



THE MANITOBA Teacher

APRIL/MAY 2017 VOLUME 95 NUMBER 6 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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Louis Riel School Division focuses on Indigenous youth leadership



FROM THE PRESIDENT

NORM GOULD

You would think that after almost two decades out of office, the provincial Progressive Conservative Party might have come up with policies that carried a best-before date in this century.

But no.

In an archeological and ideological move, the government has unearthed failed, simple solutions of the past to deal with what it sees as current problems and those of the future.

Firstly, the government claims the province is facing a hair-on-fire fiscal calamity. We are at the edge and one more dime in a public servant's pocket will topple us into the abyss.

So, the only way out of that is to disregard any kind of collective bargaining and simply freeze the wages of tens of thousands of people who provide services to the public. Of course, many won't have any wages to freeze. They will be among those cut loose by agencies and organizations funded by the province which have been told to reduce their budgets.

The government will try to absolve itself of those layoffs, but it will be no less responsible.

It would seem at this point that those who work in the public service will be carrying the greatest part of the load so the provincial government can fulfill its ridiculous election promise to cut the provincial sales tax.

In the lead-up to the unveiling of his greatest hits from the '90s, Premier Brian Pallister said the fiscal situation is grave and that the province would need "all hands on deck." While yet to see a new budget as of this writing, the only people on deck so far are public servants and they're being tossed overboard.

Even elected members of the government have managed to insulate themselves from any self-sacrifice by accepting a huge wage increase before announcing a freeze on their own salaries (see General Secretary Bobbi Taillefer's column on the next page).

Perhaps the province will bring in other measures that will have an impact on all Manitobans. But, that won't solve the unfair treatment of public servants who negotiated in good faith. They will simply be hit twice by government austerity – first through their salaries and second because they are citizens of Manitoba.

Again, it is sad to see that after years out of government and one year of governing, the Conservatives still have such a limited playbook. It talks about innovation and embracing new ideas, but can't seem to come up with anything that would support the "progressive" half of the party's name.

So we end up with the same thing we heard decades ago; salaries make up a large portion of government expenditures so we have to cut salaries and people. Well, any public or private agency that provides human services does spend a lot on employees. They are the service providers. You can't fill a pothole without someone on the shovel. You can't treat patients without nurses. You can't teach kids without teachers.

And you can't treat employees as nothing but expenses.

Norm Gould



**The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society**

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INSIDE MTS PREMIER'S WORDS CHANGE FOR THE WORST

BOBBI TAILLEFER, GENERAL SECRETARY

It would be an understatement to say that all members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society were appalled by the decision of the Brian Pallister government to impose Bills 28 & 29. Here is a government that was elected on the promise that it would take a balanced approach to reducing Manitoba's deficit over eight years. Somewhere, after the election, that changed – funny how that happens.

In April 2016, mere days before the election, Mr. Pallister was quoted in the Metro News as saying "I'm presenting a balanced, logical plan that would turn the ship - not immediately, that's risky. I don't want to put people out of work. I want to keep people working." Yet on March 21, 2017, in a quote from the Winnipeg Free Press, Mr. Pallister says: "I'm not committed to no layoffs — we can't do that. We're not going to give a blank assurance about that."

It didn't take long after for Mr. Pallister to introduce Bill 28 which subverts collective bargaining by imposing wage settlements over four years of 0 per cent in year one, 0 per cent in year two, then a maximum increase of 0.75 per cent in year three and a maximum of one per cent in year four. This is coming from the same government who, as reported by the CBC on June 2, 2016, awarded themselves a pay raise that equalled 20 per cent, less than two months

after taking power. For Mr. Pallister that was an increase of \$71,000 over his MLA pay of \$93,025.00 annually.

Then to add insult to injury and with great fanfare the Pallister government held a press conference ahead of the introduction of Bill 26 & 82 to announce that they would not accept their annual pay hike on April 1 and have their pay frozen at the current level until the next election. I am positive every single member of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, and all other public sector workers, would agree to those same terms – give them a 20 per cent pay raise and then freeze it for the next four years – what a great deal! I suppose, we could also have a press conference to show how reasonable and selfless we were – all in the name of austerity.

MTS has a very important mission that states that as a union and professional organization we are dedicated to advancing and safeguarding the welfare of teachers, the status of the teaching profession and the cause of public education in Manitoba. We take this mission very seriously and it is at the core of all of our activities. The Manitoba Teachers' Society would have appreciated that the Pallister government respect the long and successful tradition of collective bargaining where both sides agree on fair and reasonable compensation and working

conditions for Manitoba Teachers. It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that public education is an important sector that ensures a strong economy and prepares children to participate fully as engaged citizens. In these difficult times, it would make sense for the government to seek counsel from its partners. President Norm Gould and staff attended many meetings with other labour unions to discuss mutually acceptable ways of addressing the province's finances. Much time and great effort was spent by labour to develop alternative strategies and plans that could have assisted government in achieving their goals. Sadly, these meetings appear to be pro forma and this work was never given a serious look, nor have legitimate questions raised by labour been answered, such as what actual savings are being sought by the government in each of the first four years. It is a shame that Mr. Pallister chose to ignore the serious contributions of labour to work together.

As Winnipeg Free Press reporter Dan Lett said in an article on March 21, 2017: "Political leaders who are fearless about starting fights can be portrayed in one of two ways: brave or foolish. It will not take long before Pallister reveals which term best describes him." When people look at this draconian piece of legislation, I think they will already know which term best characterizes Mr. Pallister.

