

The background of the cover is a grayscale photograph of a classroom. In the upper half, a young girl with long dark hair is looking down, possibly at a book or paper. In the lower half, a hand is visible writing on a piece of paper with a pen. A calculator is also visible on the desk. The overall scene suggests a typical classroom environment.

THE MANITOBA Teacher

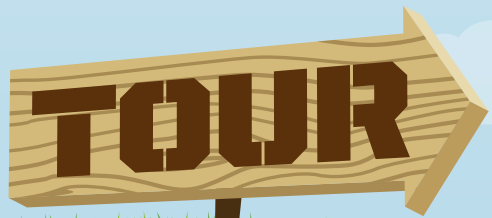
APRIL/MAY 2014 VOLUME 92 NUMBER 6 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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THE MANITOBA Teacher

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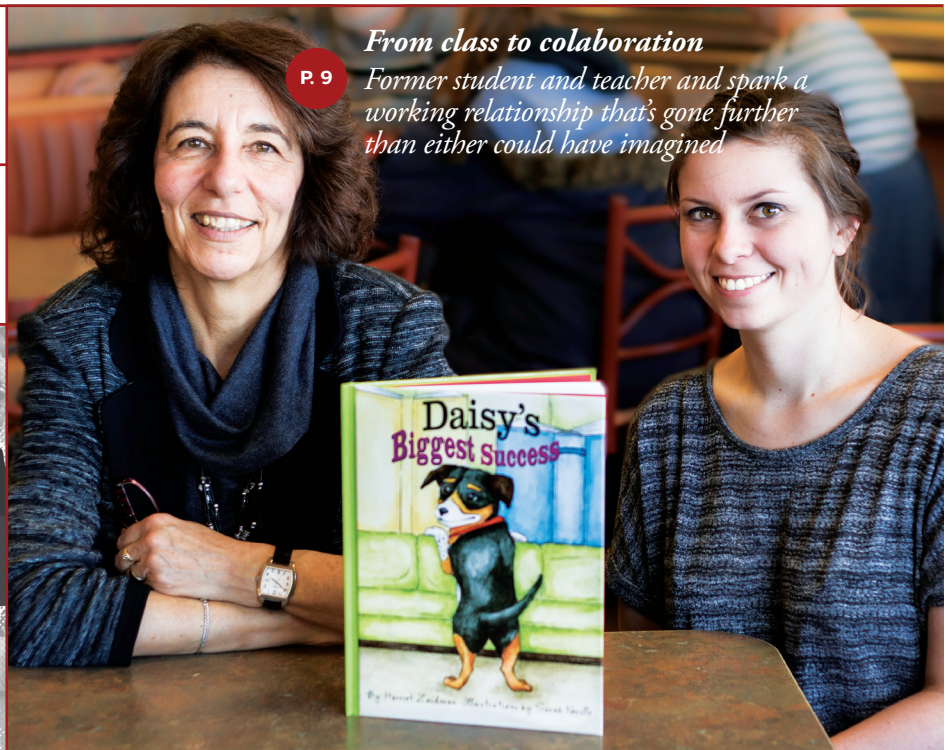
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working relationship that's gone further
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Full court pirouette

*Canada's Royal Winnipeg
Ballet School pirouette their
way through schools*





PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

PAUL OLSON

“Beware the Ides of March.”

March 15th, 44 B.C.E., Julius Caesar was knifed, and died. I'm sure it's purely coincidental that it's also the annual deadline for school divisions to submit their budgets to the Province.

It seems that Brutus (he with the knife) is remembered mainly as a murderous conspirator, but also, arguably, as a freedom fighter against Caesar's tyranny.

I've actually never found any topic that will make you less interesting in a staff-room or a coffee shop than education finance. Eyes glaze over at an amazing rate, and that's to everyone's detriment. It's partially our fault, of course, because we tend to unleash a “fact-a-lanche” on our poor friends and colleagues, spewing forth on matters of equalization, mill rate, transfers, tax credits, and whatnot. I've been as guilty of this as anyone, and it's a painful memory of how not to engage members on important stuff.

Education finance is the kid in front of us every day who desperately needs support they are not getting because someone decided that it was too expensive to provide. (Of course, common sense tells us that what we don't pay for in schools we'll pay for ten times over in health care, social services, law enforcement, and the like, but that's later on, and someone else's budget. So, that makes it okay. Right?)

Education finance is why you no longer have your resource teacher, Art program, or vocational program. Education finance is also about anything good that's happened lately, because that stuff costs money as well.

This year, some school divisions have cut teaching positions because they believe their constituents cannot or should not have to meet a particular threshold of obligation to support public education. Outdated programs and approaches should be cut, but only when we can replace them with something better. Any professional seeks to free him or herself from the tyranny of, “that's how we've always done it.”

In Canada, the public discourse on public education is overwhelmingly off topic. It should not revolve around budgets, PISA rankings, or whether you have new iPads. Most media are focussing on details and a few specific “outputs”, and spend little time focussing on core issues and inputs.

Public education discussions could focus on why we are seeing the depth, range, and severity of human need that walks into our schools every day. We could even ask why other provincial governments have decided to spend more public money leasing schools than they would if they just built them.

The real public education conversation is this simple, and it is also this hard:

- 1) What is every child entitled to?
- 2) How do we finance that, equitably?

Education finance is ultimately a human rights conversation. Our students are entitled to highly qualified, professional teachers, with access to proper resources, in safe and supportive environments. Period.

Paul Olson



**The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society**

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Canadian
Educational
Press
Association





INSIDE MTS

KEN PEARCE, GENERAL SECRETARY

In an earlier article I described the current project of archiving and exploring our history in preparation for the upcoming 100th anniversary of the founding of the Society. The process involves interviewing former presidents and general secretaries and one of those interviews was with Walter (Wally) J. Pindera, former staff officer and general secretary.

In that interview he described how, when he began work at the Society as the first bargaining specialist staff officer, he worked “in a decade that began and ended in a recession” and how he was heavily involved in collective bargaining, trying to improve working conditions for teachers and “trying to squeeze out any penny he could for teachers’ stagnant salaries”. He argued that the cuts and restraints by the government not only eroded teachers’ financial status, but also their rights. “Not since 1930’s have we seen such cuts,” he said, “and they haven’t been made by fine scalpels, but by broad axes – axes so dull that some may be tempted to call them hammers.”

Wally called on Manitoba teachers to support each other as well as their colleagues across Canada. He often pointed out the Society’s motto: “Each for all, and all for each” and urged teachers to stand together. At one point, he wanted to see if the Society could get through one year of collective bargaining without going to arbitration. “I almost busted my butt,” he said in his 2007 interview. “One time we were really close to a settlement in Turtle River and I packed up and drove up there and met with each of the



trustees individually until finally they agreed to a contract.”

During his time at the Society, Wally Pindera saw breakthroughs in working conditions for teachers such as the first time MTS negotiated working conditions on noon-hour supervision and limitation on extra-curricular activities. He also saw, for the first time, teachers included in the Workplace Safety and Health Act. To meet the needs of French teachers and a new Francophone school division, he made sure that the Society began hiring more bilingual staff officers to provide services in both French and English.

Wally also helped to start up the Society’s Educator Assistance Program (EAP) designed to provide counselling for teachers across the province, and to make the Teacher

Disability Insurance plan become self-insured.

On a personal note, those like me who were involved in the Society in the 1980s and 1990s cannot fail to remember Wally’s clear booming voice. He was a member of the staff here at the Society for a total of 28 years and his influence as a leader who demonstrated a sense of personal responsibility and a clear commitment to issues of social justice, was felt throughout the Society. Walter J. Pindera’s obituary noted so many qualities that made him the man he was and helped recall the human qualities that made him so memorable as a member of the staff here.

Wally died on February 20 at the age of 80 but his contribution to my early memories of the Society and especially to the staff with whom he worked lives on with us. Those of you who attend McMaster House will see his portrait above the entrance to the Auditorium, an area where we encountered energetic conversations with our colleagues from across the province and, during his time here, heard him enthusiastically call for action on the issues of the day.

