programs. In 2015, Lakeshore School Division created LEGO (Lakeshore Educational Growth Opportunities) and began offering alternative, off-campus programming for students who were not fully engaged in regular classes. The program leveraged an alternative setting, a dedicated staff, and relevant community involvement. Over the years, the structure proved to be highly effective at re-engaging students in education and/or helping them transition into the work force.

In the fall of 2020, Lakeshore combined what we learned in our previous experience with alternative programs and launched LEGO Flex. The goal for the program was to find a way to create and then leverage local relationships to create a more holistic learning environment for students, which included academic achievement as well as community involvement. Key to the LEGO Flex program was hiring a dedicated coordinator who was responsible for linking together parents, schools, and students to develop a learning plan that is unique to each individual and creates a sense of connectedness and community. While the learning plans are inherently flexible in nature and include various combinations of in-school and at home learning, all plans must include both academics and community engagement.

There is no set path for students in LEGO Flex. There are components that make up the program and learning

goals that need to be met, but it is a co-creation between the students, parents, LEGO Flex coordinator, and teachers. The first step in the process is for parents to fill out an application for the program. Following this step, the LEGO Flex coordinator meets with the family and begins to create individual plans for each student, weaving together input from classroom teachers, available resources, and learning goals for each student. After the plan is created the LEGO coordinator works with the student, family, community partners, and dedicated program teachers who provide academic content.

While the program has continued to evolve over the course of the school year, and there remains the process of data collection and analysis, from a preliminary qualitative standpoint it appears as though the efforts have been well worthwhile. We are confident that the students have seen significant benefit in receiving an education that is multi-faceted and includes both academics and well-being.

When we look back at this moment in time from the vantage point of history, I imagine that we will see a number of impacts that COVID-19 has had on our society and educational landscape. Whatever the future holds, I hope that it is one in which education is seen as a holistic endeavour where we collectively work towards creating thriving individuals and communities. ■

Darlene Willetts is Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer for the Lakeshore School Division. Donald Nikkel is Superintendent of HR and an Alternative Program Director for the Lakeshore School Division.

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Contact the MASS office for an English version of this article.



COVID-19 :

santé mentale et cadres supérieurs

Par Alain Laberge, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM)

C'était le mardi 28 janvier 2020. Le ministère de la Santé du Manitoba publie un premier communiqué portant sur le « nouveau coronavirus ». Nous en avons certes entendu parler, mais les risques de contamination étaient faibles et le virus était à des milliers de kilomètres de chez nous. La Chine allait fermer ses frontières et comme une bonne vieille grippe, ce nouveau coronavirus ne serait bientôt qu'un mauvais souvenir. <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.fr.html?archive=&item=46797>

Hélas, ce virus ne connaissant ni frontière, ni race, ni genre s'est répandu comme une trainée de poudre et a perturbé la vie de tout un chacun sur notre planète. Lorsque le virus a fait son entrée au Canada, les gens l'ont comparé à n'importe quel autre virus. Les questions n'ont toutefois pas tardé : Et si ça nous touchait? Et si ce virus s'invitait dans nos hôpitaux, nos maisons, nos écoles! La tension était de plus en plus palpable. Il ne me sert à rien de vous raconter la suite. Nous ne la connaissons que trop bien.

Faire le lien entre COVID-19 et santé mentale était facile, direz-vous, et vous avez raison. Toutefois, derrière cette vérité

de La Palice, cessons de nous enfouir la tête dans le sable et de nous cacher à nous-mêmes cette réalité qui est de plus en plus fatale : à force de nous occuper du bien-être des autres, nous nous oublions. À force de tenir à bout de bras nos collègues, nos familles, nos amis, notre division scolaire, nous ne nous rendons pas compte que nous mettons toutes nos tripes sur la table et que nous nous épuisons. Comme si notre travail de cadre n'était pas assez difficile, nous jouons aux super-héros-héroïnes, car nous n'avons pas le droit de laisser paraître que nous aussi nous vivons des moments difficiles.

Lunch sur un coin de table... réunions... café... encore des réunions... et encore du café. Notre système nerveux est en constante alerte. Le téléphone sur la table de nuit, au cas où. Un texto à 23 h, nous y répondons tout de suite, car peut-être que demain nous n'aurons pas le temps d'y répondre. Tout va très vite. Nous commençons une drôle de diète : Pepto-Bismol pour nos brûlures d'estomac, puis une canette de Boost, car nous ne digérons plus aussi bien qu'avant. Est-ce trop stéréotypé? Peut-être, mais sachez qu'en 2017, la D^{re} Salima Hamouche révélait dans sa thèse doctorale les données

suivantes sur les personnes qui occupent un poste de cadre supérieur :

- 19,5 % d'entre eux souffrent de détresse psychologique;
- 20,5 % ont une consommation d'alcool qui pourrait entraîner une dépendance;
- 11,7 % des cadres ont dit consommer des médicaments psychotropes;
- 2,3 % éprouvent des symptômes d'épuisement professionnel;
- 2,9 % présentent des signes de dépression. (Gilbert, M-H., 2019)

Lors d'une conférence en 2019, donc assez récemment, Marie-Hélène Gilbert, professeure agrégée au Département de management de l'Université Laval, indique que les facteurs suivants contribuent à la détérioration de la santé mentale d'un cadre :

- insécurité d'emploi;
- horaires de travail difficiles;
- empiètement du travail sur la vie personnelle;
- ambiguïté des rôles;
- manque de reconnaissance. (Marin, Stéphanie, 2017).

Elle ajoute : « Les gestionnaires ne peuvent plus se déconnecter du travail. Aujourd'hui, leurs employés leur envoient

Ignorer les symptômes qui nous apparaissent les uns après les autres est néfaste et ne fait que repousser l'inévitable.

constamment des messages textes, et ils s'attendent à une réponse quasi instantanée. On observe aussi un sentiment d'isolement social à mesure qu'un employé grimpe dans la hiérarchie.