MTS becomes movie's **police station**

If you drove past MTS on March 5th you may have done a double take at the American flag flying in front, and a big crowd of people surrounding the building.

Don't worry, there was nothing fishy going on, just the US police force trying to trap a criminal – only to realize the depth of his crimes goes far beyond anything they had anticipated....

The Society's Harcourt Street building, McMaster House, was used as a backdrop for the movie *Nomis* – a thriller starring actors Stanley Tucci, Sir Ben Kingsley,

and Alexandra Daddario. The film is produced by Fortitude International with Arise Pictures and Winnipeg's Buffalo Gal Pictures. The Society was transformed into a police station and both indoor and exterior shots will be featured in the film.

"When we were asked to help out with the movie shoot, we thought it was a great idea," says MTS General Secretary Bobbi Taillefer. "We are always up for being good community members and supporting local companies such as Buffalo Gal Pictures."

Keep an eye out for *Nomis* coming out later this year.



AGM: Fee hike of 1.2% proposed

The MTS budget for 2017-2018 recommends a fee increase of 1.2 per cent.

The budget to be debated at the Society's Provincial Council (annual general meeting) in May would see the membership fee increase to \$988 from \$976 or \$12 a year.

The proposed fee increase is lower than that adopted last year when the final budget included a 1.7 per cent increase.

Last year delegates to the Provincial Council transferred \$300,000 from reserves to ease the impact of the fee increase. It is being recommended that the same amount be transferred this year

to be used against any fee increase.

If the budget recommendations are approved, the total Society operating budget, excluding the Disability Benefits Plan, would be \$15.5 million.

Expenditures and revenues in the final budget could change depending on decisions made at the May meeting.

CANDIDATES FOR PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

A total of 13 MTS members have been nominated so far for positions on the 2017-2018 provincial executive. There is one nomination for president, one for vice-president. There are also 11 nominated for eight positions as members-at-large. Voting on the executive will take place at the Society's Annual General Meeting in May. Further nominations could be made at that time.

All candidates' election statements and biographies can be viewed on the MTS website at mbteach.org

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St. James-Assiniboia

Vice-President



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Louis Riel

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BY JENNIFER MCFEE

A NEW GENERATION *OF* INDIGENOUS LEADERS



A group of Indigenous students has found their voice — and they're not shy to use it as they delve into an exploration of their heritage and culture.

In the Louis Riel School Division, a focus on Indigenous youth leadership is enriching the community within the classroom and beyond.

Corey Kapilik, the school division's co-ordinator of Indigenous education, explains the purpose of the project with pride.

"The goal is to provide students an opportunity to learn more about culture, but more than that, to provide students an opportunity to find their voice and to share culture with other students within the division," he said.

"We want to create an environment where Indigenous knowledge is welcomed in our buildings and we want to learn from that Indigenous knowledge. We had that opportunity through a couple of our initiatives."

One such initiative is the ECHO program, which is a cultural enrichment high school program currently offered in four schools: Glenlawn, Dakota, Windsor Park and Nelson McIntyre collegiates. Although each school might approach the program in a different way, the overall purpose remains consistent — to help students transition to high school and be successful in the process. At the same time, it fosters a sense of belonging for students with First Nations, Métis and Inuit backgrounds.

Through the ECHO program, Indigenous perspectives are infused into the curriculum. Students benefit from smaller-sized classes led by an Indigenous teacher who provides instruction in the four core Grade 9 subjects. The students' education is further enhanced through traditional teachings with a deeper focus on Indigenous perspectives.

In another endeavour, the school division launched an Indigenous youth leadership group last school year, with about 30 high school students meeting monthly. This group, which includes representation from all high schools in the division, calls themselves the Circle of ReconciliACTION.

"The whole purpose of bringing this group together is that we wanted these students to be advocates within the division and to learn about culture. Throughout our time together, they decided that they wanted to look very closely at the past, the present and the future," Kapilik said.

"They wanted to look at the historical narrative, the colonialization and the impacts of residential schooling. When they looked at the past, they wanted to

have an understanding of how those factors influenced the present. But the real focus was on the future and promoting that spirit of reconciliation and the idea that we're all Treaty 1 people. We have a shared history, so we need to work together."

Last spring, the group decided to host a youth leadership conference and invite high school students from across the division.

"Once the students become comfortable with each other and with the whole process, they had a ton of ideas. The students totally owned the conference," Kapilik said.

"As adults, we had to let go and we had to support them and let this be authentically the students' voice."

The students arranged to bring in guest speakers and entertainers while also planning activities for the daylong event, which drew participation from more than 300 students of all backgrounds. They hosted the conference at the Indian & Metis Friendship Centre, with sessions at Turtle Island Recreation Centre, the Manitoba Metis Federation building and the Thunderbird House.

"Each student in the Circle of ReconciliACTION chose something that they wanted to share from their culture," Kapilik said. "It was phenomenal."

For the group of students involved in organizing the event, the experience was unforgettable.

"When we first began meeting with the students in September, it was almost awkward. A lot of the students were very shy and they just stuck with other students from their own school. The evolution and the growth of these students just a few months later was amazing," Kapilik said.

"They gained confidence in their passion and in their ability. To see that pride in themselves and that pride in our culture was very, very powerful."

Overall, the conference was a win-win experience for both the attendees and the organizers.

"I think the students who came to the conference really benefited. They gained a better understanding of Indigenous culture, along with a really good understanding of reconciliation and the idea of working together," Kapilik said.

