the manitoba Teacher

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Contents

On the cover

This young student and her guinea pig are not likely to argue with teacher Jennifer Lawson who advocates the keeping of pets in classrooms. It is part of the hands-on science program described on pages 12 and 13. Pets can help children learn a lot about the characteristics of living things and their presence in the classroom also provides opportunities for fostering humane attitudes toward animals, Ms Lawson says.

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Vol. 67, No. 1, October 1988

This is your magazine

Welcome to another year with *The Manitoba Teacher.*

Published four times a year, the magazine is part of the membership privileges of the over 13,500 active and associate members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Since its birth in 1919, *The Manitoba Teacher* has appeared under different names and in different formats. Each represented a renewal of sorts and each had its own objectives, determined by the organization's membership through its representatives.

The present magazine format has been around since October 1983. Its current objectives, established and approved by the Society's provincial executive five years ago, include the promotion of

- the work, aims and contributions of teachers in and outside education;
- positive images of teachers and education;
- dialogue among teachers and between teachers and others in and outside education;
- the objectives, activities and services of the Society; and
- interest and involvement in the Society and education.

The magazine is intended also to offer information about developments and trends in education and to take a look at social issues of particular concern or interest to teachers.

Obviously, all objectives set for *The Manitoba Teacher* cannot be met in any one issue and no one issue can offer something that will appeal to every reader. However, in the course of time, we hope to have presented and hope to continue to present something of interest to most readers without negating the overall objectives set for the publication.

In this issue, readers will find a potpourri - ranging from two articles related to the teaching of science through the reminiscences of teachers who travelled or worked abroad to a question-and-answer feature attempting to shed some light on academic freedom with the help of the Society's lawyer.

Most of the pages of the December 1988 issue are expected to be devoted to concerns related to literacy, a timely focus if one believes the news makers and news media.

To meet the objectives of *The Manitoba Teacher* and appeal to as many readers as possible, we rely heavily on contributions from teachers and others.

As the official publication of the Society, *The Manitoba Teacher* can be expected to support the goals of the organization and its members. However, not all the members support all the policies and views of the Society all the time. Therefore, not all articles in *The Manitoba Teacher* need to reflect only the policies and views of the Society. Contributions questioning or opposing the organization's positions have always been welcome and will continue to be so. Only by keeping its pages open - within reasonable boundaries of good taste and style and keeping in mind space limitations - can a magazine remain a professional publication.

In the coming year, we will look forward to receiving many contributions from our readers. We will also look for reactions, constructive criticism and, perhaps, even an occasional word of praise.

Help us meet the objectives set for *The Manitoba Teacher.* Help us make it a publication by, for and about as many teachers as possible. Let us hear from you.

Miep van Raalte

ASK (Agassiz Science Klub) began as a gleam in a teacher's eye. The gleam became a glow when a student expressed a wish for such a club and readiness to assist in running the club's envisaged activities. The two soon discovered they were not alone in their search for understanding and participation in a fellowship of science. So began an exercise in what the teacher calls . . . .

Participation for the mind

Judith Hattie

Science and technology are Canada's hope for the future - so we are told these days. They say we must encourage students to pursue mathematics and science. However, can scientific excellence be achieved by memorizing formulae and donning a lab coat or does it require a particular attitude toward the book and beaker to bring out the elusive genius for which progress lusts?

What can be done to bring youth to science? Cynics say it is hopeless. On the other hand, George Bernard Shaw told us, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

I know a number of unreasonable teachers, many unreasonable administrators and a host of unreasonable students. What do we do with these mad, restless, creative, unreasonable ones? I say, give them a ship, let them sail it; give them a kite, let them fly it; give them a club, let them run it - give them a science club.

Five years ago, an unreasonable grade 10 student, Gary Roebuck, asked me to help him get a science club started at our school in Beausejour. Neither of us had any idea whether anyone besides ourselves would be interested but we concocted posters announcing a planning meeting and promising "speakers . . . films . . . field trips and fun galore" - the school's equivalent of 'free beer.' Wonder of wonders, 30 students turned up and we were off.

I had no interest in the sort of classic science club that involves doing an experiment a week - the noisier and smellier the better. I wanted to introduce students to the forefront of science through magazines, journals and contact with working scientists. Gary wanted to build strong relationships and a sense of unity among members of the proposed club. It was the start of what eventually became the Agassiz Science Klub (ASK) after a lot of hard work, cooperation, tears, heartache, wonder and laughter.

ASK was named after Louis Agassiz who discovered glaciation. He was a marvelously unreasonable man who was at first disbelieved and ridiculed until, subsequently, he was found to be one of the truly great scientists.

I refer to the club as voluntary enrichment. The closest I can come to a definition is the cartoon posted by my desk. It shows a little boy telling the truant officer that he is not skipping school, he is on a self-motivated field trip. He is the kind of child I like to see in ASK.

Helping each other

Over 60 students from grade 5 to second-year university belong to ASK. Members range from gifted to slow, from athletic to handicapped. We do not like labels though because all our members are capable of making a little science club into a great one and we all work together and help each other learn about the world and cope with some pretty scary stuff - like snakes and hospitals and atomic reactors and pollution.

We buy magazine subscriptions, belong to the Planetary Society, Operation Lifeline (World Wildlife Fund) and Young Astronauts. We pay our own expenses with monies earned by selling chocolate bars and raffle tickets. We have an elected executive of about 12 representatives with at least one representative from each grade and an adult advisor who is a non-voting member with power to veto any action which may threaten the safety or reputation of individual members or the club as a whole. Most decisions are made by general vote but minor matters are handled by the executive.

The adult advisor of ASK is a sponge for student ideas. Projects often start with comments such as "Wouldn't it be great if ASK could take a field trip to Cape Canaveral?" It constitutes step one, better known as stu-

"We keep hearing about 'melanoma' and 'AIDS' and 'the ozone layer' and 'Chernobyl.' But instead of allowing ourselves to become scared and confused, we started a club to find out about this stuff and find ways to make the world happier and safer."

dent interest. Step two involves a long, thoughtful cup of coffee and tends to cause a few grey hairs. Step three consists of consideration of the practicability of the proposed project and questions familiar to all parents such as 'How can we give them what they want without going broke or insane?' The comment about a field trip to Cape Canaveral eventually prompted me to suggest that we visit the planetarium and the IMAX theater in Winnipeg to see the space shuttle blast-off. The suggestion was put to a general vote (step four) and greeted with unanimous wild cheering.

Tricky but effective

An ASK field trip can give the phrase *in loco parentis* a completely new meaning. It demands an adult advisor willing to behave like a loco parent to take 50-or-so 10-to-18-year-olds through a shopping center like Eaton Place in Winnipeg.

The trick, of course, is to be loco like a fox. I divide the students into small groups with at least one responsible senior club member in charge. The leader takes attendance continuously. Thus, at a moment's notice, we can round up the strays into neat groups for an overall attendance check. It works so well that a walk through Eaton Place can look to bystanders less like a school outing than an army maneuver. Seniors automatically position themselves at the front and rear of their group to point the way, watch for strays and hold the doors.

The success of ASK depends greatly on the cooperation between older and younger members. The seniors know that the juniors are the club's future and we all want ASK to have a future.

The young ones learn from the older members that bad behavior makes it impossible to do things, learn stuff, have parties and go places. The young members take behavior so seriously that they lecture each other about it. It works. It works as the children want it to and, as a result, they learn what it is like to have order without having to give up freedom.

ASK members will "go to great lengths and heights" in exploring their environment, according to teacher Judith Hattie. For example, none of them hesitated when confronted with a steep climb during one of their field trips in the desert near Carberry, Manitoba.

Teacher Judith Hattie (left) and student Gary Roebuck (seated in front) started the science club in Agassiz. With them, returning from visiting some hospital patients, are three former club executive members, (standing from left) Lisa Babey, Josephine Galay and Scott Macaulay.

We have had many compliments about the students' behavior and no complaints. This is significant when it is realized that we have been to many places, including the nuclear research establishment, Pinawa; the Fort Whyte Nature Center, Freshwater Institute, medical school, law courts, planetarium, IMAX theater, and Children's Hospital, Winnipeg; and the Carberry desert and Narcisse snake pits elsewhere in Manitoba. We also have stayed overnight at the Delta Field Station, on the shore of Lake Manitoba, where we cooked and cleaned for ourselves.