Plusieurs études confirment que de 20 à 49 % des cadres supérieurs souffrent de grande détresse, ce qui est une proportion élevée que la population générale.

Plusieurs cadres signalent des troubles du sommeil. Plusieurs cadres sont aussi très hésitants à parler de leur santé mentale : plus de 65 % d'entre eux avouent cacher leurs émotions (Trudel, Pierre Luc, 2019).

Si vous croyez que ces données nous brossent un portrait peu reluisant, sachez qu'en temps de COVID-19, la situation s'est détériorée en lien avec la charge de travail directe et indirecte que la pandémie occasionne aux dirigeants. C'est sans compter que le monde de l'éducation a bien changé au cours des 20 dernières années. Il faut vraiment avoir la fibre et le dévouement de vouloir changer les choses lorsque nous acceptons ces postes qui, soyons honnêtes, ne sont plus aussi gratifiants qu'avant.

Occuper un poste de cadre en 2021 n'est pas un travail de tout repos. Comment en sommes-nous arrivés à ce point de non-retour? Nous devons absolument cesser de faire comme si de rien n'était. Nous devons cesser de repousser notre santé aux prochaines vacances qui, en passant, ne seront probablement pas des vacances, car nous aurons notre portable, notre téléphone et resterons branchés la majorité du temps.

Nous devons développer l'aide, l'appui et le partage entre collègues. Nous devons avoir la force de répondre à la question si souvent posée : Comment ça va? De dire que tout n'est pas rose et que nous vivons des moments difficiles. MASS est une organisation extraordinaire, et par son entremise, nous pouvons nous rapprocher et nous donner le droit d'être, pour un moment, des personnes qui ont besoin de leurs collègues. Notre petit nombre de cadres scolaires et le manque de temps font en sorte que nous nous retrouvons souvent seuls sur notre petite île.

Ignorer les symptômes qui nous apparaissent les uns après les autres est néfaste et ne fait que repousser l'inévitable. Faisons tomber ces paradigmes et ces tabous de « leaders qui sont toujours au front »; ces leaders qui montrent le chemin. Ne tombons pas dans le piège de nous croire invincibles. Parfois, le leadership, ça veut dire de se donner le droit de penser à soi. C'est le meilleur exemple que nous pouvons donner à nos collègues et à nos employés. C'est le meilleur exemple que nous pouvons donner à nos élèves.

Je ne suis ni médecin ni psychologue, mais au fil des années, probablement comme plusieurs d'entre nous, j'ai vécu des moments difficiles; des périodes de remise en question, à me demander à quoi bon faire tous ces efforts. À me demander : Suis-je encore la bonne personne pour ce boulot? Ce genre de remise en question est difficile lorsqu'on a passé une vie à enseigner à des élèves, à accompagner des cadres et à savoir prendre ce qui nous appartient.

Bien que je sache que nous savons relativement bien comment garder un bon équilibre, permettez-moi de vous faire part de quelques pistes de solutions qui, je l'espère, aideront à prévenir la détérioration de notre santé mentale. Ces éléments proviennent d'une étude de l'Institut national de santé publique :

- Ressources personnelles de base : avons-nous les outils pour faire face aux défis de santé mentale? Sinon, allons chercher de l'aide externe.
- Estime de soi : non pas au niveau professionnel, mais plutôt au niveau de reconnaître que nous existons et sommes importants à l'extérieur du travail. Nous référer à notre vie professionnelle pour nous définir peut assurément être un facteur qui mène à un stress inutile. Nous faisons notre travail au meilleur de nos connaissances et il y a une raison pour laquelle nous avons obtenu ces postes.
- Soutien social : avoir le soutien de nos collègues au niveau de notre propre division scolaire, mais aussi un bon

réseau de collègues qui font un travail similaire au nôtre, comme la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) le fait présentement. Il est primordial de pouvoir nous parler toutes les semaines, discuter, échanger nos points de vue, emprunter, partager, etc. J'ajouterais que les rencontres de sous-groupes comme SISA, Métro, Prairie Mountain, etc., et les discussions avec notre directrice générale, Barb Isaak, sont très importantes pour nous rappeler que nous vivons tous la même réalité.

- Soutien de nos familles et amis : lorsque tout est terminé et que nous fermons le capot de l'ordinateur et le téléphone, nous avons nos familles et nos amis pour nous amener à réaliser qu'il n'y a pas juste la COVID-19. Que l'éducation est essentielle, mais que nous avons aussi le droit de profiter d'un bon repas, d'un bon livre et d'un peu de bonheur. ■

Après avoir travaillé pendant 15 ans dans le système d'éducation de la Colombie-Britannique, Alain a pris les rênes de la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) en 2013. Son commentaire préféré : qui dit que l'anglais est facile à apprendre?

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Work-Integrated Education: Apprenticeship, Purpose, Authenticity, and the Conservation of Energy



A student at Tech Hub Exchange learns in a real studio environment about digital media. Photos courtesy of Matt Henderson.

“‘Theory’ isn’t just an intellectual pursuit – it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence, and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives.”

– Leanne Simpson, *Land as Pedagogy*

By Matt Henderson, Seven Oaks School Division, and Meghan Cook, Wayfinders

The great lesson learned from teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic brings us all back to the first law of thermodynamics: that energy cannot be created or destroyed.

Educators and learners have had to find ways to focus their energy as best they can, all while moving to remote learning, back to hybrid learning, again to remote learning, and back into schools. For many of our learners who have languished, the frenetic energy involved in switching tasks, navigating online platforms, and a dislocation from loving adults has made learning difficult, disjointed, and often miseducative.

Dewey (1938) spoke of this wasted energy 80 years ago when he argued that, “experiences may be so disconnected from



Tech Hub is "for creatives, designers, coders, innovators, builders."



