



RIELITY CHECK

A publication of the Louis Riel Teachers' Association (www.lrta.ca)

EDITOR: SEAN FITZMAURICE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

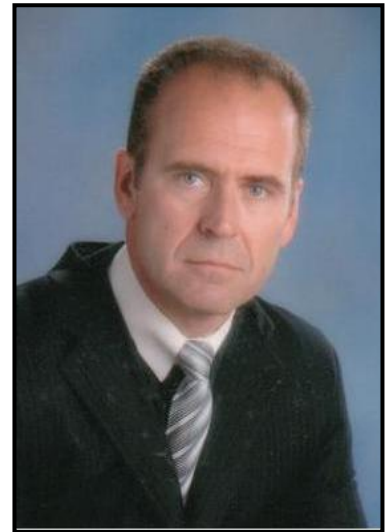
President – Frank Restall

Bonne et Heureuse Année!

Happy New Year!

Welcome back! I hope you had a wonderful break and enjoyed special time with family and friends. As well, I trust that you were able to take time for yourself, reflect upon the year that just passed and the one upon which we are now embarking.

For this new year, please resolve to strike the perfect balance between your professional responsibilities and your personal responsibilities. The Association strongly believes that members must fulfill their personal responsibilities to themselves and to their families. Your health and well being, as well as your family's health and well being, should always be front and centre when you make decisions and plan for this new year.



I would like to take this opportunity to provide an initial reminder to all members of a most important event. The Louis Riel Teachers' Association Annual General Assembly is scheduled for Wednesday, April 17th. All worksites were asked to not schedule events for this particular day so that all members would be able to attend. The Association requests that each member highlight the AGA on his/her calendar and attend this one meeting. The strength of our Association continues to be the active involvement of the membership!

The LRTA AGA is indeed a very important day of the year for our collective. However, on a day to day basis, all members (administrators, clinicians, coordinators, substitutes and teachers) can demonstrate commitment to the collective by ensuring that the articles of the Collective Agreement are honoured. Member rights and working conditions must be protected and it is the responsibility of every member to safeguard these rights and conditions.

With the start of a new year, it is important to once again remind members that the Association exists to serve you. As a member of LRTA, please remember that whenever the need arises, we should be your first call (929-5782). From general enquiries to issues surrounding bargaining to questions about PPDF, contact the LRTA office by phone or email. Ensure that any sensitive inquiries/questions are made from a personal email account on a personal computer. All matters will be dealt with in confidence. As well, members can call the Manitoba Teachers' Society (888-7961) and request Staff Officer assistance. →



...PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from page 1)

While some things evolve with time, some things do not. The Louis Riel Teachers' Association exists to support local Association activities, to explain to members changes that affect them, to develop networks with other teacher Associations, to liaise with the Division and to nurture a sustainable local organization. However, the major responsibility of the Association is, and always will be, to advocate teacher concerns and to help our members resolve issues.

The LRTA completed a very busy year of working on behalf of members and we look forward to building upon our member advocacy in 2013. I wish each of you the very best in the year to come.

Take care of yourself and take care of each other.

Frank Restall

President, Louis Riel Teachers' Association



TECHNOLOGY: the silent virus in teacher workload

Barry Wittevrongel

Teachers need a respite from divisional technological initiatives. In my experience, none of these technological initiatives have made any part of being a teacher easier. These have placed additional demands and expectations on each and every one of us with no consideration given for time to do it in. This "creeping barrage" has placed a psychological burden on our minds and souls. A "truce" is required to give us time to replenish our energies, train during school designated time and become comfortable with current divisional technology before introducing anything new.



For a list of all the ways technology has failed to improve the quality of life, please press three.

~Alice Kahn

As LRTA President, Frank Restall, stated in the November Rielity Check, let's put "People First" as "people, in whatever stakeholder group they belong, are essential to public education." If this is true, why is it that technology trumps people needs? Albert Einstein eloquently stated that, "It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity." →



...TECHNOLOGY (continued from page 2)

In the Louis Riel Teachers' Association Wellness Project Report respondents identified the causes of negative workplace stress. "In the aggregate, the most common causes of stress were generally related to workload, working with high needs students, and new initiatives. Too much work and not enough time (75.7%) was identified as the most important factor to negative workplace stress while too many new initiatives was identified by 47.3% of the respondents. In responding to work and life wellness issues of concern, 56.2% of respondents identified workplace stress as a serious or moderate concern."

