

President's Message – A Culture of Learners

When you glance at the October and November calendars and see the early frequency of PD days for Interlake teachers, you can certainly see a concentrated focus on [teachers as learners](#). Beginning with our Oct 5th exposure to the ISD Continuous Improvement Plan, carrying through MTS PD day, and recently two November days of training have been given in the areas of numeracy and wellness. We have been presented with a number of opportunities to learn and formulate plans within similar grade and curricular groups. In contrast, December and January will see us getting together less to collaborate professionally. However, we should view this as the time to utilize the tools and apply the information gained from these earlier days. And if I have learned anything from these first few months, we must all continue to communicate. Talk to your peers, share with your principals the goings-on of your classrooms, check in with new teachers and work toward establishing a school culture of learners and collaborators.

What is the impact of the numeracy and wellness PD opportunities thus far? How often do we hear our students, or even ourselves utter the words, “I’m not a numbers person?” If you think about it, we are all numbers people. We memorize patterns and numbers everyday to function. Ironically, a “function” is a math term that defines a relationship between an input and the resulting output. Telephone numbers, following a recipe, paying a bill, playing music or a game, or cutting a pie into the correct number of pieces to stave off a family revolt, are just some of the ways we are a culture of “numbers people” every day.

Even wellness; “the state of being in good health, as an actively pursued goal”, can be thought of as a function to which we control the numbers. If the input is a staff who give merit to [being well in order to work well](#), we create an output culture of [being well to learn well](#) for our students. We sometimes forget that our students aren’t the only part of society impacted by our classroom culture. Ideas and tools we give our students transfer to their parents and the community. Our function is to move from teachers as learners, to teachers as culture-setting models. I know there are many variables, (Christmas concert month to say the least), but the school culture we create is the one we get to work in. Remember to reach out to John Bock for numeracy and any other program support you need, and Vicky Brzuskiwicz & Melissa Beer for the wellness initiative.

Need Wellness support during Black Friday and Holiday shopping season? Don’t forget about the discounts you receive through MTS membership. Here is the [LINK](#) to the discounts we receive.

Election Results: Welcome to the 2018-2022 Interlake School Division Board of Trustees

Chairperson – Fran Fredrickson (Ward 2)
Vice-Chairperson – Alan Campbell (Ward 2)
Cindy Brad (Ward 1)
John Hueging (Ward 1)

Victoria Schindle (Ward 2)
Sally Cook (Ward 3)
Bridget Yablonski (Ward 4)

A Team Building Opportunity from Your ITA Professional Development Chair:

We all have walked into a staff room at some point in our careers and have either felt graciously greeted or somewhat in discomfort by the welcoming of our coworkers. Wherever your current staff room vibe sits on that continuum, the recent seminar I attended may be of interest to you. In short, the relationships among the educators in a school define all the relationships within the culture of that school. Teachers and administrators demonstrate all too well, a capacity to either enrich or diminish one another's lives and therefore, enrich or diminish their school's culture.

As PD Chair I recently attended the Professional Development Fall Seminar presented by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, featuring guest presenter Sue Stephenson. This two day seminar was focused on "Leading with Trust" and was broken into six parts. The main focus was placed on building one's capacity as a leader in a trusting culture. The workshop focused further, on the nature of professional learning in a trusting culture, building personal and interpersonal capacity within and among groups, facing barriers to trust, and exploring strategies to build from distrust to mature trust. There was also focus on self-reflection as to where you would place yourself among the various levels of trust through various relationships within your life.

MTS has purchased the workshop and is offering it to all members, with a focus to help build and establish trust amongst school staffs. If you are interested in having the presentation to help impact your staff culture, please contact MTS and they will make arrangements to deliver the presentation.

Ashley Kutcher

Teacher-Principal at Omega School

ITA PD Chair

News Items:

- The Manitoba Teachers' Society is currently conducting its annual, province-wide random poll of members between Nov. 12 and Nov. 21. If you get the call, you are encouraged to participate. I heard from some members who responded. They said it took 15 min and topics included current government, school trustees, class sizes and violence in schools from students or parents.
- On that note... Christie Crow (ITA Workplace Chair) and I attended a Knowledge Exchange for Educators; Acknowledging Violence in Manitoba Schools. This event was packed full of Workplace Safety & Health info presented by Safe Work Manitoba. Stay tuned for a full report as we will dedicate a coming issue to harassment and violence in the work place, and the importance of proper reporting.
- As you venture out into the community clubs and rinks across the province, page 3 contains a list of talking points from MTS to help us speak out for education when the topic comes up.

Important Dates:

- November 30: If you are considering retiring effective Dec 31, 2018, Nov 30th is the date by which you must make your intentions known to the Board. Contact me for further information.
- December 3: Lakewood Regional Presidents' meeting and the Collective Bargaining Chairs from the region will meet to hear information regarding next steps from MTS.

Talking Points

Stable, Sustainable Education Funding

For the past two years, education funding has fallen below the rate of inflation.

Enrollment continues to increase.

Twenty-one school divisions received less funding for this school year.

Students benefit from stable funding because schools can continue to provide programs and resources that students depend on.

K-3 Smaller Classes Initiative

Class size is an important determinant of student outcomes.

All else being equal, lower class sizes will improve student outcomes.

Increasing class sizes will harm student outcomes.

Less one-on-one time with students who need it most.

The larger the class, the higher the social and educational costs in the future.

Since the removal of the cap on class size:

- Close to 70 per cent of teachers report a significant impact on their ability to provide individualized attention to students
- More than half have witnessed a significant impact on student behaviour
- Three in four have noticed a negative impact on student engagement in learning

This program was cancelled prematurely, long before it was out of the five-year pilot stage.