ASK members are not necessarily quiet unless specifically requested to be so. I am not happy when children are silent unless they are reading or I am speaking. I like a bit of chatter although I try to steer them toward the topics of the moment and frown on inane chatter. Good questions are answered as soon as possible with discussion, reference to sources where answers may be found or both. This is part of the advisor's job but, for the system to work as intended, club members sometimes should and do answer each other's questions.

Keeping tabs on development

With the help of questionnaires, Gary and I have monitored club development and the attitudes of members quite closely. Once we videotaped a 'rap session' during which club members were encouraged to express their opinions and desires.

The surveys have revealed that students tend to find science interesting but also threatening. The idea of dealing with major problems - pollution, extinction, nuclear bombs and the like - as part of a supportive group appears to appeal to them. I recall one girl who helped us with a demonstration on the Joey Gregorash television show

'Skiddle Bits.' Joey asked what she liked about the club.

"Was it the experiments?" he asked.

"The experiments are o.k.," she said, "but it's mainly the group. I like the group itself."

ASK aims to help children feel better about life and the world around them. It tries to foster hope and confidence through constructive action. Instead of allowing ourselves to become scared and confused by what seem major world problems, we raise money for research on children's diseases, entertain children in hospital and help promote wildlife conservation. For two years, we have organized community concerts to benefit wildlife protection efforts and the Winnipeg Children's Hospital. Donating monies is satisfying but, more important, each new problem tackled through the club also brings a host of opportunities to learn. Confronted with a problem, club members inevitably ask 'What is this all about?...How does it fit into science as a whole?...How can we help?' In their pursuit of the answers, they learn - learn for themselves.

Generous participation

Children want teachers. All adults are teachers, including the professional scientists and technicians participating in ASK activities. Once or twice ASK members have come away from a lecture or visit a bit confused and indignant, feeling that they "were talked down to" or that the people they visited "didn't want us there." Perhaps some professionals tend to resent the time they are asked to give to school tours and fear possible misbehavior, even though they want to cooperate. Their ambivalence, if it exists, is understandable. On the whole, however, the response by the scientific community to our requests for help and participation has been incredibly generous and ASK members have been grateful. I am sure they will never forget Dr. William Preston and his bag of snakes (at the Museum of Man and Nature); Dr. Robert Nero with Greyl his captive great grey owl (at the Manitoba Wildlife Branch); or the scores of patient answers they received when they visited the research facilities in Pinawa, the RCMP forensic display in the Law Courts Building and the Children's Hospital Research Foundation laboratories in Winnipeg.

"The project helps improve the image of the public school system. We make the public aware of our activities and the enthusiastic participation does not go unnoticed. Word gets around that good things are happening in our school."

The exposure to the real scientific world which ASK members enjoy is enhanced by experimental work and participation in science fair projects.

The Youth Science Foundation (YSF) - a non-profit national organization with headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario - has promoted science fairs by sponsoring the annual Canada-wide science fair in different parts of Canada. The foundation also sponsors Young Scientists of Canada (YSC) of which ASK is a chapter.

YSC is a nation-wide network of science clubs which allows students interested in science to keep in touch across the country. It also provides excellent leadership training and gives its members opportunities to get involved in regional and national science fairs.

YSC programs in British Columbia and Ontario give students credit for science projects and training in the scientific method. University staff act as mentors, assisting students with advice and facilities. The idea has potential not only as a training ground for active minds but also

A hug can take many different forms. For teacher Judith Hattie (seen at right with Dr. Goodbear of the Children's Hospital in Winnipeg), one of her special hugs came in the form of the following poem written by two of her students for her and her teacher-husband John:

You go out of your way
to be thoughtful.
You go out of your way
to be nice.
You go out of your way
to do favors,
And do them without
thinking twice.

So this note comes to say
that we are grateful
For your kind and
considerate way.
And thank you for being so special.
It means more than
we could ever say.

as a link between the sadly estranged worlds of high school and university science teachers.

The teacher-advisor role is demanding. My involvement as the adult advisor with ASK has cost me time, money and a whole lot of energy. Sometimes I have wanted to quit because the demands and responsibilities seemed to be overwhelming me.

Pillars of success and hope

No woman is an island. Without the support and advice of my husband, John Hattie (a science teacher, also at Edward Schreyer School in Beausejour), I could not have continued as I did. His belief in me, coupled with his practical skills and trouble-shooting, have made all the difference in the heavy-weather times. Fortunately, those times have been rare. More often I consider ASK the essence of my teaching. At times, the club and its members have kept me in teaching and have been my only hope in a troubled world.

Moreover, science clubs, such as ASK, allow teachers to explore the delights of being interdisciplinary teachers. The science magazines we use are a reading course in themselves, from *Chickadee* to *Scientific American* and beyond. Science writing is a skill and an art - from the writing for the ASK newsletter to the writing for the *Youth Science News* and beyond. Taking care of the club's business demands development of skills in letter-writing and minute-keeping. Maintaining the club's books provides lessons in banking and accounting. Our present treasurer, upon his election, could not fill out a cheque or deposit slip but, in the course of time, he has done an excellent job and he is currently shopping for a bank account with more free privileges.

A science club can be a means to teach public speaking. In the beginning, some of our members were tongue-tied even when only asked their names. Gradually, they have learned to speak to their fellow-members at club meetings and some have progressed to speaking at YSC meetings of students from across the country.

A science club can help in teaching poise. A child put in charge of a complex situation, which may confuse even adults, is bound to develop some confidence, compassion and tact. This has been the case with ASK members involved in hosting variety concerts. They have had to meet and guide singers, dancers and politicians. They have had to introduce stars to audiences of hundreds of people. These jobs have not been easy for ASK members but they have done them and carried them out successfully.

Can education benefit from the development of a nation-wide network of science clubs? Will such a network encourage students to consider science and technology careers? I think I will go on being unreasonable for a little while longer and continue my work with ASK. Members have been quite successful in science fairs and at university. The president and treasurer, working together this year on a project, won bronze medals at the 1988 Canada-wide science fair. One of them wrote me a poem of thanks. Any endeavor which brings science and poetry together must have some value. □

With an eye on Einstein

Looking back at the time she first thought of and began to develop the ASK project, Judith Hattie recalls one of the observations made by physicist Albert Einstein (1879-1955):

> *The worst thing seems to be for a school principally to work with methods of fear, force and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the healthy feelings, the integrity and self-confidence of pupils. All that it produces is a servile helot.*

The ideas that helped shape ASK partly were inspired by Mrs. Hattie's desire to avoid the pitfall to which Einstein alluded and, at the same time, promote order, discipline and freedom of thought in her classroom.

Judith Hattie teaches biology (grades 11 and 12) and basic French (grades 6, 7 and 8) at Edward Schreyer School, Beausejour. She started teaching in the Agassiz School Division 14 years ago. She holds B.Sc.(Hon) and M.Sc. degrees. In addition to her involvement as advisor in the science club at her school, Mrs. Hattie is the coordinator of the Young Scientists of Canada network in the prairie provinces and Northern Ontario and is interested in pilot programs in British Columbia and Ontario. Gary Roebuck is now a second-year education student at the University of Manitoba.

Everyone needs a PAL

Terry Dann

Most people will have heard the following anecdote:

"Come on now! It's time you were out of bed and getting ready for school."

"I don't want to go! I don't have any friends and none of the teachers like me."

"That's nonsense. Now get up and start getting ready."

"Don't wanna!"

"It doesn't matter what you want, you have to go - you're the principal!"

Believe it or not, the anecdote seems to be based on research - almost anyway.

Research conducted by Far West Laboratory, an educational research institute in San Francisco, suggests that many principals will identify with the anecdote because many feel isolated and unable to develop the kind of collegial networks that would be helpful in the development of their skills. Moreover, the weight of detailed administrative tasks, constantly having to resolve conflicts and having to carry out political tasks necessary for daily survival militate against principals keeping the mission of the school front and center in decision-making. At the same time, principals know that they must not lose sight of the big picture - the general framework within which they operate - if the administration of their school is to be successful.

Principals are keys to success

Over the past several years, research in education has been heavily weighted toward the study of effective schools. One of the findings of this research has been that the principal is a key, possibly the most important factor, in determining the success of a school in meeting its objectives.

The Far West Laboratory's investigators started with observing principals of effective schools to see what they did to contribute to their schools' success. They recorded the activities of the principals and their relations with others and, subsequently, interviewed the principals about their activities. In the interviews, the principals were asked to clarify and give background that would put the observed activities in the overall context of the schools and their communities.