It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being.

~John Stuart Mill

Why the use of virus in the title? The Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary defines a virus as "something that poisons the mind or soul." The term virus appropriately describes the pervasiveness and insidiousness of how technology has incrementally crept into our work lives. At times it has been overwhelming. In the case of the new provincial report card, many members indicated the extraordinary hours (more than 100) that it took to complete the task. Not long ago, when high schools implemented their new reporting system many of the same concerns arose. Unfortunately, technological change appears to have no boundaries and continues to "poison" our work/life balance.

Once upon a time we were just plain people. But that was before we began having relationships with mechanical systems. Get involved with a machine and sooner or later you are reduced to a factor.

~Ellen Goodman, "The Human Factor,"
The Washington Post, January 1987

The K – 8 Report Card clearly impacted Association members in a negative way and went far beyond what is a reasonable work/life balance. What exacerbated the problem and what is most concerning is that the K – 8 reporting program introduced by the Division was a prototype and a work in progress. K – 8 teachers were the "crash test dummies" used to produce a finished product, under deadlines, using unpiloted software, with many landmines that cost unprecedented hours of additional work. Somehow, most teachers survived, but what K - 8 teachers lost is irretrievable.

What has the Division gained? More skepticism and less confidence in technological initiatives, higher stress levels in members, greater chance of burnout and lower staff morale. What can be learned by the Division? Do not subject members to untested computer software. If the task at hand creates additional work, what area of workload will be reduced? How and when will adequate training occur? Training should be done by the creators of the software as in most other businesses. One can only hope that the Division will take the time to consider how any new technologies will be introduced and make a serious attempt to answer the previous concerns. Further erosion of a teacher's work/life balance will have an intolerable impact. Increased workload, technological change and implementation, and teacher burnout will remain a priority of our Association.

The greatest task before civilization at present is to make machines what they ought to be, the slaves, instead of the masters of men.

~Havelock Ellis



LRTA CHILDREN'S LIBRARY PROJECT

Public Relations – Sean Fitzmaurice



The LRTA Children's Library at the ACF Pediatrics Unit of the St. Boniface Hospital.

Every year, the Louis Riel Teachers' Association takes part in various charitable initiatives as a means of giving back to our community and also to raise the profile of educators. For 2012, we undertook the huge project of establishing a Children's Library at the ACF Pediatrics Unit of the St. Boniface Hospital. The LRTA Public Relations Committee was so very pleased to be able to offer this library to the hospital on behalf of our 1100 teachers, and everyone at the hospital was so very appreciative of this generous gift.

We decided to embark on this particular project for many reasons. We wanted to work on a project that would reach a wide and diverse audience. The ACF Pediatrics Unit sees many thousands of patients each year, many of whom are right from our local St. Vital, St. Boniface, and Norwood communities. We also wanted to do something that would directly benefit children and we knew a fresh new children's library would be a welcome addition for the hospital. Most importantly, as teachers, we are always working to promote literacy for everyone, especially children, and one great way of accomplishing this is by stocking shelf upon shelf with quality books that seek to excite, educate, and entertain!

For many children, a visit to the doctor's office can be a somewhat stressful experience. One of our hopes with this project was to help children relax while they wait to see the doctor by getting caught up in the excitement and intrigue which reading offers. Great books combined with a child's vivid imagination and natural curiosity could certainly help ease any tension patients may feel while waiting to see the doctor.

With input from fellow educators and some of our very own students, we carefully selected a huge variety of books for the library; 500 books in fact! Our committee had so much fun choosing all the wonderful books for this library. We want to thank Chapters St. Vital for all their help in getting this huge order processed.



We put LRTA donation labels in each book.



Our PR Committee poses with all 500 books. That's a lot of books!!!

With books for toddlers to teenagers, books in English and in French, books with fun facts and familiar characters, there is sure to be something for everyone.