Learning directly from industry mentors, students work on complex, large-scale projects.

one another that, while each is agreeable or even exciting in itself, they are not linked cumulatively to one another. Energy is then dissipated, and a person becomes scattered-brain" (p.26).

In our teaching, we have often felt scattered brained ourselves, leaving learners wanting for more.

But despite the challenges of COVID-19, there have been educative experiences that have laser-focused energy – fostering the conditions whereby learners are engaged with passionate adults, where meaning and purpose are derived, where cutting-edge technology is used as a means to express oneself, and where learners are able to name the world as they create pathways to post-secondary and industry. These experiences push beyond notions of front loading, pre-teaching, and/or a false dichotomization between discrete skills and knowledge acquisition and the ability to think critically, creatively, and collaboratively. Experiences, as Mehta & Fine

(2019) argue, where there is cognitive challenge, participation, and engagement. Where learners are in-task, not on-task.

Educators who design deep learning experiences for their learners fundamentally understand that the experiential cycle as articulated by Dewey and then later Kolb (1984) is dependent on an accordion-like relationship between: framing concrete experiences and opportunities for reflection, as well as time to apply, test, and play. These cycles flow into each other, providing conduits for energy, deeper learning, and transformation. Dewey calls this *continuity*.

In Seven Oaks School Division, we have witnessed the results of the experiential cycle in several learning opportunities that are geared at Senior Years learners. These learning experiences are rooted in learner interest and led by adults who share their passions and create learning communities that are collaborative, flexible, and creative. Educators

have completed feats of ingenuity as they have designed opportunities for learners to think deeply in community and develop solutions to significant problems that matter to themselves and their communities.

A powerful example of Seven Oaks' commitment to rich learning experiences that connect learners to passionate adults, authentic experiences, and work and post-secondary integrated opportunities is through its Tech Hub. The Tech Hub, launched in 2020, provides learners in the division with the opportunity to dive deeply into the design of interactive digital media in collaboration with industry and post-secondary. In partnership with New Media Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg's department of Applied Computer Science, the Tech Hub offers two unique campuses, one in the Exchange District and one based in the Maples at the Wayfinders campus.

At the Exchange District campus, learners from all five Senior Years Schools (including the two Met Schools) come together each morning at 62 Albert Street to work with industry professionals and educators in a studio environment. Specific learning plans are developed for each learner based upon their project and passion. For example, a Grade 10 learner who is passionate about animation might earn credits in Visual Arts, Computer Science, and information and communications technology (ICT). Another might earn credits in language arts, based upon their passion for creative writing and communication. The learning plans reflect the authenticity of studio work that adults are engaged in. That is transdisciplinary, collaborative, creative, and rigorous pursuits and projects.

The learners at the Exchange District Tech Hub campus have engaged with industry leaders to not only learn various platforms and languages, but also to fully immerse themselves in the culture that the Exchange provides. It is a culture supported by designers, artists, architects, entrepreneurs, and social enterprises. Gleaning from this intellectual energy is difficult to quantify, but evidence of powerful learning and transformation is gathered through portfolios, public exhibitions, and the evaluation of final products that are released into the world for authentic

critique. A standardized test would not suffice in this context.

Building on the success of the Exchange Tech Hub, a second campus was launched in Fall 2020 at Wayfinders, the after-school mentorship and learning program in Seven Oaks. Wayfinders Tech Hub campus is designed for younger learners, who might see the distance from home or transportation to the Exchange District Tech Hub campus as a barrier of participation. Next year, the Wayfinder campus will expand from 25 learners to 150.

After school on Tuesdays, learners from high schools across the division gather to work with University of Winnipeg instructors on a range of topics geared at developing experience and interest using a wide variety of platforms, including Adobe InDesign, Unity, Powtoon, and Sonic Pi. By exposing learners to a range of platforms and experiences, learners learn and apply theory as part of their University dual credit coursework.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays, the learners engage with New Media Manitoba members to develop more specific interests that they explore under the mentorship of passionate adults. They exhibit and defend their project work to acquire ICT credits from the Manitoba Curriculum. Through an apprenticeship and project-based environment, learners engage in authentic work that connects them with not only industry experts and critical skills, but also earns them dual credits from the University of Winnipeg and a smoother pathway into the steps of their lives.

For many learners, they are the first person in their families to earn a post-secondary credit. The opportunity to have these experiences in a safe environment surrounded by mentors has been transformative for all participants and Wayfinders has built a learning community that shares knowledge, contributes to each other's ideas, and celebrates classroom successes. It is the type of connection that learners are craving in the midst of COVID-19.

The energy behind all this learning rests in the precarious pocket where apprenticeship, challenge, authenticity, and rigor exist. We continue to see how educational communities cultivate the conditions for powerful transformation and engagement in the learner's world. We often hear people speak to the purpose of education

as preparation for the real world – as if the child's experience is not real. Engaging the child where they are, honouring their lived experience, and connecting them with significant cognitive challenges is where the Tech Hub situates learning.

Paulo Freire (1970) argues that education conceived in this manner is not only an act of true critical thinking, but one that is liberatory and emancipatory for all. This conception, one which he identifies as *praxis*, is where learners and mentors channel their cognitive energy to "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36).

It is this sense of transformation and liberation for both learner and educator where the energy of public education is properly conserved. The Tech Hub is merely one example of many of the potential of deep learning experiences where the learner names and transforms the world. ■

Matt Henderson is the Assistant Superintendent of the Seven Oaks School Division in Winnipeg. He is also an instructor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg and a Ph.D.

candidate at the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. Meghan Cook is the Director of Wayfinders and one of its founding staff members. She is currently studying for her Masters of Education. She believes all students should have access to meaningful after-school experiences.