Although the original intent was to gather data for the researchers, it soon became apparent that the principals involved were gaining a great deal from the process. It gave them opportunities to reflect on their actions and gain new insights into the reasons for their activities. The interviews enabled them to talk at length to someone knowledgeable about and interested in their jobs - maybe for the first time.

Out of this serendipitous finding, the PAL program was born. PAL - Peer-Assisted Leadership - is a highly structured professional development program for school administrators, based on the data-gathering techniques employed by Far West Laboratory in its original research.

In the PAL program, administrators voluntarily become involved. Each participant works with a partner - usually of his or her choice. A number of these partnerships form a PAL group. The optimum size of a group is between 12 and 24.

Each PAL group is led by a team of trained instructors who meet with their group six times during the school year. Normally, the meetings are held four to six weeks apart. The meetings provide training in the skills necessary to become effective PAL partners. Equally important, however, is the development of trust and a collegial atmosphere. The participants use the periods between meetings to visit each other's schools to observe and interview each other.

Learning new skills

Participants in the program learn to

- conduct background interviews which will gather information about their partners' schools, communities, and personal backgrounds and philosophies
- observe their partners in such a way as to gather relevant information without being intrusive
- conduct reflective interviews that will help both partners come to a fuller understanding of the activities observed

The program is designed to assist participants in identifying key themes in their partners' leadership activities and the skills needed to explore these themes. At each meeting, participants work with other members of the group in addition to their partners. This not only facilitates learning of the theoretical content but also helps to develop a collegial network.

In the final phase, partners synthesize the themes into a 'General Framework of Instructional Leadership' - the big picture of each other's schools and their leadership activities within their schools. The synthesis includes an

oral presentation to the group at the sixth and final meeting and completes the formal activities of the group. Recent research by Far West Laboratory, however, indicates that PAL partners often continue sharing on an informal basis.

PAL offers participants more than opportunities to learn a set of skills and pick up a credit. Far West Laboratory has published a comprehensive follow-up study on PAL participants. The initial response to the researchers' questionnaire was high and respondents were positive in their reports of the ways in which PAL had affected their work. This was particularly the case with those who had maintained links with their partners after the conclusion of the formal program. The finding contrasts sharply with the frequent experience of administrators who return to their jobs after attending some other type of workshop. All too often the administrators are immediately swallowed up by their fragmented, hectic jobs with little chance to implement what they have learned.

PAL seems to be more successful because it begins with the learner's individual needs. First, participants in a group examine their current situation and background. Subsequently, they focus on their on-the-job activities and are then guided through a set of highly structured activities to help them decide whether their activities contribute to the effectiveness of their schools. At the same time, other ways of doing things are being shown by others in their group.

Common sense suggests that learning and growing in one's own school, grappling with real issues with a knowledgeable and trusted partner and checking regularly with a similarly motivated group will have a good chance of creating a lasting positive impact.

A first in Canada

Manitoba school administrators will have their first opportunity to get involved in PAL in the 1988-89 school year, thanks to the efforts of Society staff officer Linda Asper. Dr. Asper learned of PAL two years ago and visited Far West Laboratory last January. Several months later, the Society's provincial executive agreed to sponsor a team of Manitoba administrators to become PAL trainers - the first such team in Canada.

The Society's PAL team, the first of its kind in Canada, received intensive training this past summer. The training sessions were led by Faye Mueller, Far West Laboratory, San Francisco (seated at right). Seated with Ms Mueller are (from left) Harold Jonasson and Vaughn Wadelius. Standing are (from left) Ron van den Bussche, Linda Asper (Society staff officer), Terry Dann, Charles Clifford, Jean Beaumont, Christie Stefaniuk, Roy Seidler and Joe Degen.

The Society's team consists of nine administrators, representing various regions of Manitoba. The team was selected by a Society committee. It has considerable breadth and depth in terms of the combined experience of its members at both the elementary and secondary school levels. Three of the members have additional administrative experience. All have previous experience in the presentation of professional development activities to colleagues.

The team received a week of intensive training from Faye Mueller, a Far West Laboratory staff member who has been involved in the development of PAL. The team's first task now is to make administrators in Manitoba aware of the opportunities presented by PAL. The members plan to meet with divisional administrative groups and their superintendents during the early part of the school year to outline the program and answer questions.

Through the Society's office, pamphlets were distributed last June to each school in the province. The pamphlets give details of the various PAL groups planned for 1988-89.

Unlike previously conducted PAL programs in the United States, Manitoba programs will carry credit. Education Manitoba has granted 30 credit-hours toward administrative certification for successful completion of a PAL program.

The members of the Society's PAL training team are looking forward to the coming year. The team hopes that Manitoba administrators will take advantage of this exciting professional development opportunity because, after all, everyone needs a PAL. □

Terry Dann is principal of Lockport School, Lord Selkirk School Division, Selkirk, and a member of the Society's PAL training team.

Letter from a substitute teacher

Looking for the good word

Current educational research supports the notion that most substitutes are ineffective and that the present system established to cope with teacher absences is too expensive. Such notions call for immediate steps to either improve substitute performance or to devise a new, more efficient, strategy for handling the absences.

Many teachers consider substitutes high-priced baby-sitters rather than colleagues because they notice the differences in the teaching, marking and preparation requirements. For many years, I, too, could muster only faint praise for the work of the substitute teacher. It is so easy to latch onto the obvious weaknesses of others without acknowledging the possibility of personal shortcomings, particularly in one's green years. I still have need today, at times, to play the song, 'It's difficult to be humble when you're so perfect in every way' but I have begun to search for good words about substitutes.

Search produces meager yield

Up to now, my search has produced few examples of good words for substitute teachers. So, should you, dear reader, have a good word or two in favor of substitutes, please include them in a letter addressed to me, care of the editor of *The Manitoba Teacher.* Without appearing too pessimistic - but considering my research - I will, realistically, be prepared for letters that are short, pithy and few in number.

Let me first dispel any lingering doubt in your mind of the reasons for my search and request for help. I have become a substitute teacher which, more than likely, provides sufficient reason to find something good that could be said for substitute teachers generally. For me, this is a most timely and necessary undertaking. I need to know whether you truly consider substitutes a necessary evil or colleagues fulfilling an important and significant role in your absence.

While looking for answers this past summer, I discovered guidelines, checklists and research findings designed for the improvement of substitute teachers but, unfortunately, I found no mention of a different system for handling teacher absences.

Study suggests training

One study produced results suggesting that new substitutes can be trained to function as effectively and efficiently as regular teachers by the systematic utilization of predetermined behavioral objectives. Though this scheme has much of the certainty and efficiency of science, business and industry, it is accompanied by a significant footnote stating that the approach "needs more research using more complicated research designs and statistics."

Researcher Donna Hicks, writing from her personal experience as a substitute teacher and a free-lance writer, provides a checklist for improving the efficiency of substitutes. She is convinced that substitutes who perceive a school staff as supportive have greater confidence and are thus more effective. She feels that teachers generally, as part of their professional image, have a responsibility toward helping each other - including concern for the temporary teacher next door. She asks regular teachers to help the substitute by offering assistance when requested and, at other times, be sensitive to conditions that make intervention by a regular teacher essential.

I believe that a great deal of care needs to be exercised when using a checklist to see that all attempts for dialogue be as natural and genuine as possible.

Former assistant-principal, classroom teacher and substitute Joan Stommen writes of her experience in nine different schools and five divisions. Her typical day as a substitute almost always followed the same pattern in which she was seldom made to feel welcome or useful. Along with other school executives and substitute teachers, she helped design a new approach for the recruiting and training of substitute teachers so that school systems could benefit more from past teaching experiences and regular training workshops. Her eight-point program emphasizes the need for aggressive recruitment and continuous evaluation.

In Winnipeg, formal guidelines for substitutes are limited, usually, to one or two printed sheets, dealing with class assignments, fire-drill proce-

dures, hall-pass requirements and timetable schedules. Here the most important words of encouragement and support come spontaneously - without formal guidelines or checklists - from students, teachers, janitors, librarians and administrators alike.

Substitute teachers seldom see superintendents, though they must pass one another sometimes without even knowing, absorbed in the enormity of their respective tasks. Someone - quite unkindly, I thought - suggested that many superintendents lead an almost spectral existence akin to that of the legendary captain of the Flying Dutchman.