"But for the 30 students who put it on, I think the impact on them is potentially life-changing. Some of our students didn't see themselves as leaders, so to see themselves in this role will be something that will impact them in their life."

This school year, the group continues to meet, although they're not currently planning another conference.



“ALL THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, THE GOAL IS A TWO-PRONGED APPROACH. ONE IS ENGAGING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WITH THEIR OWN CULTURE AND TRYING TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS STUDENTS IN ANY WAY THAT WE CAN. THE OTHER PRONG WOULD BE HAVING NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THEY CAN BE ALLIES AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ALLY.”

- Sean Oliver, Glenlawn Collegiate ECHO Teacher

“We’re continuing to focus on advocacy and voice and other ways that we can share. There is a lot of relationship building and a lot of very strong friendships that have formed out of this,” Kapilik said.

“We bring in elders and traditional knowledge keepers some afternoons to work with the students. We try to provide students with opportunities to explore the culture and to really find confidence and find their voice in who they are.”

The group has now grown to the point that it can’t accommodate all the students who would like to participate. As a result, some individual schools have launched a school-based version of the program.

At Glenlawn Collegiate, ECHO teacher Sean Oliver has been working with students for the past two years in a group called the Glenlawn Indigenous Voice and Action Council.

“We were looking at a way to get students in a safe space where they could learn about issues that matter and also learn about Indigenous peoples. We call it an Indigenous council, although not all members are Indigenous — and we like that because it shows that there is support there for Indigenous students and issues,” Oliver said.

“Through that council, it’s a good platform for us to identify the students that we want to put in touch with some of the extracurricular activities that we do through the Circle of ReconciliACTION. At the same time, it’s also a good platform to get students involved in the whole school-based activities here at Glenlawn.”

The group began with fewer than 10 students, and it has already doubled in size

to nearly 20. Together, they launch the school year with an awareness campaign for Orange Shirt Day, using it as an opportunity to engage in discussions about residential schools and other issues.

“It’s been a good springboard for getting us engaged in things like Orange Shirt Day, so we kick off the year every year with that. The students hand out information pamphlets and do an awareness campaign. We showed the residential schools film *We Were Children* in my classroom for two days and the students were there to answer other students’ questions,” Oliver said.

“All throughout the year, the goal is a two-pronged approach. One is engaging Indigenous students with their own culture and trying to support Indigenous students in any way that we can. The other prong would be having non-Indigenous students understand that they can be allies and what it means to be an ally.”

The approach seems to be working since Oliver has noticed that the students have gained confidence to engage in aspects of their culture.

“In a school like Glenlawn, there are a lot of self-identified Aboriginal kids who have white skin. There are white Métis people that know they have Aboriginal ancestry, but they haven’t grown up in a predominantly Indigenous community or neighbourhood. They’re interested in the background and the culture, but they may not have had opportunities to learn about it and they may not have seen themselves reflected in their school too much at times,” Oliver said.

“A lot has changed here in the past few

years in terms of students seeing themselves represented in the school and students being able to take on leadership roles. Now we’ve got the treaty acknowledgement up on the screens in the halls and we’ve got smudging happening in the school weekly. We’re on the announcements every day and people see that there’s a group of kids at the school that cares and they’re not afraid to bring voice. They’re out there with all the other groups and clubs and councils, working alongside and in partnership to complete school initiatives and raise awareness.”

Continuing to create connections and encourage leadership abilities, Louis Riel School Division also offers a mentorship group that links Indigenous students in high school with younger students in elementary school.

As these programs continue to bloom, Kapilik is inspired to see the participants grow and gain confidence in their ability as leaders.

“We want to do more than welcome Indigenous students. We want Indigenous students to be heard. We want our Indigenous students to bring the knowledge from their families and culture to our division. And we want all the students in the division to benefit from this knowledge and culture that we can learn so much from together,” he said.

“We’re really focusing on reconciliation, working together and moving forward in the future — and that’s in Louis Riel School Division, in Winnipeg and in Canada. I think our students gained a better understanding of a path to reconciliation. By bringing in other students, we’re providing them with an opportunity to gain knowledge about our past, present and future in working together.”



PHOTOS & STORY BY MATEA TUHTAR

THIS AIN'T FIGHT CLUB

IT'S TOUGHHER!

At Sanford Collegiate, punching a teacher is not only allowed, it's encouraged. And once you throw your punch he'll teach you how to do it better, and harder, next time.

Sanford Collegiate is home to the province's only extra-curricular boxing club. The club got started in 2011 by science teacher Mike Zurba whose own background in boxing spurred him to introduce his students to the sport. The club started off with just him and 30 kids and it has now grown to four teachers and 62 students – an impressive number considering the school's population is 271.

"It's really become a rather large footprint on the culture of Sanford Collegiate."

Zurba started boxing while in high school and trained at Pan Am Boxing in Winnipeg's Exchange District, mostly to get himself into shape for hockey.

"I quickly found out it was a better workout than hockey ever was. I like the competition of it. You find out a lot about yourself when you're fighting and when you push yourself as far as you can possibly go. And that is what I thought the sport could offer the kids here. We put them through quite a lot in their workout and when they come out of it they have a little bit more confidence because it's hard not to feel a little tougher after you do a workout like this."

The club has converted a former storage space in the school's gymnasium into a full-fledged boxing gym, and participating students pay \$40 for the program which goes towards maintaining and buying equipment. A lot of the equipment has been sourced second hand to make it affordable. They also have their own t-shirts and hoodies, awards at the athletic banquet and a special training session with head coach Harry Black at Pan Am Boxing.

Continued on next page...