Why mention all of this? Not only to celebrate a life but also to encourage you to delve further into the history of the Society by talking to others and listening to their stories. Your own experiences with the Society will ultimately be the history of the Society’s progress on issues of the day. Like Walter J. Pindera, help paint the picture of our history; 95 years and counting.



The
Manitoba
Teachers’
Society

Walk with us at Pride Parade Winnipeg, Sunday, June 1st!

Join our MTS walking group at the Manitoba Legislature at 11:00 am, so we can walk together at noon. Whether you’re walking individually or with a group, we’d love to have you with us! Email us at MTSpide@mbteach.org to let us know you’re coming.

What the public thinks of teachers...20 years later

BY JUDY EDMOND

In 1993, Bill Clinton was inaugurated President, Kim Campbell took over as Prime Minister from Brian Mulroney for four months before the Conservative government was decimated by the Chretien Liberals, the first World Trade Center bombing occurred, Winnipeg lost in the Grey Cup and the Toronto Blue Jays won the World Series. It was also the year Premier Gary Filmon introduced Filmon Fridays and cut public school funding by two per cent.

In 1993 MTS did public opinion research on education issues for the first time. Twenty years later in the fall of 2013, MTS asked some of the same questions that we asked in 1993. After two decades, has public opinion changed?

In May of 1993, focus groups with parents were held in Winnipeg and Neepawa to discuss public schools now and in the future, perceptions of teachers, education funding and ideas for improving the public school system. In October 2013 similar focus groups were held in Dauphin and Winnipeg.

"It's like society in general. Kids can't be kids anymore. Little kids look like adults the way they dress and act and then they get all this modern and really advanced stuff in school. Why can't then just slow down and let them get a handle on the basics and then gradually advance instead of shoving it to them before they've even got the basics," said a parent from Neepawa in 1993.

"They just push kids through. They don't have to know anything. Kids have to know the 3 Rs. You aren't doing kids any favours when a kid leaves high school and knows nothing," said a Dauphin parent in 2013.

The 1993 parents felt that the education system had declined since they were in school. There wasn't enough emphasis being placed on the basics. They didn't blame teachers, but the school system in general. They felt schools were trying to ac-

complish too many things and not doing a good enough job providing students with a basic education. They criticized a lack of discipline and a lack of individual attention to students. They blamed the broad focus of the curriculum and large class sizes.

The 2013 parents talked about students not learning basic math, writing, reading and other skills and still being promoted through school. Several said they were opposed to what they believed to be school division no-fail policies and felt that teachers no longer had the tools to enforce good behaviour or discipline among students. Bullying was an emotional issue for the 2103 parents. They wanted bullying to be officially reported and recorded and they wanted swift consequences for bullying including working with parents of bullies. They also suggested smaller class sizes would help make schools better.

Comparing results from MTS telephone surveys, Manitobans view teachers much more positively than they did 20 years ago. Today, 87 per cent of Manitobans have favourable feelings towards teachers. Looking back, in 1993 almost twice as many Manitobans had an unfavourable perception of teachers. Sixteen per cent compared to only nine per cent today.

In both 1993 and 2013, Manitobans were asked, "What do you believe is the most difficult aspect of a teacher's job?" In 1993, discipline was perceived as the hardest part of a teacher's job by 47 per cent of Manitobans. Today only 22 per cent feel this way. Today, 17 per cent of Manitobans believe dealing with students and their problems is the most difficult part of the job. It was 14 per cent in 1993. Lack of respect for teachers or authority was mentioned by seven per cent of Manitobans in 2013. "Mutual respect" was mentioned by only two per cent in 1993.

1993 was a tumultuous year for teachers and public schools in Manitoba. The government not only slashed funding to pub-

lic schools by \$16 million, it announced a freeze on the provincial property tax levy for schools and capped school divisions' ability to raise taxes at two per cent. At an emergency meeting of local association presidents, Ron Banister, then MTS Welfare Services Chair said, "The government is saying that school boards should meet the \$16 million shortfall by laying off teachers. It's not up to teachers to solve the self-made funding problems of the government. This crisis is purely political."

Later that year, the government introduced Bill 22, dubbed Filmon Fridays, allowing school divisions to designate up to 10 in-service days as unpaid leave for teachers. On May 29th of that year 3,000 angry teachers and their supporters gathered at the steps of the Legislature to protest the education cuts and the unpaid in-service days.

In 1993 Manitobans were asked to rate government performance on a variety of services. When it comes to providing health care, today's ratings are almost exactly the same as they were 20 years ago. Roughly four in 10 Manitobans rated the government as doing a good or excellent job. The government in 1993 got slightly higher marks for reducing the deficit—17 per cent compared to 13 per cent today said government was doing a good or excellent job. Twice as many Manitobans in 1993 gave the government high marks for keeping taxes low than they do today (28% vs. 14%).

However, today's government is rated significantly more positively in two important areas—providing a sound educational system and creating jobs. The proportion of Manitobans in 2013 who rate the government as going a good or excellent job in education has increased from 26 per cent to 42 percent. And currently more than one third (35 per cent) of Manitobans rate the government positively in creating jobs compared to just one in ten, two decades ago.

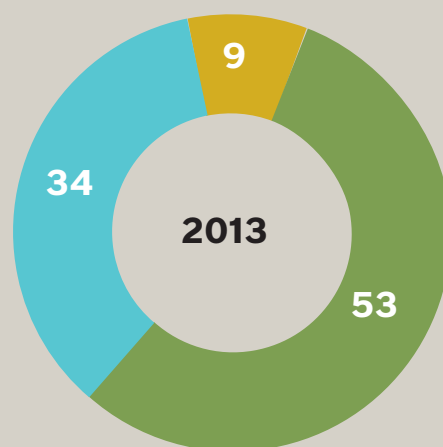
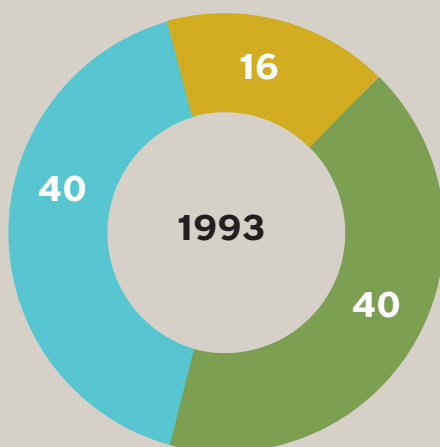
Viewpoints Research conducted focus groups in Winnipeg and Neepawa in May 1993 and in Winnipeg and Dauphin in October 2013. Viewpoints also conducted a random province-wide telephone survey of 800 Manitobans between May 27 and June 4, 1993. The results of the survey are accurate to within + 4.4%, nineteen times out of twenty. Viewpoints also conducted a random province-wide telephone survey of 805 Manitobans between November 12 and 27, 2013. The margin of error is + 3.5% nineteen times out of twenty.

Most Difficult Aspects of a Teacher's Job



Impressions of Teachers

- Unfavourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Very favourable





The
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GOLF TOURNAMENT

SATURDAY JUNE 14, 2014

12 pm shotgun start
Modified Green-Ball Scramble

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Minnedosa, MB

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Rolling River
Teachers' Associations

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Entry deadline
Friday May 30, 2014

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or visit www.mbteach.org

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Website: electionsmanitoba.ca

Employment Equity is a factor in selection. Applicants are requested to indicate if they are from any of the following groups: Aboriginal people, visible minorities and persons with a disability.

We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.



www.electionsmanitoba.ca

ElectionsManitoba

From Class to Collaboration

BY MATEA TUHTAR

It took a chance encounter and a little dog named Daisy to reconnect a former student and teacher and spark a working relationship that's gone further than either could have imagined.

