

President's Message: Fault?

While using some weekend storm time to wade through recent education articles, I came across a Matt Henderson piece that poked my teacher senses and provoked concern for colleagues. Matt is an assistant Superintendent with Seven Oaks School Division, and has authored opinion pieces for a variety of media outlets. His January 18th Free Press piece entitled – *Strength in numbers; Engaged educators at the root of nurturing a love of mathematics in kids*, speaks to the announcement of low math scores for Manitoba students.

Henderson points out that the John Mighton book *All Things Being Equal*, determines that “good teaching begins with the teacher”. As I’m sure many of you have read, he suggests that if we are engaged and passionate, no matter the domain, our students will be as well. My visits to your schools have revealed teacher after teacher engaged in their work and attentive to class traits and student profiles; as well as classroom upon classroom of willing students. But does a total buy-in equate to high achievement? Mighton is quoted as saying, “when one of my students fails to understand something..., I always assume the fault lies in my lesson and not in their lack of ability.” Educators, by nature, give much weight to student growth and progress, by why when judging themselves, is the verdict so much harsher? Teaching is a profession of investment in which we likely don’t always see the return. So why is it so tough for us to be okay with that?

One definition of fault is “*responsibility for misfortune*”. The real fault of teachers may be why we repeatedly look at ourselves as the source of our students’ misfortune? We know that we are a small fraction of the influences that our students face each day. So why do we take on the whole of the problem? MTS recently recommended to the K-12 Review Commissioners, that resolving poverty, hunger and inequitable school experiences due to social, economic and cultural differences, be some of the immediate areas of concern in order to improve student achievement. Is trying a new idea to reach different intelligences, to satisfy a variety of student needs, to engage the sideline sitters, or to provide enrichment for higher thinkers, a waste of time or a bad idea? And if it didn’t work this year, might it work next? Is some time spent practicing rote math going to stifle our creative thinkers, or are project or rich tasks going to ruin our logical reasoners? I think none of these are absolutes.

To teach, is to evolve. In sport, if you run the same play and your opponent continues to defend it; time to change the play. And the next time you face them, that old play just might work again. My hope for all of you is that even though you may feel like you are everything to many of your students; you are not the cause of their grades. You excite and inspire them to learn, try, and take chances, and how to use failure in itself, as learning. You give them the tools, and often try to shove tools in the bag when they aren’t looking, just to be sure. Many of you have expressed concern that the province may release Grade 12 provincial exam marks by school this year. This will be an opportunity for us to force the narrative, and remind those who need to hear it, that student achievement is a product of varying and infinite factors. Until all are addressed with purpose and fiscal commitment, it is not fair or reasonable to place the fault, solely with one.

Project Connect – from Sheila Anderson - Public Relations Chair

On January 17, 2020 we were notified that our Public Relations Grant Application was approved by the Manitoba Teachers' Society. *Project Connect* is the name of our endeavour. It was born out of a conversation with Cynthia Jacobson, the ISD Junior Kindergarten Lead Teacher. Our project is designed to build relationships with incoming ISD families. We will give a gift of education resources to one hundred and twenty-seven Junior Kindergarten families. Our intention is two-fold: for families to receive the support that they need and for them to already feel connected to the ITA, is two hundred twenty-seven teachers strong! We hope that this project will be something that ITA teachers will feel proud of.

The estimated total cost for this project is \$1200.00. MTS will fund 67% and the ITA will fund 33%.

We will report on the developments and progress of *Project Connect* in each newsletter. Opportunities to be involved with *Project Connect* extend to all ITA members. Please let Cathy know of your interest and she will put you in touch with me, or contact me at sanderson@isd21.mb.ca.