The program starts in the second semester of school. The teachers hold a three-week rookie camp for Grade 9 students which introduces them to the sport and eases them into it through less-strenuous workouts. Grades 10-12 go through a six-week training camp where, three days a week, they learn key aspects of the sport including boxing intro, endurance, power, accuracy, fight strategy and final round technique.

Zurba has designed a training plan that teaches the students techniques such as hand wrapping, punch combos, generating power, foot work and fight philosophy. The one hour workout is non-stop and intense. The students not only do boxing drills but build their endurance through squats, ab work and cardio.

"We try to get them in shape first and then we work on technique," says Zurba. "In a fight, you have to be able to continue for a long time so you need to be really fit." The teachers also go over nutrition and hydration and how to take care of your body to prepare it for the strain.

Though the workout is exhausting, the actual boxing fights are not dangerous.

MIKE ZURBA HAS DESIGNED A TRAINING PLAN THAT TEACHES THE STUDENTS TECHNIQUES SUCH AS HAND WRAPPING, PUNCH COMBOS, GENERATING POWER, AND FIGHT PHILOSOPHY.

"We're not sparring, it's all very controlled. After six weeks it's kind of like a game of tag with body contact from waist to shoulders, and no head contact at all. But just because these kids are not going to get into fights doesn't mean we can't train them like fighters. We do everything except for the sparring rounds like an actual fighter would do."

And the punches haven't spilled over into the school hallways.

"We've had one fight here in five years. I think it's actually less since the boxing club

has started. Maybe it's because anyone who knows how to throw punches are all friends now," laughs Zurba. "It takes the fight out of kids when they realize how hard fighting actually is."

"I talk a lot about the mental side of it and pushing their limits. We work out to failure, until your muscles can't handle it anymore. They learn something about themselves. And every time they hit that wall, the next workout they'll be pushed a little further and it'll be a little tougher."

There used to be a drop off at the beginning of the program where students stopped when they realized how hard it is, but Zurba says that's not the case anymore.

"Everyone knows what they're in for and you don't want to be the one who quits."

That includes the four teachers who run the club for 15 weeks straight.

"We get into shape, relieve stress, generate student connections and experience an overall happier mental health at work and at home. You don't want the kids to be in better shape than you so you push yourself!"

"We're constantly developing the program and changing things up – it keeps us on our





toes,” says Industrial Arts teacher Brendan McManus who caught the bug and now boxes at Pan Am with Zurba and coaches fighters there as well.

“The kids kind of walk around with a badge of pride, like ‘Yeah I’m in a boxing club, no big deal!’

McManus says he sees a lot of Sanford kids training at Pan Am in their spare time where it’s free for kids under 18– “I see at least 20 regularly!”

The students that get into the program don’t have to be very athletic or co-ordinated, and often don’t participate in any other sports. They just need to push themselves and not give up.

McManus recalls a particularly shy student who ended up addicted to the sport. “We had one girl who went down two pant sizes and she said I think four words to me the entire semester – a really quiet kid. But she never missed a workout and after we finished we kept working out for an extra two weeks because she wanted to keep going.”

The boxing club has always had a 50/50 split with guys and girls, something that just happened naturally according to Zurba.

THE ONE HOUR WORKOUT IS NON-STOP AND INTENSE. THE STUDENTS NOT ONLY DO BOXING DRILLS BUT BUILD THEIR ENDURANCE THROUGH SQUATS, AB WORK AND CARDIO.

“The sport is all mental, most of these girls that we have are tougher than the guys. It takes a tough girl to jump into this.”

Grade 12 student Bailey Thompson is in her third year of boxing and says she joined because she wanted a good workout.

“I thought it would be a good way to get in shape and try out a new sport. My brother had done it when he was in high school as well and he liked it.” Thompson says it was a bit intimidating at first and she had to build endurance. “Kicking the boys’ butts is fun –

maybe the best part!”

This year the club began its assistant trainer program where a seasoned Grade 12 student can become an assistant instructor for the Grade 9 students, showing up to their workouts and leading their own workout near the end. Building their leadership skills is just another way the club has benefitted the students.

“I see the kids’ confidence grow over the six weeks,” says Zurba. “And I find my teaching is way easier when I can connect with this many kids outside the classroom. There’s no behavior problems. When they know you put the time in they show appreciation.

“You can’t help but build a bond with the people you’re working out with. For any teachers with an athletic background – start a club! For the amount of distressing that you get for your mental health I would recommend it to anyone.”

The Sanford boxing club teachers plan to hold a SAGE info session during MTS PD Day this fall to share the program with other teachers, and Zurba encourages other teachers to contact him if they would like any info: mzurba@rrvrsd.ca





Caregiver burnout

BY MARK HALSALL

Caregiver burnout. It's a common problem for parents and others like teachers who have kids with autism and other mental health disorders under their care.

"Children and adolescents and even adults, who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have a very unique and different way of processing information, at looking at the world, at perceiving the world both from a sensory point of view and a social point of view," says Tamara Rogers, an occupational therapist with almost 20 years of clinical practice and university teaching experience in mental and physical health.

"The way that they communicate can be very blunt and literal and factual without a lot of awareness around sensitivity and social cues," she adds.

"Teachers who don't necessarily understand how a brain with autism works may be deeply offended by some of the behaviors that occur and may take things quite personally. Meltdowns and shutdowns are very common in autism, and often school staff don't know what to do to support the individual or how to manage a meltdown."

Rogers believes the extra layer of figuring out ways to support kids with ASD and associated deficits adds significantly to teacher workloads and can be quite exasperating and frustrating when the answers are hard to come by.