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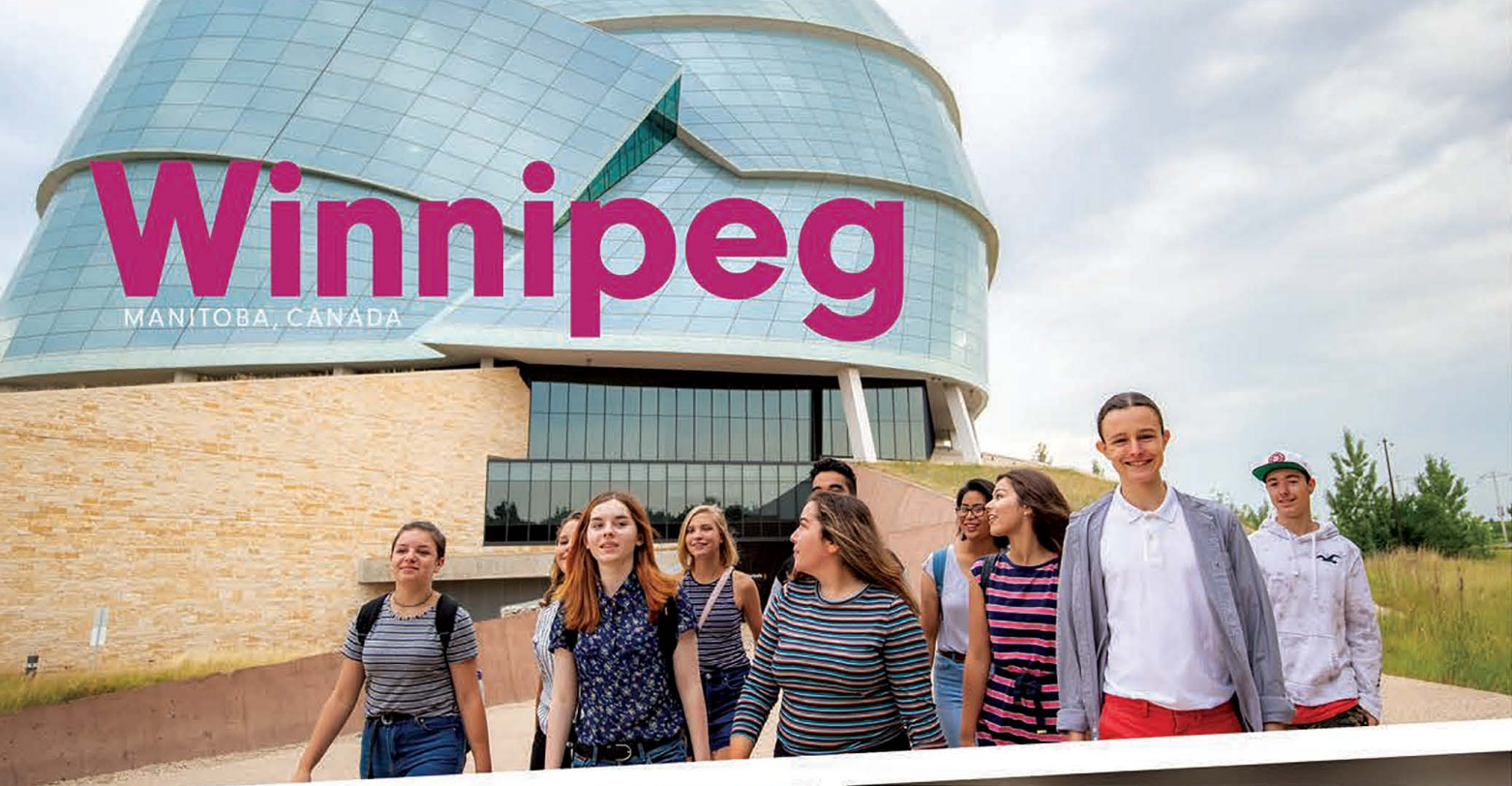


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Until it's safe to travel again, Parks Canada has created at-home activities for students and educators. With hands-on activities like designing moccasins, learning to camp at home and DIY fort building, students will learn about the incredible natural and cultural history of the province.

For a fun interactive approach to learning, Manitoba's virtual scavenger hunt sees students solving eight clues to close a hole in time created by Manitoba's 150th anniversary. Using Google Street View to collect answers, students will put together the ultimate answer, which will close the space-time rift and save Manitoba for another 150 years.

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Synchronous Teaching and Learning in PSSD



Teaching between two classes with the help of technology at Holland Elementary School in Holland, Manitoba.

By Cheryl Mangin, Prairie Spirit School Division

There is little doubt that COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on schools across the country. A four-month school suspension tested the limits of families trying to help their students learn at home, and provided a new appreciation for teachers and schools as pillars of the community. I don't think anyone will soon forget how, with a week's notice, teachers across the country pivoted to teaching from a distance.

September 2021 brought a joyful return to school along with preparations just in case in-class learning didn't last. Schools planned for students' return with-in complex public health guidelines while simultaneously wondering how long students would be able to attend. At schools where most students attend every day, public health guidelines recommending two meters of physical distancing often

required students to move into alternate spaces and sometimes split classes between two rooms. In rural Manitoba, space wasn't necessarily the issue, but the supply of teachers and support staff often was. Thankfully, our technical capabilities in Prairie Spirit School Division (PSSD) meant teachers wouldn't have to run between groups in two locations.

Prairie Spirit is a rural division in southwestern Manitoba. It is made up of 29 schools (14 Hutterite colonies and 15 small public schools) that are responsible for educating just over 2,000 students. Years of developing and evolving an interactive instructional television (IITV) system, a switch to Google Workspace, and a board commitment of public funds to using these systems, has put PSSD in a position to explore teaching synchronously.

Teaching between two classes and teaching remotely is a new concept for most teachers and a seemingly impossible

task to do well. Adding Chromebooks or laptops to a classroom does not automatically mean that students will be receiving a good quality learning experience. Similarly, handing a teacher a piece of hardware and outfitting a classroom with expensive gear will not necessarily ensure that teachers are prepared to teach synchronously or effectively.