Thank heaven, principals and vice-principals continue to valiantly exhibit that great skill of 'showing the flag.' By exercising this all-powerful and all-knowing skill during classroom visits they assure us all that this is truly an ordered, balanced world, the harmonious nature of which will continue - unchanged - from that moment until nigh eternity. With no pun intended, substitutes rely for survival itself upon the good offices of principals. Mind you, once, I came across an administrator who made quite an issue of assuring me that his office would always be open for me. To be truthful, the door was always open but he was never there.

Behavior puzzles substitute

Substitutes also can be blessed, repeatedly, by a cadre of slightly strange teachers - all consummate actors without peer anywhere. These teachers have the ability to knock off the very socks of an overly zealous substitute and a group of cool, pseudo-sophisticated grade 9 students, all at once, at the same time. Such teachers usually start their performances by a quick look-see at an unsuspecting class and teacher. Some, by all indications, have serious business to conduct. One of these actors asked my class and me for a few moments to find out "who would be doing what" on the upcoming "spirit" days. Without waiting for a response, he asked for a show of hands of those intending to graduate this year. Not satisfied with the first performance, he repeated it time and again - changing his tone of voice here and reversing the order of the questions there - until he was sure of success. Amazingly enough, this year we had an unusually high number of youngsters who, to my knowledge, had never been in the 'spirit' of entering obstacle races or tugs-of-war.

Then, there was the teacher who asked to "do" a little Shakespeare during a 'free reading' session, with my grade 9 students. Certainly a little strange but what a fantastic performance she conjured up of Portia's 'quality of mercy' speech - all from memory.

Support and encouragement also come from many other sources - from the person in charge of duplicating who continually assures me that I am no trouble; to the janitor who never fails to give me far more soft soap than I know what to do with; and the librarian who magically marshals films and cassettes out of thin air and unearths other resource materials from places never before dreamed of.

Most important of all are all those detailed instructions and work outlines provided by the regular classroom teacher. Some also have an 'emergency' folder full of supplementary lessons and assignments while yet others provide instructions by telephone.

A plea to colleagues

Substitutes, in carrying out their duties, have the responsibility and authority similar to those of regular teachers within bounds set by the particular schools, classes and grades to be taught. Working within such parameters, we are neither 'fair fish' nor 'foul herring.' Be assured, though, that we care enough to do our very best. Only, never hold your substitute solely responsible for all the inadequacies of the present system for handling teacher absences.

The day will come when a new and better system appears and substitutes will no longer be required. You may be truly thankful to have finally done with us though we may still part as friends.

Until then, I remain, unpenitently yours,

Steve Vaughan
(former teacher and administrator)

PS: Please don't forget to write.

Editor's Note: A bibliography related to the research conducted by Steve Vaughan may be obtained by contacting the Editor of *The Manitoba Teacher*, 191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 3H2.

PLEA
What is that?

Public Legal Education Activities (PLEA) is a non-profit organization run by law students at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. In consultation with department of education staff, it has produced various materials for use in junior and senior high schools.

PLEA has developed, among other things:

- a video on the Young Offenders Act
- a computer tutorial with information about the Young Offenders Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedom, employment law and other topics
- kits with booklets, notes for teachers, sample cases and exercises

PLEA members develop new projects each year and are currently working on the production of a mock criminal trial kit for use with junior high school students.

A complete list of PLEA materials can be found in the catalogue of the Manitoba Textbook Bureau, Winnipeg.

PLEA members welcome requests for materials as well as suggestions from teachers who may wish to contribute their ideas about materials and projects that would help them in their teaching of law.

Teachers may direct their requests and suggestions to: PLEA, 308 Robson Hall, Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Man. R3T 2N2.

All substitute teachers in good standing as Society members may receive *The Manitoba Teacher* at their home. To receive this service, contact the Editor, 191 Harcourt St., Winnipeg, Man. R3J 3H2.

Public relations money can't buy

Judy Balabas

Often we read or hear that education is a shared responsibility. My experiences in public education have led me to believe that teachers carry a greater responsibility than others in some areas. One such area is public relations.

The nature of our profession demands that we take into account many unwritten expectations and society values. As a teacher, do I have the skills to be a public relations person, too? Why should I even consider public relations as part of my responsibility? With the myriad of responsibilities and expectations others have of me, do I have time to plan how I can be effective in the communications-public relations area?

I am convinced that teachers have the potential to destroy much of the mystique and negative generalities often unfairly accorded to public school education and teachers. I am convinced that teachers are the only ones who can be most effective and successful in this respect.

Survey findings regarding public satisfaction with public school education indicate that respondents tend to report higher satisfaction with the education in their children's schools than with education in general. Clearly, such surveys indicate, the greatest support comes from the direct contacts, experiences and communication between children and parents, on the one hand, and teachers and others in the children's schools, on the other.

If we want parents to be more supportive of public school education, we need to demystify the public education system. As a teacher, I can do this by ensuring that parents are involved in the communication process on a regular basis. Parents need to know that teachers care and are doing the best they can even in some difficult situations and without adequate resources. How often do we remember to convey to students and parents that we are glad to see them? Most parents want to support their children's teachers and schools. They want to know the progress being made and the options available. They want communication on a regular basis.

Recently, a teacher told me she had decided to telephone the parents of each student before the first parent-teacher interview to introduce herself and give the parents an opportunity to talk to someone from the school early in the school year. One parent, a dad, told her at the first parent-teacher interview that no teacher had ever made the time to call unless there was a problem. He also said that the call had made him feel more at ease before what is usually an apprehensive first interview for both parents and teacher.

At the Society's 1988 annual general meeting, delegates approved a budget allocation of $105,000 for a public relations program to be conducted during 1988-89. I wonder if we could save half that amount (approximately one per cent of the Society's budget) for 1989-90. The Society can produce all the brochures, billboards, radio and television advertisements, posters and bookmarks in an attempt to convey to parents that the public school system is a quality system. On the other hand, reality suggests that individual experiences, one-on-one contacts and regular communication generate the best support.

We, teachers, are in one of the best positions to increase support for the public school system through regular contact and communication with our students and their parents. We are the key to support for the public school system.

The public relations that every teacher in this province has the potential to deliver is priceless. It cannot be bought. The results of teacher-generated public relations are of the highest quality. Would less time spent on fund-raising and more time on communication with parents make a difference? Can we increase support for public school education? I believe we can make a difference.

At 9:00 am on any given day, a group of seven-year-olds can be seen feeding and caring for their pet guinea pig in their classrooms. Later, during the art period, they may be seen creating collages, using metal, plastic and wooden objects. Yet later in the day, they may go for a hike to observe the changes in trees during autumn. These and similar activities are all part of a primary science program, known as 'Hands-on Science' and developed for use in schools throughout Manitoba.

Practical program builds new foothold

Jennifer Lawson

According to the authors of *Primary Science - Taking the Plunge*, published in London, England, in 1985, "Learning science helps children develop ways of understanding the world around them. For this they have to build up concepts which help them link their experiences together; they must learn ways of gaining and organizing information and of applying and testing ideas. This contributes not only to children's ability to make better sense of things around them but prepares them to deal more effectively with wider decision-making and problem-solving in their lives. Science is as basic a part of education as numeracy [*sic*] and literacy; it daily becomes more important as the complexity of technology increases and touches every part of our lives."

Science is a necessary ingredient of the school experience but, all too often, students and teachers view science as a mundane subject offering little else than a study of acids and bases or the parts of a cell. Unfortunately, this attitude can affect the way teachers value the subject and, in turn, how they present it to students.

In elementary schools, some teachers see science as an extra subject and do not give it the recognition or time it deserves. The 'Hands-on Science' program is designed to give science new life in primary classrooms. It offers teachers necessary resources and promotes positive attitudes, with an eye on enhancing science education in all of Manitoba.

Learning by doing

The 'Hands-on Science' program was developed about three years ago. Its main purpose was to expand the resources available to primary science teachers. The emphasis was placed on the primary level since early years science instruction provides the foundation for all further acquisition of knowledge and skills. In addition, valuable early experiences in science help formulate lasting positive attitudes.

The program focuses on the development of children's science process skills, as does Manitoba's science curriculum for kindergarten through grade 6. These process skills include observation, classification, measurement, communication, inferring and predicting, used by scientists to gain new information. However, these skills are not confined to complex scientific research. Children, even in primary years, use them continuously to solve problems and make decisions regarding scientific issues.