"There are lots of teachers who become very anxious," she says. "It can definitely contribute to feeling ineffectual and depressed."

Rogers knows a thing or two about the intense challenges faced by the caregivers of autistic kids. She's the mother of teenage twins who both have ASD and anxiety issues.

"I feel I have some insight into what it's like to parent children with autism and other disorders like anxiety," says Rogers, who has a private practice ([onthespectrumtherapy](#)).

How to manage challenging behaviours while dealing with children and adolescents with ASD and special needs — and how to better take care of yourself in order to avoid caregiver burnout.

com) that supports individuals and their families living with ASD and other mental health conditions.

Rogers recently left her position as a Community Mental Health Worker with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to devote her full attention to her private practice and to pursue a master's degree in Psychology and Neuroscience of Mental Health through King's College London in the UK. She also provides occupational therapy mental health and physical health services to Veterans Affairs Canada.

Over the past 10 years or so, Rogers has delivered presentations to hundreds of caregivers on how to manage challenging behaviours and stressful situations while dealing with children and adolescents with ASD and other special needs — and also how to better take care of themselves in order to avoid caregiver burnout.

"It's about knowing how to interpret and look at a situation through an autism lens. In my presentations I really do share a lot of personal experiences and what I've learned along my journey," Rogers says.

"I love to teach and I love to provide people evidence-based knowledge about the strategies that work. I know they work because I use them myself. I have very challenging situations to deal with within my own family context and with my kids, and I've been dealing with these for a long time."

Rogers shared her expertise with 30 or so teachers during a workshop session at the MTS Professional Development Day on Oct. 21, 2016.

Participants learned how to identify signs of stress in individuals with ASD, and were also taught strategies for minimizing the intensity of behavioral reactions in students with special needs.

Rogers maintains there's no standard formula for recognizing that an autistic child is starting to feel overwhelmed or overstimulated because every individual is unique. "Those cues can manifest in many different ways," she says, adding self-stimulating behaviors known as "stimming", which are often characterized by repetitive movements or sounds, can be one such sign.

According to Rogers, autistic kids can become overstimulated by something going on in the environment around them or if unrealistic expectations are being placed on them. Recognizing these cues will allow a caregiver to put a stop on an escalation if they can redirect the child to a calming activity.

Rogers maintains a common mistake many teachers make is talking too much when an individual with ASD is starting to escalate.

The problem is that in a brain with ASD, processing speed is often delayed. When an autistic child is feeling overwhelmed, she says, "adding more auditory input into that child's brain only serves to escalate things to a larger meltdown."

Mirroring an autistic child's emotions during a meltdown is something else to be wary of. "We can go into a rage cycle ourselves when we're dealing with a very escalated situation," Rogers says, and when that happens, "our brain can leave the building." It's also important to avoid falling into a power struggle trap, she adds, because "in those battles of will power, we'll never win. I guarantee you that."

Another key aspect of the workshop was equipping teachers with the necessary tools to avoid caregiver burnout.

"It takes an extraordinary amount of patience and repetition and neutral emotional responses to make things gel," Rogers says. "It is a trial and error process, so you're not going to come with the magic answer straight away. Cushioning oneself, having a buffer or a protective armour, to regenerate, rejuvenate and to refresh and recharge the batteries is absolutely critical."

During her sessions with caregivers, Rogers stresses the importance of learning how to live in the moment

they tend to be less in tune with their own bodies and their own needs until it reaches a critical mass," Rogers says. "[Burn out] is something that creeps up, and it can creep up pretty quickly because of how intense the challenges can be.

"It's absolutely essential that people... try to be in tune with one's own sensations, one's own body, one's own cognitive processes and thoughts, and to actually implement parts throughout the day where you're doing some stress management techniques that help to calm down the physiological system and really do work to decrease stress," Rogers says.

"The stress response is so physically devastating on the brain and the body. It causes a surge of cortisol, and that actually has really negative effects on your health," she adds.

Rogers recommends setting up daily routines that incorporate small stress management activities, rather than such things as resolving to go to the gym an hour every day as this may be unrealistic for many people. Simple stress management techniques could include going for a quick walk, or listening to a relaxation CD for 15 minutes over the lunch hour.

According to Rogers, mindful meditation and breath-holding techniques that benefit the nervous system have also

"It's about knowing how to interpret and look at a situation through an autism lens. In my presentations I really do share a lot of personal experiences and what I've learned along my journey."

- Tamara Rogers, Occupational Therapist

as well as depersonalizing events if a meltdown should occur.

"Self-reflection and reflection of these situations is really important," she says. "Part of it comes from learning how to ... remove yourself emotionally from the event, analyzing it objectively to see how to make changes to prevent those kinds of situations from occurring again."

Rogers believes taking an objective view can enable caregivers to become more resilient, but she acknowledges that it's hard not to take things personally during a full-blown meltdown. Teachers often blame themselves when these things happen, she says, and that can contribute to depression.

"Teachers are caregivers so they tend to put other people's needs first, and so I think across the board it ends up where

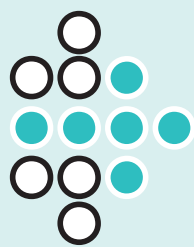
been shown

to reduce stress levels. Debriefing with others with similar experiences can be very beneficial, she says, adding that organizations like the Autism Awareness Centre and the Canadian Mental Health Association offer valuable resources for caregivers of kids with ASD and other mental health conditions.