Teachers know that good teaching involves contact with students. It requires seeing them and hearing them, and for them to be able to see and hear you. Connection is key. Relationships matter. Access to technology doesn't equate to good teaching.

And yet, teaching during a pandemic, teaching remotely, synchronously if possible, requires technology. Teaching students in multiple locations at the same time requires great technology support and teachers who are willing to take risks. It takes great people to teach you how to use the technology, and those people need to be willing to listen to what teachers need to teach well, despite the added complication of distance. Changes in teaching practices also lead to the development of codes of conduct as well as policies, practices, and procedures that continue to evolve and are constantly being communicated to teachers and families.

Teaching synchronously has the potential to meet the needs of learners regardless of their location. In addition, for teachers who are provided with the hardware and develop the skills to teach effectively, teaching synchronously can help manage a workload that could be exponentially greater for teachers who have to replicate their daily lessons for remote learners. In small schools, there are no teams of teachers teaching the same grade. The ability to divide learners by platform and share the work does not exist.

So, how does a school division get started? If you think of setting up a teacher and their class for synchronous learning – which, for our purposes, is the

goal – much like purchasing a cable package, one could start with a basic package. A basic package would include a class set of Chromebooks, with each student having access to one device. In COVID-19 times, we would suggest that each student has and uses their own Chromebook and be allowed to take it home as needed. The teacher needs a touch screen device (usually a Chromebook), a second screen to link to, a document camera, and a projector to Chromecast to the students in front of them. This basic package will allow a teacher to present their screen or document camera, and still be able to see and hear the students who are learning remotely. In our division, teachers use Google Workspaces.

Once some confidence has been established with the basic technology teaching tools, a teacher may recognize a need to add additional components to their basic package. An Education Enterprise License with Google Workspaces upgrades your basic package and includes Jamboard, a digital whiteboard linked right from the settings in Google Workspaces. Additional tools in Google Meet allow teachers to take polls, allow students to ask questions and upvote, and allow teachers to organize and join students in breakout rooms. These tools increase interaction between students, and between the students and the teacher.

Adding Screencastify, which is a free screen recorder for Chrome, allows teachers to add video which they can make in advance and add to any lesson. Regardless

Teachers know that good teaching involves contact with students. It requires seeing them and hearing them, and for them to be able to see and hear you. Connection is key. Relationships matter. Access to technology doesn't equate to good teaching.

of what platform school divisions use, the critical component is the engagement between the teacher and the student(s). Equally as important is the privacy and safety of the student and teacher while working in these digital environments. This aspect is another reason to upgrade from a basic package.

The addition of hardware enhances the experience further. In PSSD, some teachers teaching synchronously have requested a speaker be added to their class so the students invited in through Meet can hear not only their teacher, but also their classmates. A video conference grade speaker and microphone combination could be added to classes to elevate the quality of sound and reduce background noise. This additional speaker also allows the teacher some mobility in the classroom; one of the biggest changes for the teacher is that teaching synchronously anchors them to their workspace while direct teaching. Despite physical distancing, some measure of movement improves communication and increases engagement.

Utilizing solutions already in place in our blended program, such as physical video conferencing hardware that integrates directly into our learning management system, is an extension of our pre-existing competence using digital tools. PSSD has been able to leverage our past experience and build capacity among our teachers as existing expertise was made contagious. Deliberately accessing skills and tools currently in use minimized the disruption already present during the pandemic.

Currently teaching an entire class of students present and in-person seems like a luxury. More likely, teachers are working with entire cohorts from a distance. In our rural Manitoban school division, some high school teachers have been doing this for several years. Now these skills are being expected of the majority of our Grade 5 to 12 teachers, both colony and public. The addition of these skills and the evolution of teaching as a result of the pandemic will have long-term and widespread effects on education forever; storm days could be teaching days!

In 2021, our challenge is how to teach students in person, and at a distance, at the same time. In Prairie Spirit School Division, we believe that we are developing a package that will help teachers do just that, as we continue to work to turn challenges into advantages. ■

Cheryl Mangin has been the Superintendent of Prairie Spirit School Division since February 2020.



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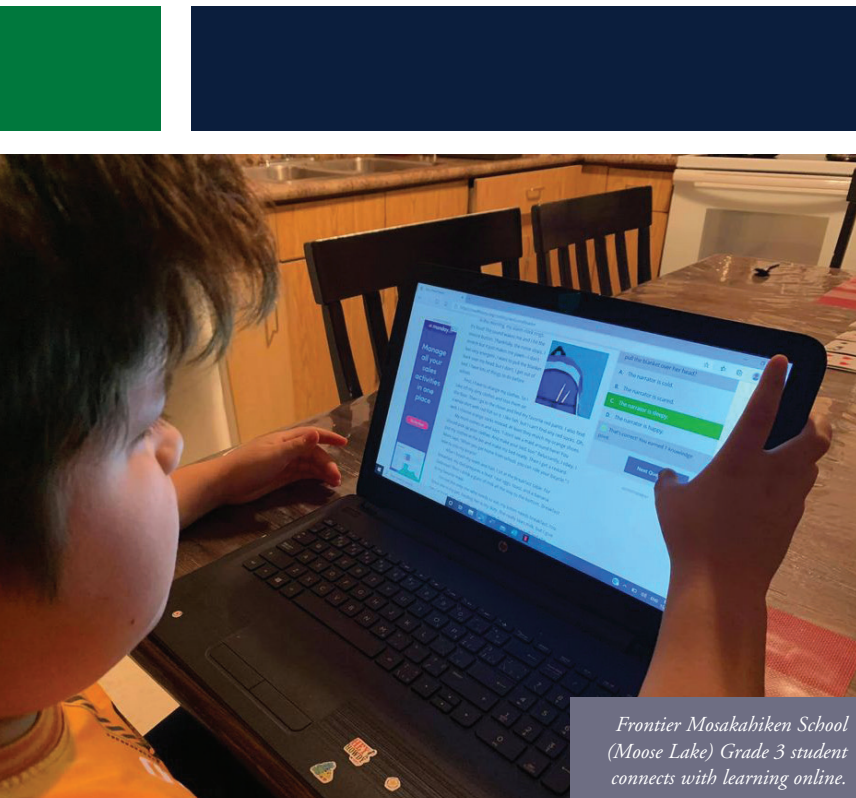
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Still Finding Our Way



Joseph H. Kerr School (Snow Lake) student participating in a fiddling lesson with a fiddle instructor over Microsoft Teams. With good connectivity lessons can take place in real time and they can actually play together!