Harriet Zaidman has been a teacher-librarian at Niakwa Place School for the last 22 years. She's seen a lot of kids come through her classroom, including Sarah Neville who attended the school from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

"I think I gave her the eagle eye from time to time," laughs Zaidman. The two reconnected years later by sheer accident. "I went into Toad Hall Toys and found out that she works there and was attending the U of M School of Art. I asked her what she was up to and she said 'Well I'm an artist, and I want to get into children's illustration, and I paint dogs!'"

It was serendipity for Zaidman who had written a children's story 10 years ago about a little dog entitled *Daisy's Biggest Success* which had been accepted by a small publisher that later went out of business. "Until that point I never considered self-publishing, but I thought why not give it a try now?"

As it turns out, Zaidman and Neville had the same vision for the story. "I thought it was a really cute and interesting story," says Neville. "It was a great opportunity for me to get started in children's books illustrations."

The story is autobiographical and based on Zaidman's former dog Daisy who used to try to get on the couch, much to Zaidman's chagrin. "The Daisy in the book loves to get on the couch and hang out with the kids but then the mother (which is me) discovers that the dog is shedding and puts up books on the couch to deter Daisy."

But Daisy becomes fascinated by the books and starts learning from the pictures, showing off her knowledge by helping out around the house, including



helping the kids. The children start taking books out of the library for Daisy and the librarian wonders why so many books are being taken out. Finally they plan a surprise for Daisy and take her to the library where the librarian gives her a book bag and her own library card.

Zaidman and Neville met up and planned out what illustrations were needed for each page. "It only took us 30-40 minutes to plan everything, and when she left I thought 'Did I miss something, that was too easy!'", says Zaidman.

Neville sketched out and hand coloured the illustrations making sure Daisy matched her real-life counterpart. Neville even managed to sneak a picture of her own dog Keira into the book. The collaboration was 'seamless'. "We really were on the same page for everything."

Daisy's Biggest Success had its own success earning a spot on McNally Robinson's best-selling list.

"We don't have the large distribution that a large publisher would but in terms

of sales and all the promotion I did, I sold far more than with a publisher." Their first run of 500 was sold out in 3 weeks and got great reviews.

The story is aimed at grades four to eight, and aims to show the importance of libraries and reading books. "It's funny that it turned out to be the message of the story," says Zaidman. "You're writing a story that has its own journey and that's what happened here – I remember chuckling to myself when she goes to the library because hey that's what we do in real life!"

A strong proponent of libraries, Zaidman says that all evidence shows that libraries are essential and library use has increased over the years. "It's the greatest equalizer – everybody deserves to be literate, to be entertained. You can find physical and psychological refuge in the library."

Daisy's Biggest Success is available at McNally Robinson Booksellers, Toad Hall Toys, The Winnipeg Art Gallery and online at www.forestparkpress.ca.

AGM looks to meet every two years

The MTS provincial executive is recommending an historic change—that the Society no longer hold an Annual General Meeting.

Instead, it favours a meeting of the provincial council once every two years, a Biennial General Meeting.

The recommendation, up for debate at the 95th AGM in May, is the result of a proposal made at last year's AGM and a year of study by an ad-hoc committee.

The resolution is one of a handful to be debated at the 2014 AGM, May 22-24. There are very few resolutions submitted by local associations this year. Much of the AGM business could go to adopting a wide-range of proposed changes to MTS bylaws.

The idea of a once-every-two-years general meeting was proposed by the Winnipeg Teachers' Association in 2013 and resulted in the

formation of a committee to study the proposal.

Earlier this year the committee recommended to the provincial executive that a general meeting be held every two years and a "membership engagement forum" be held in alternate years. Exact details of such a forum, the first of which would be held in 2016, are yet to be arranged.

"The committee strongly feels that a stated purpose of the engagement forum must be to build greater co-ordination and respect between members of all locals within MTS," the committee report said. "The EF's presentations must be actively engaging for the membership. Specifically, speakers and events must be chosen so that participants are given hands-on opportunities (i.e. training) to build skills that will foster greater union involvement within the membership of MTS."

As for the current AGM, the committee

pointed out that other organizations have general meetings only once every two years and any obstacles can be overcome. For example, two one-year budgets would be passed at each BGM.

The resolution adopted by the provincial executive proposes a committee be struck this year to recommend necessary bylaw and policy changes that will be needed to implement the plan.

Delegates to AGM will also:

- Debate a resolution calling on MTS to initiate discussions with the provincial government to find a more effective way to fund students with special needs.
- Debate, during budget discussions, whether to discontinue printing of the annual teachers' handbook and calendar. The publication, which costs \$40,000 a year, is not included in the 2014-2015 budget. A majority of teachers polled last December by MTS said they no longer use the printed handbook.

MTS budget proposes six per cent fee hike

The MTS budget proposed for 2014-2015 recommends a fee increase of six per cent.

The budget, to be debated at the Society's Annual General Meeting in May, would see the membership fee increase to \$935 from \$882 or \$53 a year.

The recommended increase is higher than

that seen last year when the final budget included a fee increase of 5.6 per cent.

The increase last year would have been greater, but delegates transferred \$892,300 from reserves to keep down the increase.

This year it recommended that the transfer from reserves be kept at \$250,000.

At the same time, it will be recommended

that AGM delegates approve a reduction in premiums teachers pay to the MTS Disability Benefits Plan.

Currently premiums for teachers are 1.33 per cent of salary. The new premiums would be 1.21 per cent of salary or a decrease of \$96 a year on a salary of \$80,000.

Six candidates nominated for MTS Provincial Executive

Six candidates submitted nominations for five openings on the MTS provincial executive in the first nomination period that ended in March. Elections for those positions will be held at the Annual General Meeting in May. Further nominations can be made at the meeting. Candidates are:



James Bedford
Louis Riel



Ray Desautels
St. James Assiniboia



Arlyn Filewich
Pembina Trails



Sean Kemball
Sunrise



Frank Reeves
River East Transcona



Harry Wiebe
Turtle River

The candidates' biographies and election statements can be found on the MTS website, www.mbteach.org



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May 6 & 7, 2014
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2 days packed with information you can use immediately
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EMBRACING SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

Following We Day last year students at the Met School and Garden City Collegiate added a disquieting note to the overwhelmingly-positive publicity the event routinely gets.

They questioned Free the Children about the sponsorship by Potash Corp., pointing out the company's negative social and environmental impact from operations in New Brunswick and Western Sahara.

The students got a helping hand when a group of teachers posted the students' letter online, where it joined a stream of news and links about issues from the Congo to Palestine to Manitoba to Gaza.

It's the work of a growing organization called Manitoba Educators for Social Justice (MESJ), which is now looking to organize workshops and provide speakers for events across the province.

Kelly Reimer, a teacher at Gordon Bell, says that some three years ago a few like-minded teachers decided to collaborate and look to connect with others who cared about social justice issues.

He says there were, and still are, a lot of teachers working alone doing a variety of things to improve the lives of their students and help

their students improve society in general.

As the group's mission statement puts it, "we recognize that progressive teachers, educational assistants and other school staff can often feel isolated within our schools. MESJ aims to unite educators so that they may support each other, share resources, develop better teaching practices, and advocate for a more just and inclusive school system."

They are blunt. They do see themselves as radical, within the context of the current school system: "We are not content with cosmetic reforms or piecemeal changes. We support taking action to re-make society into something more democratic, sustainable, and equal."

It opposes militarism, imperialist wars and capitalism, which it says creates inequality and rewards greed.

Reimer says the group has been growing slowly, but has an active website (mesjblog.com) and facebook page (www.facebook.com/MESJBook) has organized events and holds regular meetings.

He says an alternative viewpoint is needed in schools where he says teachers have a unique role in the lives of students. Students are touched directly by all social justice issues such as unemployment, bullying,

poverty and abuse.

"Teachers see these issues all the time and need to act," he says. "You can't be neutral on a moving train. Students have a very strong sense of justice. They are not as self-interested as some people might think."

Students will take up causes and become involved if they think it will matter, he says.

"When we provide students with opportunities, showing how things can be changed, students do feel empowered to take action."