January 30th 7:00 pm

Parochial Hall in Stonewall

FREE to all ISD Staff and Significant Others

'Refreshments' available for purchase

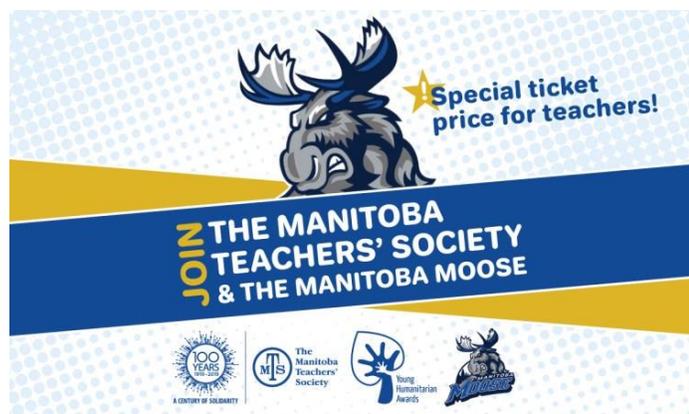
PLEASE CONTACT CATHY (cpleskach@isd21.mb.ca) to reserve your spot!

Public Relations Special Events Committee



If you love to plan events and envision occasions to bring a diverse group of teachers together during the school year, please join this committee. Your level of commitment is up to you: from making some phone calls, to being part of a dream team of event planners, or helping out with an event that sparks your interest. A wine tasting type event is in the planning stages for May.

Please let Cathy know of your interest and she will put you in touch with me, or contact me, Sheila Anderson at Rosser School or sanderson@isd21.mb.ca.



Join MTS and the Manitoba Moose in support of the Young Humanitarian Awards on Saturday, February 15 at 6:00 p.m. as the Moose take on the Milwaukee Admirals. It's a great way to kick off the long weekend! [Click here](#) and use the **promo code: MTS** to get great seats for less than half the regular price!

Equity and Social Justice Into Action – from Kathy Simcoe – ESJ Chair

Greetings from your 2019/2020 Equity and Social Justice chair! My name is Kathy Simcoe; I am a grade 7, and Middle Years French teacher at Teulon Collegiate. My spirit name is Star Thunderbird Woman of the Wolf clan. I have spent some time these past months figuring out my role and how I can serve you in it, starting by learning the definitions of these terms. Here's the short version:

Equity: *Fairness achieved through proactive measures which results in empowerment for all.*

Social justice: *all members of (a) society are treated equitably and perceive themselves to be (...) safe and secure.*

That's a tall order! Not only is it because there are so many challenges associated with ESJ – gender, racial, socio-economic - and even though our association is working for our members, it is impossible to separate our work from the issues faced by our students every day. Therefore, I have concluded that my role is to promote understanding and lend support to our membership in creating safe, brave environments that respect human diversity, whether in the classroom or the workplace. If you have concerns or questions, I may well not have the answers, but will connect with someone at MTS who has, or will help you research them in other ways. Some ESJ challenges (for example parental leave requests) come up in collective bargaining and can be presented to that chair for negotiation when the time comes. We, as an association, also have the opportunity several times a year, to share member concerns with the division. I will also be submitting some ESJ questions for our upcoming member survey, so please watch for that coming soon, and take a few minutes to share your ideas with us. Should you have an ESJ concerns, I can be reached at kathysimcoe@gmail.com.

As we face a new year, and reflect on 2019, I know that many of you, over the holiday season, graciously shared your good fortune with those with less. I would like to leave you with an idea that we may not consider often in our daily lives, and our students likely even less: the concept of PRIVILEGE. I participated in an activity that tasked a group of individuals to come to consensus on 2 privileges to purchase. This was hard enough, but seeing items that I take for granted every day listed as privileges, was eye-opening. I will be doing something similar in my class in the coming months. I have those particular questionnaires saved, if anyone wishes me to share it with them, and there are many more if you Google “race, privilege questionnaire, flower of power.” Here is a complete lesson plan with BLMs at <https://ccdi.ca/media/1588/toolkit-2-exploring-my-power-and-privilege.pdf>

I wish everyone a safe and happy 2020.