Frontier Mosakahiken School (Moose Lake) Grade 3 student connects with learning online.



Students and parents from Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre (Norway House) taking part in a home learning gingerbread house making activity for families.



**By Reg Klassen,
Frontier School Division**

In the Fall 2020 issue of the *MASS Journal*, I shared my thoughts in an article called “Finding Our Way.” In it, I spoke about how, despite the many challenges created by COVID-19, fear, poor connectivity, increased inequity, and limited access to health care, our school communities were able to carry on. Many community fears regarding COVID-19 have come to pass, with schools being closed more often than originally anticipated. Yet, despite the continuing challenges, education, under the guidance of determined and committed teachers, administrators, and support staff, has continued in a variety of creative forms.

Even with such support, there is much to concern us. To bring greater clarity to our understanding of how the global pandemic so quickly exacerbated the underlying societal issues, we must restate them. We are aware that, pre-pandemic, the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners in Manitoba was already significant. This gap is the result of many influences, including structural and societal racism, intergenerational poverty, cultural genocide, and the inequitable funding formula. Poor attendance, lack of student engagement, early dropout rates, and a mismatch between what our public education system praises and values vs. the core values and belief systems that exist within Indigenous communities are all indicators of a system that underserves our Indigenous learners.

As COVID-19 spread throughout the province, school and community lockdowns in Northern Manitoba became more prevalent, the education of our youth was disrupted, and, in many cases, the intervention work being done by educators ceased. Travel restrictions and other pandemic-related decisions have left families in Northern Manitoba with even less autonomy than families in southern parts of the province in terms of decisions regarding whether their children would participate in distance learning versus remaining in the physical classroom.



Area 1 staff member at the Thompson airport with pallets of groceries and other items ready to ship via air to Brochet School.

Often, these decisions were made by local decision makers, and with good reason (for example, a higher risk for communicable diseases, a lack of access to essential services and health care, and a lack of other necessities, including clean drinking water). Even so, school closures have negative implications for students and communities, and it would be detrimental to assume otherwise. This was the context surrounding Frontier School Division as it entered the 2020 – 2021 school year.

As we approached the Christmas Break in December 2020, an increasing number of our communities were experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks. Once a remote or isolated community had a case, it spread quickly, causing many of our local pandemic teams to close schools and lock down communities. It was alarming to watch the percentage of Indigenous people who contracted COVID-19 grow and far exceed that of the provincial population. If numerous teams of emergency health care professionals had not been dispatched to many of our communities to mitigate the spread, we would have witnessed many more deaths.

All the while, each month the learning gap between students in northern and southern Manitoba grew (and continues to grow) wider. To close the chasm will take colossal amounts of support, staffing, education, funding, cultural competency, and intellect should we feel the responsibility to confront it. Frontier School Division continues to work hard to keep that gap from growing ever wider, doing all we can to continue to provide learning opportunities for our students.

Technology challenges and solutions

Last spring, we purchased 1,100 laptops to support our students in distant learning. However, this was only a piece of the challenge; without connectivity, use of the device was limited. Our schools may provide the best source of internet connection; but even so, in many situations, the connection is unable to meet the demands of online learning. Many schools have protocols in place to manage the internet, where access must be booked and is often restricted due to priority of events and research. It is the only practical approach for schools with fixed internet capacities.

When the pandemic struck and online learning was required, many of our schools proved to be poor places for teachers to host/lead remote instruction. One or two teachers could lead instruction remotely but any more than that resulted in connections failing. Students found it challenging to learn from home, often due to a lack of connection or space that was quiet enough to learn. With inadequate internet services throughout our communities, Frontier has been challenged to provide timely and effective professional learning/professional development for our teachers and administrators, which in turn places our students at a significant disadvantage.

Not to be deterred, we created a Technology Committee. Its mandate was to explore platforms that would work best in our limited environment of connectivity. The committee determined that Seesaw for early years and Google Suite for middle and senior years offered viable solutions for our students. We then created and filled an Education Technology Coordinator position, whose role is to provide professional development to teachers and administrators on the use of these programs. They will also partner with the Assistant Superintendent of Academic Programs and Instruction, and the Assistant Superintendent of Technology, to provide direction and support pertaining to all divisional educational technologies.

Other developments have allowed our division to upgrade several of our schools' internet services by either adding additional satellite dishes or data caps. Our story of technology and connectivity does not end here; to provide effective resources for delivering remote instruction to our students and professional development for our teachers, we decided to implement a one to one initiative to ensure as much accessibility as possible for students and teachers.

All Kindergarten to Grade 4 students were provided with an Apple iPad with a protective case purchased in tandem with the division's implementation of Seesaw. Students from Grades 5 to 12 were provided with laptops preconfigured with Microsoft Office. Many teachers were provided with laptops of their own. In total, this bold step included the purchase of 2,280 iPads, 2,800 laptops (in addition

to the 1,100 last spring), and licenses and professional development for Seesaw and Google Suite. This \$3M investment aids in reducing some of the inequities in technology our students and teachers deal with every day. Even in the face of the ongoing connectivity issues, we have already observed some exciting progress for students and teachers.