While social justice issues have become more prominent in schools, a recent study shows that the idea of social justice is either down the list of priorities or misunderstood by many principals and administrators.

The 2012 study, published in the Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, found that many administrators thought some issues only applied to certain students.

"School administrators' silence on the issue of social justice, equity and diversity reveals the lack of attention to a critical-democratic ideal among those interviewed," the study says. "Some school administrators flatly denied that equity or diversity were concerns for them, on the grounds that at-

tention to social justice, equity and diversity was only necessary when working with students from conventionally marginalized populations.

"Our research suggests, in addition to the superficial conceptions of equity and diversity reported, few school administrators prioritized social justice, equity and diversity as part of essential knowledge for new teachers. Some even flatly denied any need for teachers and schools to concern themselves with social justice issues when the school and

Kelly Reimer, a teacher at Gordon Bell, says that some three years ago a few like-minded teachers decided to collaborate and look to connect with others who cared about social justice issues.

community were perceived to be homogenous and un-marginalized."

The study, conducted by six university educators, said teachers and administrators should be encouraged to "mobilize educators and their students so that they feel empowered to act." Indeed it says teachers "should be inducted into a professional culture that questions the system that employs them."

Reimer echoes those findings.

"There are things we can teach our students that show there might be another question to ask and that there is a lot more to learn and a lot more to think about."

As MESJ's goals state: "We believe that education has the power to help people change the world through the sharing of ideas, the development of analysis, the growth of skills, and the application of learning to matters of social concern.

"We recognize the limitations of the current educational system and work to move it in a more participatory and egalitarian direction, while protecting its place in the public sphere."



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at the 28th Annual**

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**May 25, 2014
Assiniboine Park**

Please contact JoyceDeleau
at jdeleau@mbteach.org

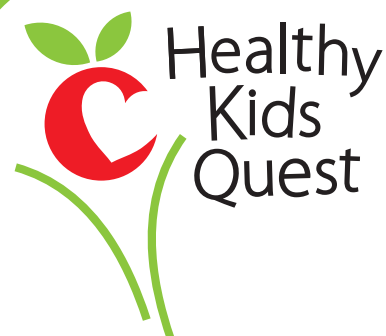


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BY MATEA TUHTAR

A long and brutally cold winter didn't stop a group of Brandon students from wearing their swimsuits to school, thanks to a free 12-week swim program organized and sponsored by the Brandon Teachers' Association.

Through funding supplied by a Manitoba Teachers' Society's Public Relations Grant, BTA offered free swimming lessons for 90 New Era school students in Brandon's inner city. And it will extend the program to more classrooms in the spring and fall.

"We're offering the program to Grades 3-6," says BTA public relations co-chair Lauren Wooley. "They're all schools who are in the inner-city which generally have lower access to community programs because of cost, and they're all schools who have a high Aboriginal and English-as-second-language student population."

BTA traditionally offered free swim days at the Brandon Sportsplex on in-service days that were well attended by students.

"This year we contacted the Sportsplex with this new innovative idea to not just have a one-time swimming opportunity, but to offer a series of lessons," says Wooley. "The students in the Brandon School Division have not had the opportunity to access a swim program during the school day for a number of years. So this was a terrific innovation."

The 12-week program costs BTA around \$3,000 dollars. The Brandon Sportsplex has provided instructors and waived any user fees to help cut costs

and the Brandon School Division will be helping with transportation costs.

"We're very pleased with the partnership we formed with this project."

Johnston says it's not unique that a school sends students for swimming lessons, but it's never without a cost to the students. The New Era kids received their lessons completely free of charge. A bus picked them up once a week to go for an hour swim lesson and then drove them back to school. The Great Canadian Superstore in town also donated \$200 worth of swim suits to the kids.

"The teachers have been very thankful," says BTA President Alison Johnston. "They've mentioned to us many times 'Thank you for offering this to us'. They surveyed the kids prior to the start of the program and were shocked at how many kids have never swum before, and certainly many who never had lessons."

The Brandon Sportsplex is using the Red Cross Swim at School program, and at the end of the lessons the students will receive a certificate and badge. If they ever take further Red Cross swimming lessons they'll be able to advance to the next levels.

"We've had a great response from students as well," says Johnston. "They've been very excited and the teachers have been telling us that attendance is almost 100 per cent on swimming days so it's had some benefits that we didn't expect. Increasing attendance has been great – when they have swimming lessons in the morning it means they're there for the afternoon as well."

New Era school principal Chad Cobbe

says the program has definitely been worthwhile.

"The program has been very well received by parents, students and teachers. We committed from Christmas to Spring Break, and while it takes a chunk out of instructional time it's absolutely worth it for the real life value."

Cobbe's school has a wide catchment area and he says the success of the swimming program is shown when students show up to go to school.

"Through these freezing winter temperatures parents made the extra effort to get their kids to school to go swimming. I'd definitely be interested in the program if it continues."

The next session of swimming lessons will happen this spring with 20 students from Betty Gibson school, and Wooley and Johnston hope to continue it as long as they can.

"From a teachers' association point of view this innovative program has been just that. It's very important for us to identify that this initiative was totally funded by teachers. Subsequently we've been able to negotiate with the Brandon School Division to help with transportation costs and because of that we've been able to extend the program to additional students," says Johnston.

Each year The Manitoba Teachers' Society makes funds available for projects by members and local associations for professional development and public relations. To find out more visit: <http://www.mbteach.org/professional-development/pdgrants.html>



Journal



D. *movement*

Full Court

BY MATEA TUHTAR

From guards to grand plié, from shooting to sauté, the hardwood floors in schools across the prairies are seeing basketball give way to ballet.

Every fall, students from Canada's oldest, and longest continually-running ballet company in North America pirouette their way through schools to educate and inspire young audiences about dance.

Through Concert Hour Ballet, students and teachers in Manitoba schools are treated to a unique dance performances by young dancers from Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, as they have for three decades.

"The experience provides an opportunity for young dancers to connect with new communities and share their passion for dance with a variety of audiences," says Bruce Monk, the artistic faculty member at RWB School and co-ordinator of Concert Hour Ballet. "It gives the audience members a really high quality first impression of what we do here in classical, contemporary and modern dance. We do a really diverse program in that one hour slot."

Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet School is home to 100 professional students and 1,000 recreational students, many who come from other parts of the world. Through Concert

Hour Ballet, 18 senior dance students dance in 16 venues across Manitoba, including two rural areas where the performance is open to the community to attend.

"We want our dance students to get as much practice performing and touring as we can give them, says Monk. "This is why the Royal Winnipeg Ballet dancers are so renowned for their performing—because they get so much practice."

Concert Hour Ballet begins with a narrated lecture that explains the history of ballet and the unique vocabulary used in ballet movement. School audiences are then treated to excerpts of dances that show a broad range of styles and tradition and the evolution of classical ballet.

"We do a character dance, classical ballet, contemporary and modern," says Monk. "You really want to give people a varied flavour – we want to show where dance is going. It's essentially a ballet class in fast forward, showing off the greatest hits."

Some of these include excerpts from *Swan Lake*, *Sarabande*, and a piece called *Macabra/Cadara* created by Monk himself. At the end of the performance Monk holds a question and answer period which brings about some interesting responses from students.

"They come with the stage, sounds, lights and a specialized floor. We bring all the students down – the lights go down, the curtains come up and the dancers are in full gear. It's visually stunning and it definitely keeps their attention." – Dave Everley, principal Nordale School



"We get some brilliant questions from kids. One of my favorites is this young Grade 1 student who pushed his glasses back and asked 'What do you LIKE about ballet?' – and I loved that question, it's the bare necessities – what is the fundamental thing you like about dance?"

Monk also tries to dispel misconceptions that students might have about ballet. "Sometimes you get questions like 'How come boys like ballet? What's in ballet for boys?' which is still a stereotype we have to deal with in the West."

Another common question is how the ballet students balance academics and training.