The Louis Riel Teachers' Association gratefully acknowledges the support of the Manitoba Teachers' Society who provided us with a grant towards this project. The funds from MTS paired with funds from our own association, including a donation from one of our own executive members, allowed us to complete this project. We also want to thank all the →



...LRTA CHILDREN'S LIBRARY PROJECT (continued from page 4)

people at the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation who worked with us to help us realize this project. The LRTA executive and all of our members have been so supportive of this whole endeavour, and everyone is so excited that we were able to provide these wonderful books to this wonderful facility.

The St. Boniface Hospital Foundation hosted a dedication event on December 20, 2012. The event was attended by several representatives of the hospital, the Foundation, MTS, and of course LRTA. Some presentations were made, photos were taken, and there was even some media coverage. The media coverage, coordinated by the hospital foundation, will continue through the new year, so keep an eye open for more LRTA Children's Library articles. Ray Job from the MTS also covered the event and has posted information about the donation to the MTS Facebook page as well as Twitter. The event will also appear on the LRTA page, the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation page, in the Foundation newsletter, and various local print and television media.



*The LRTA Public Relations Committee:
Wendy Narozniak, Sean Fitzmaurice, and Lynne Berard.*



*Highlighting just a few of
the books in our library!*

As chairperson of the LRTA Public Relations Committee, it's also my pleasure to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of our committee members: **Wendy Narozniak** and **Lynne Berard**, who gave selflessly of their time and energy in order to make this vision a reality. I would also be remiss without mentioning the contributions of another committee member, Kim Sadler-Davis, who worked with us in the beginning stages of this project. It has been such a pleasure working with everyone on this most worthwhile cause. We know all the families who come through the ACF Pediatrics Unit at the St. Boniface Hospital will enjoy the books so proudly donated by the Louis Riel Teachers' Association.

**The LRTA is
here for you**

Louis Riel Teachers' Association
22 Varennes Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2M 0N1
Phone: (204) 929-LRTA (5782)
Fax: (204) 929-5780
www.lrta.ca

Answers to quiz on page 6

1 – 1947, 2 – 1990's, 3 – 1980, 4 – 1967, 5 – 1973, 6 – 2000, 7 – 1994, 8 – 1974, 9 – 1963, 10 – 1995, Bonus – 26 or 33%



FEBRUARY 2013 MTS WORKLOAD SURVEY

All MTS members, regardless of their position in schools, are highly encouraged to fill out their workload survey which will be mailed out to schools during the month of February 2013. The purpose of the survey is to provide objective data collected from members like yourself to help inform your Association's collective bargaining committee about your workload pressures (i.e., time, class or case size, exceptional students, and stressors). This data is used by your local teachers' Association in two ways. It provides information which assists:

- (1) Collective bargaining by providing data which is useful in preparation of your Association's opening negotiations package (note: Associations will generally start negotiations in the Fall of 2014); and
- (2) In the event of a bargaining impasse, this information can be used at interest arbitration.

The bottom line is that this information is used to help improve your collective agreement and obtaining as many responses as possible from your Association is extremely important to ensure reliable results.

The survey is paper based and should take about 15 minutes of your time to complete. The surveys are completed anonymously as your Association only requires aggregate research data. If you have further questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to call your Association President for clarification or additional information.

MTS and your local Association thank you in advance for participation in this very important activity!

QUIZ: Top Ten Events in MTS Women's History

In what year/decade did these events occur?

- 1 – Married women allowed to teach in Winnipeg School Division
 - 2 – First female President of the MTS
 - 3 – First female General Secretary of the MTS
 - 4 – Full pay equity is achieved
 - 5 – First maternity leave provisions
 - 6 – First top-up provisions
 - 7 – Sick leave can be used in connection with being pregnant/giving birth
 - 8 – Women attain insurance benefits equal to men
 - 9 – Women attain pension benefits equal to men
 - 10 – Teachers allowed to buy maternity leaves as pensionable service
- Bonus – Out of the 79 MTS presidents who have already served, how many of them were women?

...for answers, see the bottom of Page 5...