Support for communities

Over the past year, local pandemic teams have chosen to close their communities in an effort to keep their residents safe. These closures, which extend beyond education, often create food security issues, particularly if travel in and out of the community is restricted. In the most northern part of our division our area office stepped up by taking orders and shopping for groceries and personal items. Barren Lands First Nation (Brochet), a fly in community, had their groceries brought to the airport and loaded on the plane for delivery. For O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (South Indian Lake), groceries were loaded on to trucks and delivered to their ferry dock, which serves as their community check stop. Our divisional employees were met by community residents, and the groceries were transferred from our trucks into theirs. In many of our communities, delivery of food to families in need continues, led again by our committed and resilient school staff.

As one can imagine, living in a community in lockdown creates numerous stress points even when issues of food security are addressed, and especially if the community is house bound. Very quickly, homes begin to feel crowded, which can lead to increased mental wellness challenges. In Norway House, with the community facing similar conditions and where the school was closed to students, staff sent home activities for the whole family to participate in. These projects were designed to involve all members of the family, helping to divert attention, for the moment, from being in a lockdown. One of these activities was making gingerbread houses; families were provided with all the supplies. Once finished, families were then asked to take a picture of

themselves with the completed house and submit the picture to the school for a prize draw.

Support for older students

In communities where students must leave home after Grade 8 or 9 to continue their education, the pandemic has added further complications. Leaving the community and then returning home for breaks throughout the school year increases the chance of bringing COVID-19 into a community. In many communities this poses too great a risk, and many students have not been able to leave their home communities to go to school. As well, families in the larger urban centres that were once willing to host these students attending the local high school have declined to do so, adding further challenges.

Frontier Collegiate provides the option of living in dormitories; however, living communally on campus is subject to safety and health protocols and provides another layer of complexity for students and staff. After discussions with Manitoba Health, Frontier Collegiate was able to open its doors in September to 150 students, half the usual number. This allowed for increased safety measures, including one student per room, remaining on campus, staggered meals, and smaller classes, creating a Frontier Collegiate bubble that, to date, has not had one case of COVID-19 on campus.

When students left school at Christmas, many of them needing to fly, communities expressed a high degree of concern that students would bring COVID-19 back to the community. Some officials asked for their children to be tested, while others asked that students be quarantined before sending them home. Quarantine meant that students were to stay in their rooms, by themselves, with staff delivering meals. Naturally, students and staff found this very challenging, but their herculean efforts paid off as students returned home to their communities without a single case of COVID-19. The process will be repeated for Spring Break, in hopes of achieving the same result of no cases on campus to take back to home

communities. An unexpected result of fewer students in class and more time on campus has been a higher percentage of credit acquisition during the first term. Lessons learned from this will need to be transferred to the time when we can return to 100 per cent capacity.

The impact on holistic learning

In most of our communities, language, culture, and land-based learning are integral to children's education and well-being. With many of our schools closed for extended periods of time, and travel restrictions in place since the beginning of the pandemic, these programs have suffered. It is challenging to teach language or land-based learning online, even if connectivity is robust. Added to those complications is that language, culture, and land-based learning cannot be taught in isolation.

We recognize that all children need to find their identity; for Indigenous youth, this means reconciling their personal and collective pasts. Connecting to the land is key for this to occur. With so many interruptions to in-school learning, it has been challenging to provide holistic programming for our youth. In spite of this, our division staff continue to support teachers and students by providing resources and activities.

Working with our Elders, and our Wisdom and Knowledge Keepers, has also been severely impacted due to the significant health risks COVID-19 poses for our elderly. It is impossible to substitute their knowledge or leadership in any way, so we long for the time when it is safe for them to return to our schools. With the issuing of vaccines to greater numbers of Manitobans every day, we move ever closer to that reality.

Hope for the future

There is no doubt that this past year has been laden with complex and challenging issues. I constantly marvel at the resilience of students, staff, and communities as they continue to move forward regardless of the interruptions and challenges they are forced to overcome. My hope is that, as a system, we can use this time and lessons learned to finally address the inequities facing our students and their communities in order that they too can live and grow in good health and well-being. ■

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



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Prioritizing Student Well-Being and Well-Becoming:

Learning from WB2 Initiative Projects

By Verland Force, Seven Oaks School Division, and Dr. Jennifer Watt, University of Manitoba

Since student well-being is a priority area for Manitoba's Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools (www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/mandate.html), many educators actively engage with how to design and implement meaningful, sustainable, context-specific approaches that cultivate flourishing in schools.

As Falkenberg (2019) argues, "Any school education system that is concerned with students' quality of life – be it at present as students within the system or be it in the future as adults – needs to ground its work in an understanding of human well-being" (p. 25). Falkenberg (2014) further defines well-being as, "What humans aim for when they exert their agency to live their lives one way rather than another" (p. 78). Along with agency, the capacity to enjoy life, live a meaningful life, and make personal and community connections are all components of the Well-being and Well-becoming in Schools (WB2) Framework (Falkenberg, 2019). This WB2 Framework approach

encourages "community-based engagement" (p. 25) and emphasizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to student well-being and well-becoming.

Contextualizing the WB2 projects

Combining theory and practice, the WB2 Initiative is a partnership between Manitoba Education, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the University of Manitoba, and 11 divisional cohorts (six of which contributed to this article, see Table 1). The divisions committed to exploring well-being and well-becoming in a middle school in their division – designing and assessing an initiative that they hoped would improve some aspect of well-being and well-becoming that they identified as important to their students.

Learning from the WB2 projects: identifying common lessons across divisions

The WB2 Initiative exemplifies collaborative practice both within

the divisional and school levels, and between divisions. Even though each project was unique because it grew from the strengths and needs of a particular community, the WB2 teams drew on one another's knowledge and experiences to think more deeply about common conceptualizations, supporting practices, and assessment and evaluation of student well-being and well-becoming. The following eight lessons from the WB2 Initiative can help interested educators think about how to prioritize student well-being/becoming within their own schools and divisions:

1. Start small and grow sustainably:

Divisional teams were encouraged to start small, concentrating on student well-being/becoming at one school or one grade level. After reflecting on what was working well in the process, they then expanded their initiative to include the wider school or divisional level.