"The dancers talk about what their schedule is and how motivated they are to what they do," says Monk who compares a ballet dancer to any other elite-caliber athlete. "You really have to push yourself that hard and that long and you need basically 10,000 hours of training to do it right."

Concert Hour Ballet tends to focus on schools where in some cases the kids have a limited exposure to the arts and Monk says the

performances are always very well received.

"As an audience member, they see students who are on stage and are really not that far away from them agewise and it's inspirational. They go 'I can do this' or I can do what I want to do because these kids are doing it at this level, so I can do it too. It's nice for them to see a peer who is really focussed."

Another part of the performance that Monk wants audiences to take away is the physicality of dance.

I've been teaching for a long time and you see the way the students come into the school, and the level of physical fitness they have, and it's been dropping over the last 30 years. So we're pro-physical fitness here. It's nice to show off something that's as physically intense as dance."

Nordale School in Winnipeg has been a regular stop for the Concert Hour Ballet and principal Dave Everley says the program is "a well-oiled machine."

"They come with the stage, sounds, lights

and a specialized floor. We bring all the students down – the lights go down, the curtains come up and the dancers are in full gear. It's visually stunning and it definitely keeps their attention."

A number of students from RWB attend Nordale School for their academic classes and Everley says it's nice to show his students what their peers do every day.

"We have a population of students Grade 6 to 8 that come here in the morning and then leave at 2 pm to go back to RWB to do their programming. I see this as an opportunity for students to see exactly what happens at RWB, gain an appreciation and have an understanding about what some of their friends in school do every day."

"It's a wonderful program, I'd definitely recommend it to others."

For more information on Concert Hour Ballet, schools can contact RWB through Chris Turyk, Director of Touring and Business Development Email: cturyk@rwb.org Phone: 204-957-3440

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CAPTIVE

THE CORPORATE CURRICULUM

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

In Alberta the Calgary school board changes its policies to allow corporations to buy naming rights for such assets as schools and classrooms.

In British Columbia, energy conglomerate Chevron spearheads a high-profile *Fuel Your School* fundraising program to provide money for school supplies and projects.

Not to be outdone, oil companies involved in the Alberta tar sands -- Suncor, Syncrude and Cenovus -- are recruited to help rewrite the province's education curriculum from K

to Grade 12.

And in Manitoba, Investors Group sponsors a new addition to the Manitoba curriculum -- so-called financial literacy.

Beyond the west, across Canada, corporations are inching their way into public schools and classrooms with, according to numerous critics, the long view of influencing what has been a protected market—or two.

"There is a reason why corporations get involved in education," says Erika Shaker, director of the Education Project with the

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

"It's a captive audience, two audiences really—the students and their parents.

"It's self-interest, it's all about branding. It's strategic philanthropy."

And it is not necessarily in the best interests of students.

Shaker says the attempts by corporations to insert themselves into the lesson plans and classrooms of Canadian schools aren't new, just relentless.

In 2007, author and activist Heather-jane

THE CORPORATE GOAL IS TO CREATE CUSTOMERS, NOT LEARNERS.

Robertson warned of the investment industries attempts to corral the eyes and minds of students.

“Getting schools to market products re-branded as curriculum is the dream of many a director of marketing,” she said in an essay entitled *Stalked by the Market: Market Populism as Curriculum*. “As one marketing consultant put it in a pitch to prospective clients: ‘Imagine a classroom using your brand creative ... Envision groups of children huddled over your ad ... Can it get any better than this?’”

And it appears to be getting better for those directors as governments of all stripes trying to offload their responsibility to fully fund education.

Shaker says she wasn’t surprised that even the NDP government in Manitoba has embraced corporate sponsorship as a part of its curriculum.

It could be a surprise to some since it was the newly-elected NDP government that successfully booted the Youth News Network from Manitoba schools in 1999 after extensive criticism of YNN by The Manitoba Teachers’

Society. YNN provided schools with equipment such as TVs and, in exchange, students had to watch a newscast every day loaded with corporate commercials.

Times change.

Now, online documents for the new financial literacy component of the curriculum are tagged with the government’s and Investors Group’s logos. The new materials, for grades 4 to 10, include lessons on borrowing, investing, managing debt and credit. The provincial education department worked with a group called the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education in putting together the curriculum.

The *Building Futures in Manitoba* program, announced last month, lists an advisory group that is almost entirely comprised of business, government and university representatives. The only person listed outside those groups is Pat Isaak, the former president of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, who attended one meeting years ago and whose term at the Society ended three years ago.

Education Minister James Allum has said the program will help students manage

money better and help secure their financial futures.

Author Laura Elizabeth Pinto, assistant professor at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, has heard such arguments before. She has studied and written about many such programs and says the logic behind them “falls apart in so many places.”

Aside from the questionable aspects of corporate sponsorship, the idea that telling students that if they just manage their money properly, they will be financially secure is faulty.

“There are many factors that lead to financial instability that have nothing to do with knowledge and they vary from person to person,” she says. “The conventional personal finance curricula tend to place the blame squarely on the individual, when there are a host of factors.

“These include absence of a living wage, systemic factors beyond their control, and rampant consumerism that seems inescapable.”

While the Manitoba material does touch on consumerism, most of the outline seems to assume that students will eventually have

CEO; THAT’S CHIEF EXPERT OFFICER TO YOU, BUDDY

BY ERIKA SHAKER

Parents, take note! Your search for clarity in the education debates is finally over. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives commissioned a report a few weeks ago that set out a fairly bleak picture of general dissatisfaction with public schools and then concluded with a series of recommendations about how to “fix” the problem.

You know, by measuring teacher quality through student outcomes, in addition to having students and other “impartial” parties judge a teacher’s performance

through more frequent (possibly surprise) evaluations...and then assigning bonuses to those educators deemed worthy. Because: incentives!

Not the “Finally! enough resources for field trips and extracurricular activities” kind of incentives—I’m talking cold, hard cash, people. After all, what teacher won’t be incentivized to find an hour or two out of their day in which to be extra fabulous—in addition to coaching, tutoring kids after class, and scrounging for change to buy lunch or find bus fare for another student—if it means a little

sumpin’-sumpin’ on their paycheque?

Don’t get me wrong. Asking CEOs how to improve pedagogy and student engagement makes total sense. I mean, just look at the stellar, kid-and-community-friendly corporate track record: their commitment to health promotion (evidenced by a range of fluorescent-coloured, high quality after-school snacks); their recognition of the dangers of socioeconomic inequality (surely we’re only moments away from having workers and community members help set CEO bonuses and stock options in the interests of, you know,

enough money that they can manage and save and invest.

Shaker, and other critics point out, too, that it tells students if their families are in financial difficulties, well, it's the fault of parents not managing their money properly.

"It doesn't take into account inequities," she says. "If there is a problem, it's because you are not taking into account your own finances, not other factors such as women making less than men."

Pinto compares it to the McDonald's corporation recent financial advice it gave to employees: such as how much employees should tip their pool cleaner or housekeeper. It provided a sample employee budget that showed the worker would need two jobs in order to make ends meet and that's only if they didn't have to buy gasoline for a car or spend money on heating. The corporation has since taken down its advice website.

It is one thing, however, for corporations to put their advice on websites, it's another for authorities to allow them to buy their way into schools full of potential customers.

Jonathan Chevreau, writing in the business-centric *Financial Post*, questioned the industry's motives. After the release of a federal task force report on financial literacy in 2011, Chevreau wrote: "I hate to rain on the parade but financial industry profits are made on the backs of financial illiterates."

He was joined by Carleton University public policy professor Saul Schwartz, who said the task force report read like "soothing words of the foxes, spoken upon taking com-

mand of the chicken coop.

"The big financial service providers profit from financial illiteracy, whether in the form of bank fees and service charges or in the form of 'advice' disguised as sales pitches for their own products."

Schwartz says the most effective policy approach is to decrease the need for, rather than attempt to improve, Canadians' financial capability.

Pinto says the many financial literacy programs she has examined do not address deeper financial issues that students may face.