In an effort to ensure correlation with the Manitoba curriculum, the 'Hands-on Science' program includes manuals for grades 1, 2 and 3. In each manual, the themes, concepts and objectives from the curriculum guide form the base for all lessons. Each lesson plan provides a list of required materials, a detailed outline of activities and a student-activity sheet. In addition, the manuals include numerous visual teaching aids to supplement specific activities and offer suggestions for follow-up activities, integration with other subjects and evaluation.

Teachers well know the importance of students being actively involved in the learning process. This is especially true for the young child who develops understanding through concrete interaction. As a result, science concepts and skills need to be developed through manipulation of materials. What better way to learn about living things than by having animals or growing plants in the classroom. Students can learn a great deal more about the characteristics of living things if they are given the opportunity to work with them. The same goes for learning about solutions and suspensions. Students will understand and internalize these concepts much better if allowed to mix, pour and filter solids and observe their reaction in liquids. In keeping with these ideas, the 'Hands-on Science' program emphasizes active student involvement.

Successful implementation

During 1985-86, the program was piloted in nine primary classrooms in Winnipeg. Teachers involved in the pilot project were enthusiastic about the program. They viewed it as an excellent resource for primary sci-

for science

ence. One grade 3 teacher commented that "science in primary has been and probably is still seen as an 'extra' subject." She noted, "With guidelines like these, teacher prep is minimized as the organizational procedures are outlined for you. The importance of science and the relationship to overall learning is emphasized with the hands-on approach. I enjoyed using the material and find myself keen (can you believe it) to tackle another year of science teaching."

The pilot project revealed encouraging data regarding student performance. An individualized performance test and a computer-based test were developed to evaluate the students' science process skills. Students were tested before and after they participated in the 'Hands-on Science' program. Pre-test and post-test results revealed a significant increase in students' abilities to use science process skills.

Special guests, such as Robert Hawley - owner of the two boa constrictors carried by the students - can help provide a true hands-on experience for students, thereby bringing part of the world of science into classrooms.

Students can sharpen their measuring skills, apply their knowledge of insects and have fun creating and baking a butterfly cake as part of their study of insects in a science class.

Since the initial piloting, teachers and student teachers throughout Manitoba have become aware of the program through in-services and workshops. Feedback has been positive. Teachers appear to appreciate the resource materials as well as the specific correlation with the Manitoba curriculum.

Future outlook

With the expected revision of the Manitoba science curriculum for kindergarten through grade 6, plans are underway to revise the 'Hands-on Science' program so that correlation is maintained. In addition, manuals for kindergarten and grades 4 through 6 are planned to provide consistency and additional resources for elementary schools.

Continued efforts must be made for the professional development of teachers involved in science education. Such training increases awareness, promotes positive attitudes and, hence, enriches the quality of science education for students throughout Manitoba. □

Jennifer Lawson, Winnipeg, is the originator of the 'Hands-on Science' program. Employed by the Winnipeg School Division, she works half-time as a resource teacher at Fort Rouge School and half-time as a developmental education teacher at William Whyte School. Teachers wanting to know more about the Hands-on Science program may contact her through The Manitoba Teacher *editor's office.*

The body travels more easily than the mind and until we have limbered up our imaginations, we continue to think as though we had stayed home. We have not budged a step until we take up residency in someone else's point of view.

John Erskine

Diary of a traveling teacher

Betty Neufeld, a teacher at George V School, Winnipeg, was overcome by 'wanderlust' when she took a year's leave during 1987-88 under her deferred salary leave plan (DSLP). Now, once again back in Manitoba, she has agreed to share with readers of* The Manitoba Teacher *some of her "escapades" by allowing them a peek at parts of her diary.

The summer holiday felt just like it often had. A year of hard work was over and it was a good time to putter in the back yard. Coaxing sweet peas up the wire fence and exploring new ways to grill hamburgers soon gave way to the realization that the next 14 months were mine.

Mexico City, Mexico
January 1988

Mexico in January is a welcome study in contrasts. Mexico City, with an unbelievable population of 23 million, seems like one teeming, vibrating mass. For me, today, the luster of Mexico's tumultuous past overshadows its enormous economic problems of the present.

An old woman bakes tortillas on a sidewalk stove, expertly lifting them from the hot iron onto the growing pile on a clay plate at her feet. Her brown and lined face, testimony to a life in the outdoors, crinkles into a quick smile.

The awe-inspiring ruins of the enigmatic civilization of the ancient Mayans speak to me of the splendor, intellectual superiority and ritualized horrors of bygone years.

Munich, West Germany
February 1988
(in an English-as-a-second-language class in the barracks of asylum-seekers)

The students begin to arrive quietly, taking their places along two long rows of tables facing a small blackboard. Some seem tentative and appear to try to be as unobtrusive as possible. Others swagger in and, with a gesture they may think bespeaks confidence, throw their jackets over the backs of their chairs. Most of them are professionals and students from East Europe. All of them wish to learn English, want to leave Germany, to begin a new life in North America.

To them, I represent a coveted goal. Books soon are forgotten as they struggle to communicate what is really on their minds. Haltingly, they ask about Canada, Canadian wildflowers and animals, Canadian cities and jobs, the cold weather, the cost of education and a passport.

We may share a love of life and laughter but we are not really equal. I can choose where and how to live. They are not free to live as they choose. My country waits for me. No country beckons them. They have to wait, often for years, to be allowed to begin a new life in another land.

The Hunsrück, West Germany
March 1988

A disconcerting, frustrating day. The Hunsrück - an area the size of Yellowstone Park - where among the gently rolling farmlands and wooded field can be found 91 American military installations, munition depots, practise fields, radar centers and 96 notorious cruise missiles.

At one depot today, we were dramatically detained for nearly an hour while we waited for the security police. My camera was the culprit. I could not convince the big, burly GI that the submachine gun over his shoulder was much more dangerous than the camera around my neck.

The missile bunkers were eerie enough but more unnerving was the passivity of the soldiers' faces. "I'm just following orders, ma'am," accompanied by a look of total resignation, seemed strangely familiar.

Low-flying jet practise flights are a daily occurrence in this area. It has taken me several days to force my eyes from the sky to watch the reactions of the citizens on the street as jets scream overhead. I have been struck by the stoic lack of expression on the faces of the people around me. Have they accepted the foreign military presence

as a necessary evil? Are they inured to what has become another everyday sound? Or do they seethe with anger and frustration at the constant reminders that the population in Germany and much of Europe must live amid the deadliest weapons known?

Some believe something can be done. Several kilometers from the missile base lie the homes of German activists committed to being non-violent witnesses for peace. André Gingerich, an American peace-worker supported by the Mennonite Central Committee, lives with them. With good-natured humor he shares his message of non-violence and peace with his fellow-Americans.

The concentrated peace cell stages blockades, visits the base, offers weekly worship services at the gate of the base and publishes peace literature. Members of the group frequently are called to appear in court to defend their actions.

The peace group in the Hunsrück finds hope in small things. Though the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Force) treaty provides for the removal of a mere three per cent of the weapons currently in place, the signing of the treaty is enough reason for the peace group to organize a champagne-and-popcorn party.

The message of the 96 cruise missiles is clear. In stark contrast, silhouetted against the grey sky, stand 96 tall crosses in an open field. Their message is no less clear.

Budapest, Hungary
April 1988

The awesome Alps of Austria earlier today gave up their dominance with reluctance. The highway straightened and the peaks began to merge with the flat landscape of western Hungary. Heavy modern machines on collective farms side-by-side with horse-pulled wagons and shawl-draped grandmothers on bicycles made up the panorama.

Budapest, city of bridges and spire-tipped government buildings, shimmering in the not-so-blue Danube. The Budapest Hilton, built on the ruins of an ancient monastery, attempts to integrate its flashy wealth with the richness of the past.

In the opulent comfort of the refurbished Opera House images of recent days return: the visit to a simple home where the daughters' bedroom was quickly converted into a place for cof fee and a visit; the predictable daily line-up at the Adidas store; blocks of pock-marked buildings, harsh reminders of the days of war; the birthplace of Bella Bartok where, even for the lone visitor, every room resounds with the folk music of the composer's people.

Hungary has given me glimmerings of a new understanding: the spirit of the people, built on great suffering, must now find an even greater hope.