Rogers suggests teachers looking for assistance with stress management or who are struggling with mental health issues like anxiety or depression as a result of their caregiver roles can turn to the MTS Educator Assistance Program or to a private therapist like herself for help.

Those seeking more information can contact Rogers at 204-415-7656 or tamara@onthespectrumtherapy.com.

BY DANIEL LEHMANN



fitbit project



During this school year, Grade 11 and 12 students at Gilbert Plains Collegiate Institute have been turning to their wrists to complete their mandatory Phys Ed. Courses.

Doing away with pen and paper logs, students have all been given Fitbit devices to monitor their activities.

Since 2008, students in Manitoba have been required to take a Grade 11 and Grade 12 Physical Education/Health Education course in order to graduate. Two of the main outcomes of these courses are to encourage students to take responsibility for their activity level and engage in different physical activities that will help them live a healthy, active lifestyle beyond graduation.

In order to achieve this goal, many schools choose to have students complete out-of-class activity hours on their own time. Students would provide written logs recounting the activities they accomplished beyond the classroom.

As a teacher, I have noticed some issues with this system: Primarily, inaccuracy and log sheets not being handed in.

Some students were too hard on themselves, and would underestimate the amount of time their heart rates were in the target zone; ultimately not getting credit for all of the activity they did. Other students would do the opposite and wildly overestimate how hard their heart was working.

My favorite example: A student who logged 16 hours of vigorous-level wood piling on a

Tuesday evening. But as long as there was a parent/guardian signature on the log sheet, the hours were deemed to be accurate. It doesn't matter if the activity hours were overestimated or underestimated, the point was: it was all an estimate. The majority of students really did not accurately know what their heart rate was on a consistent basis, which left all kinds of room for inaccuracy on the log sheets.

At GPCI, we found a solution and adds some additional benefits as well, the Grade 11 & 12 Phys. Ed Fitbit program!

Through government funding, GPCI bought one Fitbit Charge HR device for every Grade 11 and 12 student.

The program has four main goals:

- Accuracy
- Paper-free logging system
- Fostering friendly competition between peers
- Students continuing a physically-active lifestyle beyond graduation

Goal 1: The Fitbit Charge HR device continuously tracks your heart rate throughout the day. From my testing, the device has never been more than 10 beats off of what my actual heart rate is, so the devices are very accurate. This allows the students to go through their day to day routines and at the end of the day they can access a heart rate summary on the Fitbit app, which tells them how many minutes they spent in their 'Target Heart Rate Zone.'

With the pencil-and-paper logging system,

students often said that if they did not have a structured activity on a day of the week, they basically believed that that was a 'lazy' day, in which they logged zero minutes of moderate-vigorous physical activity.

As Bryanne noticed: "wearing the Fitbit tracks every little thing you do. If I run outside to start my car, and then run back in, my heart rate has actually gotten into my zone for a minute. When I was using the paper-and-pencil [logging system] I would have assumed I did nothing that day. But in reality, I did. Those little periods of physical activity probably add up to an extra hour every couple of weeks."

Every two weeks, I met with all of the students individually and we would look at their Fitbit app together on a smartphone or iPad and tally up how many hours they spent in their target zone. By the end of the course, each student needed to reach 48 hours.

This system took the estimation out of the picture, and made everything more accurate.

Goal 2: With the paper-and-pencil logging system, every student was expected to hand in a sheet of paper every week, for the 16 weeks of the semester. At GPCI, even though we are a small school, this added up to hundreds of sheets of paper per school year dedicated to the Grade 11 & 12 physical education classes.

The use of paper was virtually eliminated because all of the logging information was saved on the Fitbit app on students' smartphones or school iPads.

Goal 3: On the Fitbit app, you can add peers to your account, so you can see how active your friends or classmates have been. At the beginning of the Fitbit program, every student added all of their classmates to their Fitbit account and this fostered friendly competition between students.

Goal 4: In order to encourage students to continue living a healthy, physically active lifestyle beyond graduation, we decided that the students would have the choice to keep the Fitbit Charge HR devices permanently after they finish the course. At the beginning of the course, students paid a \$30 damage deposit. Throughout the course, students not only wore the Fitbit during Phys. Ed. class, but also took the device home and logged all of their out-of-class hours while wearing the Fitbit. At the end of the course, students have the choice to return the Fitbit and get their damage deposit back, or they can keep the Fitbit for themselves. It was no surprise to me that every student decided to keep the Fitbit. As Grade 12 student Acey said: "Getting a \$160 Fitbit for 30 bucks? Of course I'm going to keep it!"

As a teacher, it just didn't make sense for me to ask for these devices to be returned after the students have become used to consistently monitoring their activity over the past four months. We want these students to remain physically active, and this device motivates them to do so. When Tori was asked if she would continue to wear this device now that the course was complete, she replied "Oh yeah! I like checking my heart rate now, it's addicting!"

After interviewing students from this year's Grade 12 class, the most appreciated aspect of the Fitbit program was how easy they were to use compared with the paper logs.

This was not an anticipated outcome of mine when I started up the Fitbit program, but I was pleasantly surprised at how enthusiastically the students embraced it. If the students find this program easier and less daunting than the pencil-and-paper style, then that is just an additional benefit to using this style of logging.

I believe that the use of these Fitbit Charge HR devices has helped solve many of the issues that teachers often encounter with the current Grade 11 & 12 Physical Education curriculum in Manitoba.

If you have any questions or want more details about this Fitbit logging program, feel free to get a hold of me at dlehmann@mvsd.ca.