"Basically these curricula tend to position financial literacy as value-neutral – a fallacy – and convey the idea that all people experience finances the same way.

"A person's gender, race, ethnicity, and social class have huge implications on not only their values when it comes to money, but also their opportunities."

She echoes Shaker's example that women face financial hurdles that men don't.

"Women face pay inequity, disproportionate unpaid household labour, and a glass ceiling: all of which compromise their ability to participate in earning and saving money the same way that men do. A holistic approach to financial literacy would have to address these things."

But, as many critics say, that isn't the point of corporate involvement. The corporate goal is to create customers, not learners.

As Shaker and Pinto say, corporations are not in the business of financing efforts that don't provide some opportunity for profit,

whether directly or indirectly. They tend to fund projects that prominently display their trademarks.

In British Columbia, some school cafeterias are run by Burger King, Pizza Hut and Subway. There's a Bell Performing Arts Centre at one Surrey school.

Scholastic sponsors 11,000 book fairs in 7,000 schools across the country.

M&M's candy produced a math text for primary students across North America. It teaches kids to count using M&M's. The book is still being used in classrooms even though Mars Inc., creators of M&M's, itself stopped advertising candy and snack food to children under 12 in 2007.

McDonald's sponsors the *Go Active Fitness Challenge* that replaced the Canada Fitness Program.

And, less obvious, the financial industry is quite willing to underwrite the financial literacy curricula.

"Unfortunately, you're going to see more and more of this," says Shaker. "It is all very strategic. Attach the word literacy to something—like financial literacy or computer literacy—and you can fly under the radar."

fairness); their demonstrated transparency, public accountability and adherence to public safety regulations (in rail transport, for example); their ongoing desire to give back to the community in tax rates that are indicative of the degree to which they too benefit from and are responsible for public infrastructure.

So it's no wonder that, when talking about how to "improve" our schools, the first group we should turn to for thoughtful, not-at-all-self-interested advice is Corporate Canada.

My question—and no doubt you are wondering about this too—is: why stop at education?

After all, we're talking about a very elite, specialized, qualified group of hyper-talented experts—and let's be honest: the proof is in the pudding. Or rather,

in the pay cheque. Only those with a superhuman skill-set and a work ethic that would make Spartans look like slackers could be worthy of their 24-carat compensation.

So who better to provide advice on any number of puzzlers?

Leaky faucet? Call a CEO.

Nothing in the fridge for dinner? Don't panic—call a CEO.

Need a babysitter? A family doctor? Advice on getting out red wine stains? Help with homework? Filing your income taxes (heh heh)? Persistent post-nasal drip? Finding the source of that mysterious and unpleasant kitchen odour? Come on people, don't waste time doing research or committing sociology—if you're looking to get the most bang for your buck, you know which experts to turn to.

I checked: 1-800-CALL-CEO appears to be available. And with a bit of luck—otherwise known as unpaid interns—hopefully someone can provide immediate assistance, saving you from a recorded message that goes something like this: There's no one available to take your call: third quarter results were particularly impressive after the last round of layoffs so to celebrate we're off to Turks and Caicos!

Beeeeep



Erika Shaker is the Education Project Director at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives



Hidden D

Everyone knows it's not always easy for kids to make friends and feel accepted by their classmates. But the issue can be compounded when a hidden disability is involved.

Students with hidden disabilities — such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette's syndrome, autism or obsessive-compulsive disorder — often face teasing or isolation at school.

Ken McCluskey, dean of education at the University of Winnipeg, says it's common for kids with ADHD to have trouble fitting in with social groups.

"Often because of their impulsivity, they run afoul of their peers. ADHD kids have a tendency not to wait. If they're playing baseball in the playground, you might have a kid who can't follow the rules. He might be so impulsive that he's swinging before the ball is even pitched," he says.

"They can also be impulsive in the things they say. If many of us were about to tell a lie, we have the impulse control to say it's not right or to worry about getting caught. But these kids who lack any impulse control blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. It's often patently ridiculous and indeed sets them up for ridicule."

While other kids likely grasp the disability of a child who uses a wheelchair, some behaviours of those with hidden disabilities are more difficult for them to understand and they might respond with hurtful comments or hostile reactions.

As a result, kids with ADHD often have difficulty forming healthy relationships, which can lead to loneliness and emotional distress.

But here's the good news — teachers can play an important role in trying to smooth over these hurdles.

"Some people don't agree, but I think it is important to structure things so that you

Disabilities: *Out in the Open*

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

help these kids find friends. You can't be all things to all people, but so often the ADHD kids are lonely and unhappy and would do anything for friendships. For me, that's serious business if kids don't have friends," McCluskey says.

"I think sensitive educators can intervene. If you do it well, you can sometimes call on the help of other empathic kids. I'm not opposed to getting actively involved in finding friends, but you have to do it very, very carefully or things can backfire. It's not something to be done lightly, but I think it's an alternative if done sensitively and with care."

Joe Goulet, professor of educational psychology at The University of Winnipeg, draws attention to four neurodevelopmental disorders: Tourette's syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder (which includes au-

tism), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and ADHD.

"I call them The Big Four because they're all heavily male dominant, and if you have one of these, you have a high chance of having the others to different degrees. They're very interconnected. Tourette's and ADHD are relatively common in occurrence and they can offset each other," Goulet says.

"Tourette's and ADHD are very overt. They're very noticeable. It's just that they're misinterpreted by people because they think these kids are being brats or attention-seeking. In many cases, that's not the situation."

Two core features of Tourette's syndrome are motor tics and vocal tics, he explains. When it comes to ADHD, the main characteristics are inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. With OCD, kids have an ob-

session that creates anxiety, so they enact a compulsive behaviour to block that thought. For autism, kids experience dysfunctions in social communication, in interactions with others, and in interests or activities.

"Of course all of these have their own unique characteristics. What needs to be done, in my humble opinion, is education of the teachers," Goulet says.

"In fact, that's what I did for 15 years. I worked at St. Boniface Hospital's department of child and adolescent psychology. I was a teacher there, and I went on seminars and in-services to teach about these topics to teachers."

As part of an intensive study of Tourette's syndrome in education, Goulet arranged classroom presentations with teachers and students, including the one with the dis-

Here are some resources that might be able to provide additional information about hidden disabilities:

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada, Winnipeg Chapter

Phone: 1-800-361-3120 ext. 62
Email: tourette.wpg.info@shaw.ca
www.tourette.ca

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba

Phone: 204-925-0600
Toll-free: 1-800-805-8885
Email: adam@adam.mb.ca
www.adam.mb.ca

Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba

Phone: 204-786-0987
Toll-free: 1-800-263-1460
Email: info@mooddisordersmanitoba.ca
www.mooddisordersmanitoba.ca

Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba

Phone: 204-774-1821
Email: ldamb@mts.net
www.ldamanitoba.org

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada

Phone: 416-637-8584
Email: erin.coza@caddac.ca
caddac.ca

Asperger Manitoba Inc.

Phone: 204-975-3037
www.asperger-manitoba.ca

Autism Society Manitoba

Phone: 204-783-9563
Email: info@autismmanitoba.com
www.autismmanitoba.com

Manitoba Association of School Psychologists

www.masp.mb.ca

Mental Health Services for Children, Youth and Families

Phone: 204-958-9660
www.matc.ca

OCD Centre Manitoba, Inc.

Phone: 204-942-3331
Email: education@ocdmanitoba.ca
www.ocdmanitoba.ca

order. They would discuss the syndrome openly, with input from the child who was living with it.

"Prior to the presentation, they interpreted the Tourette's child as being attention-seeking, bratty, stupid and ridiculous. Some of the symptoms these kids have can be very intrusive. The most common would be eye blinking and grimacing. It looks like they're making a face at you, but they're not. The muscles move and it's involuntary. They can't control it," he says.