Frankfurt Airport, West Germany
April 1988

Many travel images crowd my mind: the barefoot Indian on the Yucatan bus, carefully monitoring the activities of a large snake in his sack; the hilarious train trip with a group of Austrian senior citizens in 'lederhosen,' sympathetic with my seatless plight, offering their coach seats while they visited the washroom; the emotion-filled church service on Good Friday in Yugoslavia; the bustle of a rainy Venetian street in spring; the tranquility of a canal in Brugge.....

Winnipeg, Manitoba
August 1988

A new crop of sweet peas once again adorns the wire fence in my back yard but my thoughts are with my new classroom, new students and new challenges. □

Society offers information about plan

Teachers wanting information about
deferred salary leave plans
may contact
Art Reimer, Welfare Services
The Manitoba Teachers' Society
191 Harcourt Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 3H2

Phones: 888-7961 or 1-800-262-8803 (toll-free)
FAX: 831-0877

The stories about the disaster in Nepal which, this summer and fall, flashed around the world have been particularly agonizing to at least two Manitoba teachers. The two, Michael Montcombroux and Philippe Dufort, spent six weeks in Nepal last winter as part of their contribution to Project Overseas, an educational assistance program. They made many friends about whom they think often these days. That is all they can do at this time because, as Mr. Montcombroux indicated recently, communication with and within the disaster-struck region is so "atrocious" that the teachers "can only hope for the best" as they reflect on the time they spent in Nepal last winter.

Journey into Nepal

Michael Montcombroux

School bus - Janakpur style (December 1987)

When I applied to participate in CTF's Project Overseas, I did not know I would end up in Nepal. In fact, I knew little about Nepal other than that it seemed a thin strip of country, wedged between India and the Himalayas. But who could resist the offer to exchange six weeks of mid-winter Winnipeg for the semi-tropical plains of Southern Nepal?

On Boxing Day morning, I boarded a westbound plane en route to Bangkok and on to Nepal. However much I had mentally prepared myself for this third-world country, it was still a shock to the system to arrive in Kathmandu, capital of Nepal. The rest of the Canadian team consisted of one other Manitoban, Phil Dufort, and two women teachers from Ontario. After a few days of orientation the team separated; the two ladies going to Birjang, Phil and I to Janakpur; two towns some 150 kilometers apart on the fertile Terai plains in the south.

Bizarre blend

Kathmandu must be one of the strangest cities anywhere; a bizarre blend of modern tourist trap (the hippies have long since left) and medieval town. It has narrow streets, most none too clean, darkened by overhanging upper storeys. A communal water pump attracts inhabitants and animals alike. Odors and noises are reminiscent of Europe in the Middle Ages. Daily life revolves around buying and selling in open markets and small stores that spill out into the streets and squares. No high-rises interrupt the skyline of old buildings, temples and palaces. In the background looms the impressive chain of the Himalayas, with Mount Everest just one massive peak among many.

Yet Kathmandu is not the real Nepal. The real Nepal is to be found in the austere towns and villages of the hilly north and the noisy, sprawling towns of the luxuriant south. Temples and some fine homes speak of past splendors but, mostly, the houses are of bamboo and functional brick.

I grew quite fond of Janakpur, the town of 20,000 people, 30 kilometers from the India-Nepal border, which was my home for a month. Its streets are jammed with rickshaws, bicycles,

Michael Montcombroux teaches at Kelvin High School, Winnipeg. He is one of many Manitoba teachers who have participated and may continue to participate in Project Overseas. The project is operated at different times of the year under the auspices of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member-organizations, including The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Further information about the project may be obtained from the Society's office in Winnipeg.

oxcarts and the occasional car and truck. Cows, revered in this Hindu country, wander everywhere, but so, too, do scores of pigs, goats and chickens. The main streets are lined with small open-fronted shops selling all the necessities of life: from cloth to cooking oil, fruit to hand-made furniture. In little alleys are workshops-cum-factories offering shoes, mats and aromatic cigarettes rolled from what may be tobacco.

Walking in Janakpur requires alertness and agility to avoid dirt, dung, open sewers and spitters. Even in winter time, temperatures reach 30°C and open ponds are havens for mosquitoes. All cooking is over wood fires and the haze of smoke that descends on the town at dusk likely contributes to the high incidence of respiratory ailments among the Nepalese.

Janakpur is not visited much by Western tourists but it attracts thousands of devout Hindus to its elaborate Janki Mundi temple, the legendary birthplace of the goddess Sita. Janakpur is a relatively prosperous service center for the agricultural, south-central region of Nepal. It also boasts a large cigarette factory, built by the Russians in the 1960s to aid the country's development. Paddy fields, sugar and tobacco plantations dot the surrounding landscape.

So few white people visit the area that I could not walk anywhere without attracting a small crowd of curious onlookers. The people are friendly if somewhat reserved. They soon found out that I was a teacher and since the Nepalese have a high regard for education, my colleague and I received 'VIP' treatment. For example, I went to the tailor shop across the road and ordered a suit. "How long will it take?" I asked. By sign language, the shop-owner indicated two. Two weeks, I thought. But, no, he and his boys had it immaculately stitched in two days.

Education seen as passport

Education is definitely the Nepalese passport to a better standard of living. It may mean a job with the monumental bureaucracy which runs this absolute monarchy.

Schools are everywhere. Schooling is compulsory only for the first few years. After that, many of the poorer children are kept at home to tend the animals or work in the fields. Those whose parents are lucky enough to be able to afford the books and school uniforms are eager pupils. They study until grade 10 when they write 'School-Leaving Certificate (SLC)' examinations. Some go on to the local college where they study two more years before trying to gain admission to the university in Kathmandu.

Nepalese children - as Michael Montcombroux saw them while on assignment in Nepal last winter.

The official language of instruction in Nepal's public schools is Nepali. Therefore, many parents, believing English to be the key to advancement,

Following are some of the impressions of Nepal seen through the eyes of Philippe Dufort. Mr. Dufort was a member of the same Project Overseas team as Michael Montcombroux whose report appears on pages 16 to 19 of this issue. Mr. Dufort teaches at St. Norbert Immersion School, Seine River School Division, St. Norbert, Manitoba.

People in Nepal join their hands as if in prayer, bow slightly and greet you with "Namaste." They live in a land of contrast - of unique beauty and harsh challenges.

Life in Nepal is hard. Poverty, although not abject, is evident everywhere. Faced with the stark reality of survival amidst the fantastic beauty that the country has to offer, the Nepalese have developed a great sense of pride in themselves. They smile and laugh in the face of adversity and display an enviable degree of tolerance in the face of seemingly intolerable hardships.

They have great respect for their elders and teachers. Shashinath, at age 55, the oldest member of our group of trainees, was revered and given a place of honor at the daily opening and closing ceremonies. It took me a week to convince the trainees that they did not have to stand when I addressed them. When one of them arrived late, which was uncommon, he stood in the doorway and asked, "Permission to enter, Sir?"

The trainees did some practise teaching at a girls' school - grades 9 and 10. The rooms were about two-thirds the size of conventional classrooms in Manitoba and housed some 70 students, seven to a desk. The students maintained total silence and absolute respect for the teacher. The entire class would stand and extend greetings whenever a visitor entered the classroom.

The Nepalese have a great love for life, family and children. They have many children. This assures them a substantial family because, in most families, two of every 10 children die before they are five years old, often from dysentery or a common cold. It seems that boys receive better care than girls because more girls than boys die.

Children become responsible at an early age. They scrub pots, wash clothes, fetch wood and water - all of this without much obvious urging from their parents.

I would not want to change places with the Nepalese but I admire and envy their strength and courage.

First-class travel to India (December 1987)

send their children to private schools. The curriculum in the schools, both public and private, is narrow by Canadian standards. It offers little history, no music, no physical education, few vocational options and no special education.

Some years ago, the teachers' association was disbanded and replaced by an ineffectual government-appointed organization. Yet, the country is not oppressively undemocratic. The police and the army remain largely in the background.

Focus on methodology

The CTF project in Nepal aims to help the country's teachers improve their academic qualifications and teaching skills. My group of teacher-trainees proved to be well educated in science but most of them had no previous teacher training whatsoever. This, and the almost total lack of science equipment, meant they taught in a dry, theoretical manner. My modest contribution consisted of helping them improve their methodology and showing them how, with a little ingenuity, local materials could be adapted to conduct worthwhile scientific experiments.