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Evening for Isabella

BY MATEA TUHTAR

A teaching career of 80 years is not only remarkable, it's worthy of a celebration.

Colleagues, friends, news crews, family and former students filled the MTS Auditorium on the evening of March 23 to celebrate Ms. Isabella Dryden – the 99 years young teacher whose contributions to the education world are something few will achieve in their lifetime.

"We had 110 people attend, and more people had to be turned away as we were at capacity," says Lea Mansell, Educators of Business and Information Technology member (EBIT) and longtime friend of Isabella's who helped organize the 'Evening for Isabella' event. Mansell says the attendees included people from every school Isabella had taught at, and came from as far away as Arizona.

"Isabella is 99 and still actively teaching. She is one amazing lady. Isabella has contributed so much to education and to society as a whole, I feel that she should be honored for her years of commitment and dedication to her students and the teaching profession."

It's that dedication that kept being brought up through the evening. Guests socialized and shared memories of Isabella - how they knew her and how she had touched their lives. Story after story mentioned a strong and resilient woman with a quick mind and sharp wit who went above and beyond to show up to her teaching gigs, even when it involved getting stuck in snow storms and breaking her arm. Nothing would deter her from attending her classes because her students 'needed her' and she didn't want to let them down.

She still carries this commitment today – catching a bus downtown three days a week to teach computer classes for her students at Creative Retirement.

Above all else, guests regaled with tales of warmth, caring and support Isabella offered them through the years,



Story after story mentioned a strong and resilient woman with a quick mind and sharp wit who went above and beyond to show up to her teaching gigs, even when it involved getting stuck in snow storms and breaking her arm. Nothing would deter her from attending her classes because her students 'needed her' and she didn't want to let them down.

making sure to also remark on her great sense of humour.

"I don't think I know myself anymore," laughed Isabella as she addressed her room of admirers. "The stories have been phenomenal. To have family, former students, and students from years and years ago I never expected to see again. I'm so grateful to so many of them for being such a wonderful part of my life. I have had the privilege to teach so many and from them I have learned every day. Tonight my cup runneth over – I am honoured, I'm overwhelmed, I'm humbled, I'm grateful, and happy to share this time with you."

IDATE award!

Since 2000, EBIT has run the IDATE (Isabella Dryden Award for Teaching Excellence) award. \$500 is awarded to a graduate of the Business/Technology Teacher Education Program. Donations to the scholarship fund can be made through the EBIT website:

<http://www.ebitmb.org/>



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PORTFOLIO



Makin' America Great Again!

A group of tourists aboard a boat off the coast of Cancun, Mexico, got a snapshot of why more Canadians will be wearing maple leaves when they travel abroad.

While on the boat to watch a show, a group of American tourists began chanting "build the wall, build the wall."

The chanting didn't stop even after it clearly made Mexican workers and tourists aboard the ship uncomfortable, said an editorial by The Yucatan Times, an English-language newspaper that covers the Yucatan Peninsula, where Cancun is located.

Classy.

Trolls: There'll be a quiz later

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON



ADD YOUR COMMENT



What a grand, democratic experiment it has been to allow visitors to news sites and social media to fire off comments on what they supposedly read.

So many have been profoundly cerebral: "As long as dumbass 'Tobans continue to vote for Dip-stick socialistas and their bogus Utopian dream ... it ain't gonna change until you shake ur heads ..."

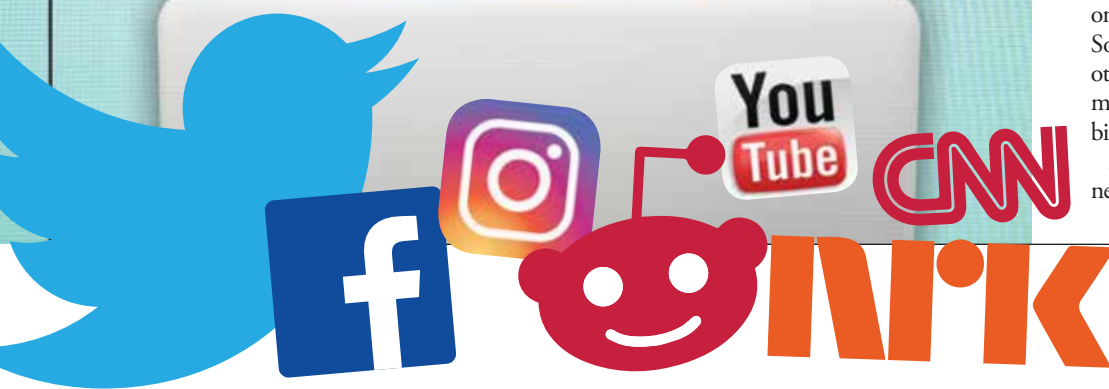
Or caring: "Take a look in the carts of people in 'core' areas. They are fully stocked with pepsi, microwaveables, pre-cooked frozen foods and chips."

And so succinct: "Hey loser, get a life already."

They have, with all their misspellings and grammatical quirks hidden behind the curtain of anonymity, contributed to the richness of discussions around topics of immense import. Well, actually, all topics, but why anyone would comment on a fatal car accident is, perhaps, a question left for the psychologists.

Over the past few years there has been much agonizing and gnashing of teeth over how to moderate these screeds or whether online sites should even allow commenting. Some have dropped the idea altogether, others have eliminated anonymity. It's mainly been aimed at keeping the fingers of bigots away from their keyboards.

Most recently, though, a Norwegian news site instituted a plan to also weed out



IN MEMORIAM

March was a bad month for the toy box.