"The second symptom is noises. They can make all kinds of noises, anything you can think of. Some common ones are sniffing and snorting and clearing the throat. Imagine sitting beside a kid in the classroom doing that all day. After half an hour, you'll get fed up with it. Other students might leave the kid out or punish the kid."

After these disclosure meetings, Goulet noticed improvements in the attitudes of everyone involved.

"If you involve the whole class, you can get them to be understanding of the child, and we found the treatment was much better afterwards. I'm not saying it's all roses after, but they tend to be a little bit more supportive because they understand the child can't help it," Goulet says.

"The parents and the child have to be on-side because sometimes they don't want that attention. But we found it worked well if we made them part of the presentation. We'd incorporate the child actively and very dynamically into the presentations, and they were very successful."

Although these disclosure meetings didn't solve all the problems, Goulet believes they were a step in the right direction.

"It sounds like a cliché, but education is the best approach because most of the other kids thought this kid was a jerk. They thought he was always making faces to get attention. When they found out he couldn't help it, they were very supportive. It was wonderful to see that," he says.

"I think that's the way to go. There are still people doing this type of presentation today, but you have to involve somebody who is trained. It would be best if they could get a professional, such as a division psychologist."

Goulet encourages teachers to promote tolerance in the classroom among students of all ages—and to ensure that they follow the same principle themselves.

"If the child is deemed unlikeable, no

matter what the age, my belief is to bring the matter up in the classroom. Based on my own experience, junior high children present a challenge because they're going through a lot of things on their own. They're very self-centred in the sense that they're shy," Goulet says.

"They don't really know how to handle things. Sometimes they'll make fun of somebody else to draw attention away from their own insecurities. So that has to be somehow helped by the teachers. I think early-years kids are among the best. They seem to be the most tolerant of all. And if we could continue to grow that and work with them, that would be helpful."

Teachers must also remember to keep their cool, he adds, even if their patience is pushed to the brink.

"They have to realize that if someone is getting under their skin, then they need to find a way to deal with that. The teacher should become aware of what is happening and under what circumstances it happens," he says.

"Then they should find a colleague to talk with. Quite often, the teachers will suffer in silence, and I don't think that's healthy at all. Unless they do something about it, they will end up burning themselves out."

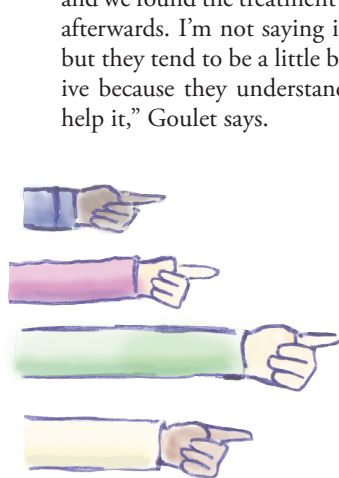
He suggests seeking additional resources through organizations such as the Tourette Syndrome Foundation.

"Some of these organizations are local and you can contact them. They can send out speakers and helpers too," Goulet says. "You are not totally alone."

Like Goulet, McCluskey stresses the need for teachers to keep their own frustrations at bay.

"Good teachers naturally accommodate many different kinds of kids. All kids are welcome. If you understand the problem and you familiarize yourself with the issues, you're much more likely to be empathic and sensitive," McCluskey says.

"There are all sorts of strategies for managing your own anger and disengaging from the conflict cycle. As the educators and the adults, we have to manage those feelings and behave respectfully."



Fab5 to be held during SAGE week

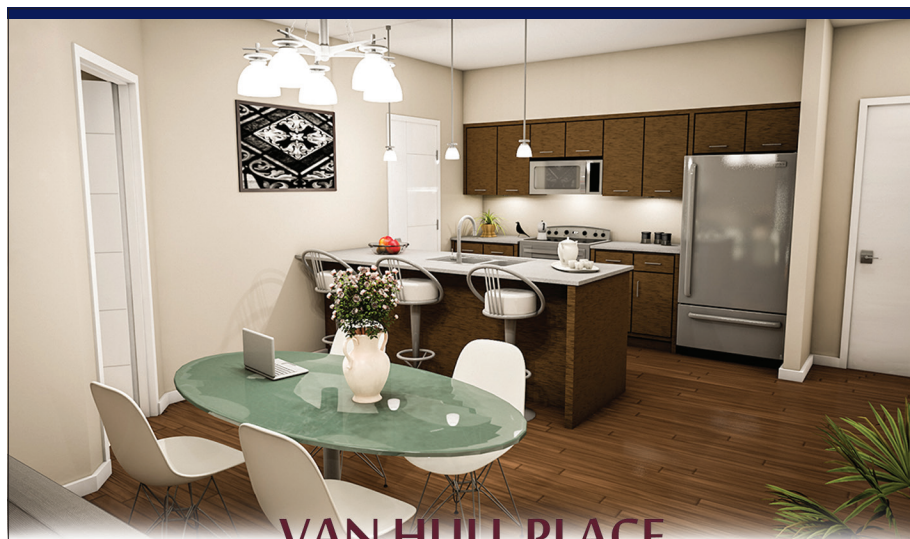
BY MATEA TUHTAR

The annual Fab 5 Conference for New Teachers will now be held in Winnipeg in conjunction with the SAGE day conference. Fab 5 will be held in the evening of Wednesday, October 22, as well as all day Thursday, October 23. Participants can follow up the conference with a full day of SAGE activities on Friday, October 24. Both conferences are a great way for teachers to connect and build new networks.

“By offering the Fab 5 Conference before SAGE, we’re really opening up more possibilities for teachers,” says Mario De Rosa, department head of Professional Issues and French Language Services at MTS. “For teachers that have to travel to Winnipeg, this schedule offers them a chance to attend both conferences in the same trip.”

Introduced in 2010, the Fab 5 Conference covers topics such as classroom management, developing safe classrooms, working with parents, technology, engagement, incorporating aboriginal teachings, wellness, and self-care. “The Fab 5 offers more general and practical topics and more ‘big picture’ content, while the SAGE content is more subject-specific,” says De Rosa, adding that the Fab 5 conference sees around 100 teachers, and is open to however many want to attend.

The Manitoba Teachers’ Society General Secretary Ken Pearce says that the Society has a long history of providing in-service support to new teachers, with the format changing as circumstances changed. “Consolidating Fab 5 into one weekend which includes SAGE allows us to continue to offer a high calibre of in-service support for new teachers new to the profession.”



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PORTFOLIO

VOTE FOR US; THE END

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

It's amazing that in the U.S. there are numerous states where Republicans are using their majorities to impose new voting rules that would disenfranchise voters who don't traditionally support that party.

Crazy, eh?

These administrations seem to think that just because they received a majority of votes, they can game the system to enlarge those majorities; without consultation, without bi-partisan analysis.

Fortunately, we live in Canada, a great beacon of fair and honest democracy.

Here you don't need that bothersome majority. Forty per cent will do the job. Or, more accurately, a solid 39.62 per cent, in

the 2011 federal election.

Well, that might be lower now, since even the most conservative Conservative elder, Preston Manning, came out against parts of the Harper government's satirically-named Fair Elections Act.

But Manning just doesn't seem to understand that our voting system has been incredibly unfair. Hey, if the last election was at all fair, the 39.62 per cent of votes for the Conservative Party would have been 60.62 per cent. Totally fair would have been 100 per cent, but that's apparently a goal for another day.

For now this Act has been warp-driven through Parliament on a blanket of hot air claiming that the legislation will put an end to the invisible fraud that now permeates the system.

That fraud is apparently so widespread that Conservative MP Brad Butt told Parliament (twice) that he personally witnessed people picking voter cards out of the garbage and fraudulently using them to vote. Of course, a week later he withdrew the story without explanation, saying that none of it was true or, as he put it, "not accurate." What, he mistook a Canadian Tire flyer for a voter's card? Nope, no fraud here. At least where elections are concerned.

Even though no one else on the government side has come up with any other real or make-believe instances of voter fraud, it is enough to know that this legislation will put an end to it.