The building which housed the training program was a huge barn-like structure with thick walls and shuttered windows without glass. It had no electricity. Although the days were warm, it was always cool inside. The

Nepalese, however, complained about the "bitter winter temperatures" (never below 5°) and wrapped themselves in shawls and scarves. Sometimes the squabbling of the birds in the rafters and the animal noises from the farmyard next-door drowned out the discussions in the classroom.

Yet the trainees, from 24 to 49 years of age, were attentive and grateful for any assistance they could obtain. Some came from remote villages and had trekked three or four days through the mountains to attend. When their English was not sufficient, capable Nepalese co-tutors helped.

I did not observe obvious signs of malnutrition. In the south, food is cheap and plentiful. In the north, the diet is plain and sparse, consisting mainly of rice, lentils and vegetables with meat once a month.

Festivals and holy days are numerous because religion plays an important part in the Nepalese way of life. In mid-January, during the Festival of Learning, school children build elaborate and colorful shrines to the Goddess Saraswati. This generates much noisy excitement and loud music accompanied by distribution of sweet cakes. At the close of the festival the shrines are paraded through town on the backs of trucks or, for the less affluent students, on rickshaws or carts.

Teachers are among the better-off segment of the population. They earn about $70 a month which permits them to support a family in a thatched bamboo house, without electricity, no sanitation and water from the pump outside. Transportation consists usually of a sturdy bicycle.

Nepalese teachers are light-years removed from their Canadian counterparts. Medicare, dental care, superannuation are unknown. At school, most contend with classes as large as 60 to 80 students or worse.

Despite this, no open discontent is apparent. Young people show a keen desire to improve their lives. One young man stopped me in the street and explained he was a student of science at the local college. To supplement his income, he tutored younger students, starting at 6:30 every morning. He wanted to discuss ways of teaching Newton's three laws of motion.

Saturday is the day of rest, although it appears to differ little from other days. The cows and pigs still wander in the streets, most shops remain open, people still seem to be working, women still carry their sacks of rice to the nearby mill.

During a break, I took a trip to India on the narrow gauge railway. Everything I had ever read about trains in Asia was true. Drawn by antiquated steam locomotives, coaches were crowded with teeming humanity plus a fair number of goats, chickens and other animals, crates and bags. For those who could not squeeze inside, there was always room to sit on top or hang on the sides.

During the three days of the Saraswati festival, I visited Chitwan, a natural wildlife reserve. Riding the back of an elephant was the highlight. It provided a different viewpoint and passing through the village of the Tharu people - a distinct group, neither Buddhist nor Hindu - I did not feel I was intruding. The Tharus live as they did a thousand years ago. They are farmers, living in bamboo huts, wrapping balls of rice in little basket-like envelopes of grass to feed the elephants, seemingly enjoying a peaceful undisturbed life.

The closing ceremonies of the training program provided time for reflection. What did I bring these teachers with whom I had shared a month of hard work? They assured me they had learned a great deal about how to teach. Perhaps more important for them, they welcomed the contact with someone who represented the concerns of teachers in faraway Canada. On my side, I profited from meeting a people capable of coping with almost intolerable conditions with stoic happiness and complete lack of cynicism or anger. That in itself was worth the weeks of mosquitoes, the diet of rice and goat meat, and the shock of returning to Winnipeg in winter. □

Among the 59 Canadian teachers who devoted much of their 1988 summer vacation to helping teachers in developing countries were three Manitobans, (from left) Barry Moolchan, Joyce Peatch and Philippe Dufort. They served under the auspices of Project Overseas in Cameroon North-West, India and Mali. About 1,200 Canadian teachers have participated in Project Overseas since it was established 27 years ago. The project is financed by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member-organizations (such as the Society in Manitoba) and with the help of a special grant from the Canadian International Development Agency.

Academic freedom - What does it mean?

Earlier this year, the Society's ad hoc committee on academic freedom met with the Society's lawyer Mel Myers of Winnipeg. Following are some of the questions the committee asked and Mr. Myers' answers.

The phrase academic freedom has a nice ring to it but what does it mean for teachers in Manitoba?

Traditionally, academic freedom means the freedom of teachers in public schools and professors in universities to pursue their educational objectives with curricula, materials and methods they believe to be appropriate. It includes the right of the educators to speak freely about their subjects and to experiment with new ideas.

Do Manitoba teachers have the right to academic freedom?

Manitoba law does not make statutory provision for the protection of academic freedom per se. However, in Manitoba, teachers enjoy legal protection of tenure through section 92 of the Public Schools Act which stipulates that a teacher's employment in this province cannot be terminated without just cause. Secondly, a number of court decisions, dealing with attempts to discipline or fire teachers for allegedly improper teaching methods, form a body of common law which further helps protect teachers.

Have many Canadian teachers found it necessary to go to court to protect their academic freedom?

I have been able to locate only two cases related to academic freedom in Canada. However, a large body of law based on American cases provides useful guidelines for Canadian teachers. The American cases help to predict what is likely to result if and when issues presented by these cases should be brought before Canadian courts.

Why does the American experience appear to be different from the Canadian one?

The American cases concerning teachers' academic freedom are rooted in the 'First Amendment' of the American constitution which protects freedom of religion, speech, the press and assembly in the United States. Judicial decisions in the U.S. have consistently related the academic freedom of public school teachers and university professors to the educators' right to freedom of speech.

How have American courts dealt with academic freedom and its relationship to the freedom of speech?

One example is the case of Mailloux vs Killey. It concerned a grade 9 English teacher who, while discussing the concept of taboo words with his students, had written 'fuck' on the blackboard to illustrate a taboo word - as compared with 'sexual intercourse,' a socially acceptable term. The teacher had been dismissed, charged with 'conduct unbecoming a teacher.' He was ultimately reinstated by the courts because he had not been given prior notice to indicate that the teaching method he had used was considered unacceptable.

Section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees Canadians freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression - including freedom of the press and other media of communication. Do you think that academic freedom will be protected under the charter?

Whether a teacher's academic freedom is covered under the Canadian charter has not yet been tested but, considering the American cases, I believe it would be found to do so if such an issue would come before the Canadian courts.

Have professional teacher organizations attempted to guarantee academic freedom?

The Manitoba Teachers' Society indirectly refers to academic freedom in its code of professional practise. However, the Society's local teacher associations have not attempted to protect academic freedom through their collective agreements because the

How can teachers protect themselves when teaching controversial subjects?
When asked for an answer to this question, the Society's lawyer Mel Myers suggested that teachers make sure they

- can justify the educational relevance of their lessons
- follow curriculum guidelines
- know the policies and directives of their employers
- have the support of their principals and school boards before introducing controversial materials or methods in their classrooms
- advise their principals of potentially controversial materials and methods
- check whether or not their methods interfere with school discipline
- can show that their administrators have refused to permit presentation of unorthodox or unpopular views on certain topics before they complain to school boards or the news media about such apparent refusal
- determine how other teachers deal with particular topics in their classrooms

protection of academic freedom has not been a serious problem for Manitoba teachers requiring such protection.

I have not yet had an opportunity to determine whether other teacher organizations have taken steps to protect their members' academic freedom through collective bargaining.

What about the rights of parents and community groups to protect children from teachings which conflict with the parents' beliefs or community standards?

Neither students nor communities-at-large have the right to insist that students be taught certain subjects in a certain fashion. Parents do not have any constitutionally protected right to delineate or interfere with curriculum and teaching methodology in the public schools. In Manitoba, the legal right to control curriculum and content in the public schools clearly rests with the minister of education. The public's right to a say in the process is protected by its right to representation on the minister's advisory board.

At the same time, parents and students have some limited rights to demand certain types of instruction from the public school system. For example, where numbers warrant, parents may demand the provision of religious exercises or stipulate the language of instruction to be either English or French. However, students and parents have no statutory right to challenge a board's decision to eliminate a particular course.

Do Manitoba school boards have the power to remove books from schools and school libraries because they find them unacceptable?

Manitoba boards may remove books from schools and school libraries if the books violate good taste, are irrelevant or are deemed inappropriate. If, however, a board removes books purely to deny students access to ideas because it does not like the ideas contained in the books, the answer seems to be 'no.'

What does the right to academic freedom mean to teachers whose opinions differ significantly from the opinions of their principals or boards?

In the U.S., teachers have successfully challenged attempts to fire them for using materials or teaching methods considered unacceptable by their principals. To succeed, however, they have had to be able to demonstrate that their teaching did not interfere with school discipline and did not subject students to unfair indoctrination and influence.