For the first time in its 100-year history, Crayola has retired a colour from its 24-count box. The company decided that there is no longer any need for dandelion yellow. Crayola has retired colours before, but this is a first for the 24-count box. About a decade ago it said farewell to blizzard blue, magic mint, teal blue and something called mulberry.

Meanwhile, Hasbro has dumped the 82-year-old thimble playing piece in its Monopoly game. Replacing it, along with the wheelbarrow and boot, will be a dinosaur, penguin and rubber ducky.



ignoramuses who don't actually bother to read more than a headline before exhibiting their barstool acumen.

The site created little quizzes at the end of articles that readers have to answer before they can comment. The three multiple choice questions about the article are intended to ensure commenters have read the piece.

"The aim is that everyone commenting should have read the article and have common basis for understanding, making it easier to avoid discussions ending up off-topic," said a release by NRKbeta, a technology-focused arm of the public broadcaster NRK.

Said editor Marius Arnesen: "If you spend 15 seconds on it (the quiz), those are maybe 15 seconds that take the edge off the rant mode when people are commenting."

Ah, those Norwegians. So optimistic.

Will anything actually enhance the dialogue coming from the commenting community? Some recent studies have found that supposed community does not reflect overall society in either the comments made or those who make them.

The Guardian newspaper did an analysis of millions of comments left on its news site. It discovered that of the 10 regular opinion writers who received the most abusive comments, eight were women (four white and four non-white) and two black men.

The 10 who got the least abuse were all

men, although a majority of its opinion writers are white men.

Since 2010, Guardian monitors blocked 1.4 million comments (about two per cent of the total) and found that articles written by women attracted a high proportion of blocked comments than articles written by men.

It also found that ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT people also appear to experience a disproportionate amount of abuse.

So, who is tossing around the abuse?

A comprehensive study by the Engaging News Project at the University of Texas found that commenters on news sites are more likely to be male, have lower levels of education and lower incomes compared with those who read news sites but don't comment. And only 14 per cent of overall respondents said they posted comments on news sites.

It found that more than half of respondents have neither read nor posted news-related comments online. Some did post non-news comments on social media.

News sites might think that they are engaging with their readership, but the most recent studies suggest otherwise. In many cases, they just give a minority a platform to attack other minorities. And the only quiz question they need to answer is: Is it worth it?

IT IS 2017, RIGHT?

The state of Arkansas went looking for civic-minded people at a Rotary Club to volunteer to witness the lethal injections of eight death-row inmates. Under law, the state needs civilian witnesses before the inmates can be killed. The state plans on executing the eight inmates over a 10-day period because the drug it uses is set to expire.



QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?
I'D LOVE TO HELP.
REACH ME AT [RJOB@MBTEACH.ORG](mailto:rjob@mbteach.org)

REFRESH

BY RAMAN JOB, PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR



BIG REASONS TO JUMP INTO SOCIAL STORIES



You've probably noticed the new Snapchat clone feature sitting on top of your Facebook profile.

Funny how that works.

Snapchat's story feature has been blatantly copied by 1) Instagram, owned by Facebook; 2) Whatsapp, another Facebook company; and now by 3) Facebook itself.

What's up Facebook – can't think of anything new under the sun? Well, quite simply, Snapchat is about to launch an IPO. Facebook is worried about market share. And people are quickly becoming addicted to posting pictures and videos with face filters, captions, stickers, drawings, geo- and temp-filters, and then stringing them together in stories that disappear after 24 hours. (You can save them before they expire.)

Since the story feature seems destined to rule the social world for the near future, and is likely to pop up in more of your social apps, here are 5 good reasons why you should be jumping in.

1) Stories keep you from flooding your feed

So you take a ton of photos on vacation, or at a school event. You post two that you love. But you'd really like to pop another dozen of those suckers on your Facebook or Instagram feed. Annoying! Plus, people just won't give them the likes or attention they deserve if you post them all or simply dump them into an album. The perfect place for those shots is in your stories. Stories are casual collections of stills and videos that people flick through one at a time. They're colourful, creative, and can bring you solid engagement.

2) Your pics don't have to be perfect

Don't worry if your pics aren't Nat Geo eye-candy. Much of the engagement in stories comes from others seeing your world behind the scenes – minus the polish and oh-so-perfect selfies. The engagement can

come from a funny face filter, from other people's FOMO on seeing your geo-tag and the temperature embedded right in the shot, from the video boomerang of your kids flipping pancakes, and from the crown and scepter (stickers) you're wearing after that winning card game at Clear Lake.

3) Video chunking is easier than one-take perfection

Let's say you have a great verbal story to tell: It's just you and the camera and a ton of enthusiasm. Well, most story features will only capture 10 seconds of video at a time. Brilliant! You simply compose yourself after each shot, shoot the next 10 seconds and so on, then string these together naturally. No script to memorize. Just think in terms of short video chunks.

4) You can do almost anything with a story

Video yourself asking a series of questions and ask for your story viewers to message you their answers. Hold a contest. Interview students during I Love to Read month or an Hour of Code activity. Make a "12 Must-Follow Peeps" post by taking screen shots of their social home pages. Watch a few stories for inspiration and let your imagination have its way.

5) The secret to regular stories – document, don't create

While a social story is a creation in itself, it doesn't require a cast of characters, script, props, or fancy lighting and microphones. Feel perfectly free to ditch the storyboard thinking and simply document what you're doing. The majority of your stories will be casual documenting. If you and your students want to knock yourselves out by building something more involved, you can do that too!

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