Or, more to the point, it will put an end to the ability of Elections Canada

to investigate it. And that, apparently, is good enough. Under the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer will have no power to investigate fraud; that will fall to a commissioner who answers to the government of the day, not Parliament.

The Chief Electoral Officer has been a major pain for this government, investigating all those electoral capers that occurred in the last election: the in-and-out Tory financing scheme, the Conservative robo-calls, the Tory candidates who exceeded campaign spending limits. Maybe the governing party is just trying to protect the system from itself? Stop us before we strike again!

Nah, it just doesn't want the polls cluttered with the rabble who have fraud in their hearts and ballots to be cast for the wrong parties. Obviously, those are pretty much the same thing.

Under the proposed Act, Canada will do away with voter cards and identity vouching, used extensively by groups such as Aboriginal people, youth and low-income Canadians who find it more difficult to prove a stable address.

And to top it off, the government wants to end Elections Canada's role in promoting voting, especially among young people, not typical Tory supporters. The government has claimed the get-out-the-vote campaigns don't work. And doing nothing will work way better.

At least in that instance.

Doing nothing won't work better for the government when it comes to solving non-existent problems to ensure a permanent Tory majority in Ottawa, even one supported by only four in 10 Canadians.



Never do research while high

In hearings looking at the legalization of pot, the police chief of Annapolis, Maryland, told state senators that in the first day of legalization in Colorado "there were 37 deaths."

It was pointed out by the Democrat sponsoring a new marijuana law that the information on the 37 deaths came from a satirical story on the comedy site The Daily Curreant and the Comedy Central website. The story quoted a fictitious Denver doctor saying: "We are seeing cardiac arrests, hypospadias, acquired trimethylaminuria and multiple organ failures. By next week the death toll could go as high as 200, maybe 300."

The police apologized, saying that, after additional research, it was discovered the figures were "an urban legend."

Comedy legend.



But only has a B-plus jump shot

In the midst of the debate over university athletes in the U.S. and the March Madness basketball tournament, a former tutor and student advisor underscored the educational rigor these athletes face.

Mary Willingham, who worked with University of North Carolina athletes for a decade, released a 146-word student essay to ESPN written for a real class about civil rights icon Rosa Parks. The essay was given a grade of A-.

Read it, and weep:



On the evening of December Rosa Parks decided that she was going to sit in the white people section on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. During this time blacks had to give up there seats to whites when more whites got on the bus. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat. Her and the bus driver began to talk and the conversation went like this. "Let me have those front seats" said the driver. She didn't get up and told the driver that she was tired of giving her seat to white people. "I'm going to have you arrested," said the driver. "You may do that," Rosa Parks responded. Two white policemen came in and Rosa Parks asked them "why do you all push us around?" The police officer replied and said "I don't know, but the law is the law and you're under arrest."

Good news, bad news

The Good: A major civil rights group in the U.S. says the number of radical-hate and so-called Patriot groups dropped significantly last year after peaking in 2012.

The bad: The reason, says the Southern Poverty Law Centre, is partly because mainstream politicians began taking far-right ideas and introducing them into state laws, many of which now face constitutional challenges.

"We might be swapping terror and other criminal behavior for some really terrible laws," said Mark Potok, a senior fellow at the centre.

Just being accurate

The Newark Star-Ledger in New Jersey ran this correction of a story on who called who what:

"An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated Drewniak referred to the Port Authority's executive director as a 'piece of crap.' While Drewniak did call him a 'piece of excrement,' it was David Wildstein who referred to the executive director as a 'piece of crap.'"

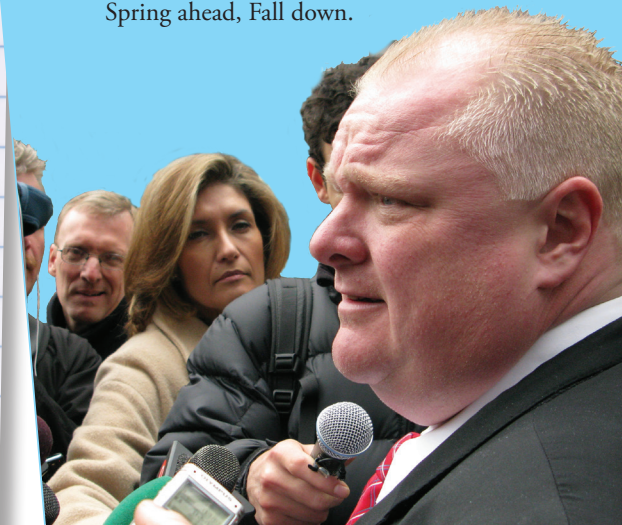
What was left unanswered was who complained.

Why do all the clocks say 11 am? It's 10 am! Doesn't anyone read my tweets?!

Never do research while high II

Rob Ford tweeted out advice to his 130,000 followers on the Daylight Savings time change: He reminded people to "turn your clocks back."

Spring ahead, Fall down.





REFRESH

RAMAN JOB,
PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR

Your next Wednesday addiction

A weekly addiction for many Manitoba educators, #mbedchat has been up for only five months. But every Wednesday night at 9 p.m., scores of teachers set aside their normal tweeting routines for an hour to share ideas and resources. “We chat about every possible educational topic,” says Zoe Bettess (@zbettess), who, along with Georgette Nairn (@GeorgetteNairn), Tanis Thiessen (@tjthiessen) and special guests, co-moderate the chat. “Mbedchat is the place to be,” says Bettess. “All tweeters will feel like they’re at home.”

Thousands of free Getty images – but it’s a trap!

Stock photo company Getty Images released 35 million images for free use on blogs and social media, last month, and the news blew up parts of the Internet. Who couldn’t use some knockout images to spice up their blog posts and social media? Each pic in Getty Image Search comes with a frame that allows social media sharing and a click-through to the original. But Getty doesn’t allow you to change the image size and that’s a big problem. Unless you have some mad CSS skills you’ll find it next to impossible to wrap your text around these pics. Oh, and don’t violate Getty’s terms of service. They’ve been known to threaten legal action. A much better idea? Stick with search.creativecommons.org.

What, you haven’t tried Haiku Deck yet?

If you’ve never built a quick, slick, presentation with Haiku Deck, download this to your iPad or iPhone. Haiku Deck allows you to pull pics in directly from your camera roll (there’s also a web app) and turn them into sweet slide decks faster than with PowerPoint or even Keynote. You can insert creative commons images into your preso right from the app, and the gallery of decks is fun to browse. Haiku Deck’s templates are perfect for students or anyone who needs to whip up something quick. It

can even handle graphs, charts and tables. Tip: Create a quick biographical deck of a dozen slides and use it before you make presentations.

Caution, serious gadget lust ahead

Not an endorsement here, but if you’re into everyday mobile photography with your phone or tablet, you owe it to yourself to scan Photojojo’s online catalog. Bike mounts, carabiner clips, scuba suits and wireless shutter remotes for your Apple and Android stuff; LED lights, mini Instagram projectors, camera lens mugs—it’s all there. Happy clicking!

App watch

Tellagami—You and your students will love animating a custom Tellagami character to deliver your class or school announcements or simply speak to your classroom project pics. Upload these vids to YouTube and share to your social networks. This app created plenty of buzz when Nadia Nevieri (@nnevieri) mentioned it in a recent #mbedchat.

Google Maps—Sure you use these already, but here’s something you might not know. If you need to load a map to take on the road and your iPad only works with wi-fi, try this. Simply get the area of the city you want on your screen, enter “go maps” into the search bar, and your map will pre-load for you. When you’re travelling, you can still zoom in and scroll within that area.

Only for Crackberry users

Blackberry Z10 screenshots—Need a picture of what’s on your BB screen? Quickly press the volume up and volume down buttons at the same time. Voilà, saved to your pictures.

iGrann—Can’t get Instagram for your Blackberry? Neither can I. But this third-party app will connect you to your IG account and let you perform most functions. You’re welcome.

Questions, comments? rjob@mbteach.org

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