Is it possible to glean some general principles from case law on academic freedom?

Comments by judges presiding over cases where teachers have successfully challenged attempts to fire them for using controversial methods or materials suggest:

- Teachers cannot be disciplined for introducing controversial subjects or methods per se. There must be a rational basis for the restriction which a principal or school board may want to impose.
- Teachers have the right to be given prior notice that certain materials or methods are considered objectionable in their jurisdiction.
- Teachers must be able to demonstrate the educational relevance of controversial materials or methods.
- Academic freedom does not give teachers the right to ignore the curriculum.
- Teachers must consider the age and maturity of their students when selecting materials and methods.
- Teachers must avoid teaching strategies which cause unnecessary disruption of school discipline.
- Teachers do not have the right to use their classrooms to promote their own political and religious views.
- Teachers must not wilfully disobey the law. They will be better off exploring legal avenues when they believe their academic freedom is being compromised.

Are we blinkering our students?

Gerry Lane

Like horse riders who blinker their horses, are we, educators, leading our students down a narrow path of education? Are we imposing artificial handicaps on our students or are we providing them with education to allow them to learn with all means at their disposal, including sight?

Rudolph Arnheim, in *Art and Visual Perception*, argues that vision is not mere passive reception but rather "an eminently active occupation."

Visual perception is a cognitive activity. Becoming aware of something through seeing, feeling, tasting or smelling requires use of the mind. In *Visual Thinking*, Arnheim defines 'cognitive' as "all the mental operations involved in the receiving, storing and processing of information; sensory perception, memory, thinking and learning." He states that "no thought processes seem to exist that cannot be found to operate, at least in principle, in perception" and concludes that "visual perception is visual thinking."

Visual thinking is a basic way of obtaining, processing and representing information. It begins with seeing and observing as a way of gathering, recording and interpreting information.

How to develop inner eye

Linda Verlee Williams, in *Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind*, explains that teaching students to understand and use graphic representations provides them with a tool that improves comprehension and enables them to clarify their thinking and communicate their ideas to others. She writes:

> Students need help developing their inner eye. Visualizing - the ability to generate and manipulate visual imagery - helps with a wide variety of tasks...remembering information, learning spelling words, performing mathematical functions and solving practical problems involving spatial relations.

By presenting information both verbally and visually, teachers make room for learning differences among students and improve students' chances of success.

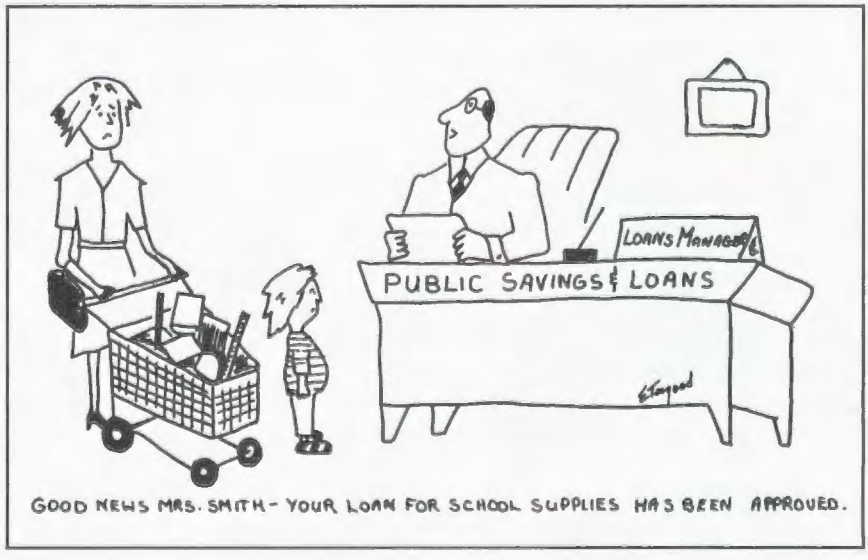
One of the objectives of most elementary school curricula is to develop students' observational skills. Unfortunately, little emphasis is placed on the development of these skills in most classrooms. Usually, students are directed to look but are seldom encouraged to question their interpretations of what they have seen.

Developing visual perception or observational skills in students can be done in various ways. Drawing activities help develop observational skills and insight into spatial relationships. Drawings can be means for teachers to determine how students perceive what they have drawn. They also can help assess student perceptions and aid students in overcoming their shortcomings.

How to sharpen skills

Students who are encouraged to describe their observations can be expected to improve their perceptual skills. The use of metaphors, analogies and simulations reinforces writing and enhances visual memory. Such devices promote mental images which help students see familiar surroundings with renewed awareness and appreciation.

Howard Gardner, in *Frames of Mind: A Theory of Multiple Intel-*



ligences, describes school as a place to develop the different components of the mind. He suggests that the abilities involved in comprehending visual arts - such as sculpture, painting, dance and mime - represent separate cognitive skills. If we omit development of those abilities from the curriculum, we shortchange the minds of our students.

Within the mind, a close relationship exists between creativity and intelligence. Creativity is a dynamic process and should be seen as the essence of education, not an appendix. Creative thinking can be applied to all areas. In science, it is needed to formulate new theories. In our daily lives, it alleviates boredom and helps us deal with social and other problems.

Creative thinking involves fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration and evaluation. It must be an integral part of learning. Therefore, as educators, we have to ask ourselves:

- Are we encouraging artistic expression by exposing our students to various art forms - like drawing, printmaking, collages, poetry, creative body movements, drama and rhythm patterns?
- Are we applauding unique perceptions, encouraging a sense of wonder and providing open-ended activities which ensure success and development of students' potentials?
- Are we offering activities in a way to ensure that students will both want and be able to learn?

If we answer 'no' to these questions, we are shortchanging the minds of our students - blinkering ourselves and them, restricting thought, movement and curriculum structure. The challenge is to develop new strategies for learning and thinking. Let's throw away the blinkers and allow our students to function creatively as active participants in, rather than passive consumers of, the learning process. □

Gerry Lane is an itinerant teacher involved in the program enrichment services of the Fort Garry School Division, Winnipeg. She also chairs the elementary art committee of the Fort Garry School Division. A bibliography related to her article is available from the Editor of The Manitoba Teacher.

Active and associate members of the Society who have not yet received their copy of the Society's 1988-89 handbook may obtain one by contacting the Editor, The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 3H2.

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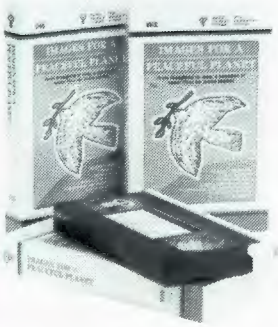

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the Hilroy fellowship program

established by
the Roy C. Hill Charitable Foundation

administered by
the Canadian Teachers' Federation Trust Fund

The Hilroy fellowship program was established to encourage and reward active classroom teachers who have developed new ideas for the improvement of teaching practises.

Applications are invited from teachers or small teams of teachers, working at any level of an elementary or secondary school, who have devised new methods, new approaches or new teaching devices.

Conditions of award

Fellowships will be awarded through annual competition, open to certificated teachers who are members of provincial or territorial teacher organizations and actively employed in elementary or secondary schools in the provinces or territories in Canada.

Recommendations for the award of fellowships of $2,500 each at the provincial level will be made by the provincial teacher organizations. Recommendations for the award of fellowships of $2,500 each to teachers in the territories, for one national award of $10,000 for outstanding merit and six national awards of $5,000 each for great merit, will be made by a national advisory council. The final selections in all cases will be made by the Roy C. Hill Charitable Foundation.

All applications must include a brief summary of the Hilroy fellowship program application at the time of submission. This summary shall be completed on the prescribed form provided with the application form and should include a brief description of the major points discussed under the headings indicated. The summary must be clear and concise enough to stand on its own merit. As the summaries of award-winning applications will be published for the purpose of subsequent dissemination of information regarding the Hilroy fellowship projects, all summaries must be prepared so that they will be suitable for such publication. Full payment of awards will be made on completion of satisfactory summaries.

In all matters relating to the Hilroy fellowship program and the awards, the decision of the Roy C. Hill Charitable Foundation is final.

Method of application

Applications by Manitoba teachers must be made in English or French on the official application form and must reach The Manitoba Teachers' Society not later than October 31, 1988.

Inquiries about the fellowships, requests for application forms and applications are to be directed to: Mariette Ferré-Collet, Professional Services, The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 3H2.