2. Examine and embrace systems change:

Since children continuously engage in emotional and cognitive appraisals of their experiences and environments (Falkenberg & Uka-soanya, 2019, p. 9), educators need to take a systems change approach to student well-being/becoming. In order to make positive and lasting change at individual or classroom levels, deliberate supports are required at the school, divisional, and wider community system levels.

3. Make time for critical dialogue:

Professional development was identified as key to creating systems change. Most of the WB2 cohorts created opportunities for colleagues

Table 1

Overview of Six 2019 – 2020 Divisional WB2 Projects	
Divisional Cohort	Focus of Project
Winnipeg School Division	Well-being and Well-Becoming of Children in Care
Western School Division	Well-being and Well-Becoming in Service Learning Projects
Evergreen School Division	My Learning Path: Hope and Well-Being/Well-Becoming
Pembina Trails School Division	Transitions and Mental Well-Being and Well-Becoming
Louis Riel School Division	Social and Emotional Well-Being and Well-Becoming (Zones of Regulation)
St. James/Assiniboia School Division	Well-Being and Well-Becoming in an Alternative School

to come together for critical dialogue about physical spaces and professional practices. This time and space for professional learning conversations increased awareness, engagement, and commitment to student well-being/becoming.

4. Reach out to families, schools, and communities:

Family, schools, and community have been identified as the three core systems that shape students' well-being (Falkenberg & Ukasoanya, 2019, p. 9). WB2 teams reached out to families and the wider community through surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews to focus on communities' strengths and needs. Parents and community members were invited as partners to provide student mental health resources and to develop programs that enhance the resiliency of youth. Outside businesses and organizations were also partners in providing authentic experiences for students to thrive and become part of the larger community.

5. Commit to culturally diverse conceptualizations of well-being and well-becoming:

Conceptualizations of well-being are "heavily value-laden," "culturally-embedded," and not "universal" (Falkenberg & Ukasoanya, 2019, p. 8). Many of the WB2 projects intentionally sought ways in which to increase awareness and commitment to diverse cultural ways of knowing, especially exploring Indigenous approaches to well-being and well becoming.

6. Value and uplift student voice:

If we return, for a moment, to Falkenberg's (2014) claim that human well-being is the "agency to live [our] lives one way rather than another" (p. 78), then we can see how important it was for the WB2 Initiative teams to listen to student voice and value their agency in determining how they want to live flourishing lives in schools and beyond. A commitment to understanding and uplifting student voice was evident in all of the projects. WB2 teams

designed opportunities to listen and learn from students' voices through surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, and authentic community or classroom learning opportunities.

7. Engage in purposeful assessment:

Each WB2 team focused on assessing the impact of their own specific projects through the most appropriate tools and processes for their purposes, but all recognized the need to access or develop a variety of data sources at the systems level, specific program level, and individual student, parent, or teacher level (Falkenberg & Ukasoanya, 2019). In the three years of the WB2 Initiative, the educator-led process of critically and collectively reflecting on ethical, purposeful assessment practices and evidence-based documentation became increasingly important in evaluating the successes and ongoing learning of the projects.

8. Acknowledge and expect challenges:

All of the WB2 cohorts felt they made significant progress in their focused area of student well-being/becoming. However, they also faced common challenges within the three-year period. The teams recognized that change at a system or even a classroom level is a slow process. WB2 cohorts appreciated the provincial support given for release time, because significant time was needed for planning and critical dialogue to develop a common vision and/or see a shift in practice. Schools also described the pressure of other competing school or divisional initiatives, since there is a finite amount of time and energy to devote to any given school priority. Another major challenge that many groups faced was how changes in staffing impacted the progress made from one year to another.

To address these challenges, the WB2 Initiative intentionally worked at embedding well-being/well-becoming into the everyday fabric of school and classroom practice, moving away from the notion that this approach to education is separate from our everyday work

with students. The WB2 Initiative, like everything else, was impacted by the pandemic. Yet, because of this embedded notion of well-being and well-becoming within the everyday work of schools, most WB2 teams have been able to shift their projects to continue to meet their students' needs within the time of COVID-19 and to think about how these projects can contribute to future flourishing. ■

Verland Force is Assistant Superintendent of 7 Oaks School Division. She currently sits on the MASS Executive and is the Chair of the MASS Mental Health and Well-Being Committee. Dr. Jennifer Watt is an assistant professor of language and literacy at the University of Manitoba. She is particularly interested in how multiple literacies contribute to and create well-being and well-becoming in schools and beyond.

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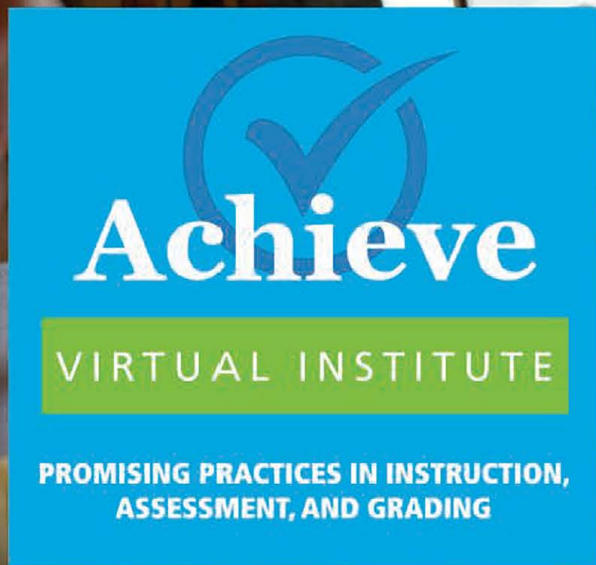
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