

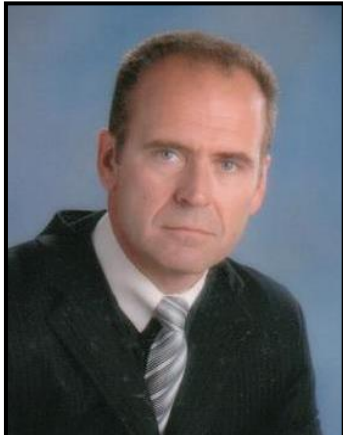


RIELITYCHECK

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

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE President – Frank Restall

BONNE ET HEUREUSE ANNÉE HAPPY NEW YEAR

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.

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. Please remember, that "consulting with the Society or the president of the member's local association" is not a contravention of the MTS Code of Professional Practice. In actual fact, consulting with your president is your right!

The MTS Code of Professional Practice establishes the required standards of conduct for all members. Every member's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of the Code.

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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.**

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President's message:

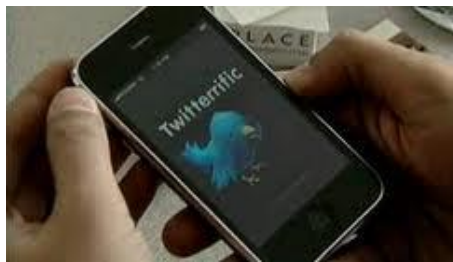
The Code is not a hindrance in our careers as educators but rather helps and supports us! **By following the Code, all members will conduct themselves with dignity, integrity and respect thereby ensuring that all members are treated with the same.** The Code must be at the forefront of all of our professional work and all of our dealings with others.

As members, we must be acutely aware of our professional reputations. The Code of Professional Practice does much to protect us but we must also be vigilant in ensuring that our professional reputations are sterling. Amongst the public, **teachers are held to a higher standard than others so extra caution must be exercised by teachers to ensure that one's professional reputation remains untarnished.** This is especially true when it comes to online activities.

Members should be constantly monitoring their online reputations and not post pictures or materials that could sully their reputation. As well, members must be careful about the posts of others.



Your likeness/image is your property and therefore your property to control. **Be certain that anything posted online cannot depict you in a negative fashion.** Photos, comments, Facebook accounts, Twitter, etc. can be viewed by employers, colleagues, parents, students, community members and the like. Once posted, the impact can be felt forever. "It seemed like a good idea at the time" is indeed, a very sad refrain.



At the start of 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 16th.** 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.**

While some things evolve with time, some things do not. The Louis Riel Teachers' Association exists to bargain collectively for members, 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 member 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 2014. 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

One of the technological changes

that we have seen in recent years, and there have been many of them, is Twitter. Twitter is an excellent tool for getting your message out, whatever it might be. **We are seeing more and more colleagues Tweet about everything from the latest news in their school, to developments in education, to conferences that they have attended, to their views on PISA testing. But as with every new technology, we have to be certain that we are utilizing it while respecting at all times the MTS Code of Professional Practice.**



I do not have a Twitter account, so I run the risk of being called a Luddite, but I often read what others write and look at what others post on their Twitter accounts. If I can read the Tweets, countless others can as well. We have to be cognizant that the audience for these Tweets may be colleagues, students, superintendents, school trustees, parents and other citizens. Because of this, we need to exercise professionalism in what is said and the images that are posted.

A good reference point is the MTS Code of

Professional Practice. This Code was written well before Twitter, but it is easily applicable to Twitter. As I have said, I do not have a Twitter account, but I am an historical re-enactor. What on earth could the two possibly have in common? While in the uniform of an 1812 British soldier, countless strangers ask to take my photograph. I have always said “Yes”, and my picture is possibly in hundreds of scrapbooks, and perhaps Twitter accounts as well. I am fine with that, because in giving my consent to these strangers, I have accepted that I have little control over where the photos will go, and I know that I am probably doing something to further a hobby that I love and enjoy. In our workplaces, all of our actions should be guided by the Code, the fourth point of which begins with; *“A Member’s conduct is characterised by consideration and good faith.”* **Before you take a photo of a colleague, for whatever purpose and in whatever circumstance, ask permission. That photo now has the potential to wind up on public display in a Twitter account, or elsewhere on the web.** If perfect strangers are capable of asking permission of me, than as colleagues, it should be a “no brainer” to ask for permission which reflects consideration and good faith between colleagues. Furthermore, **if your intent is to post that photo on your Twitter account (or use it for some other purpose), that needs**



to be clearly stated when asking permission to take the photo.

From an employer/employee point

of view, it is understood that our photos are taken along with photos of students in our schools for the purposes of identification badges and yearbooks/class photos. However, using these photos for other purposes without consent is not permitted under privacy legislation, nor is the taking additional photos without consent permitted.

I do not believe that I need to speak

of using photos of students without the consent of their parents or guardians, because the School Division is very clear regarding that. For that matter, any parent who has ever tried to take a picture of his or her child at a City of Winnipeg facility knows just how well trained our CUPE brethren, who work in those facilities, are with respect to privacy legislation.

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If you have found a photo of yourself on a colleague's Twitter account (or elsewhere),

you should speak privately to that colleague and mutually agree that he/she posted the photo without permission and will remove it without comment. If you are pleased with the photo, but had never given consent for its use, you should raise that point privately with your colleague, along the lines of, "I don't have a concern, but the next time, I'd appreciate knowing..."

If you have just realized that you have posted photos of colleagues without their permission, for whatever reason or circumstance, it would show a great deal of professional courtesy to privately admit your error to your colleague and determine whether or not the photo can remain where it is.



We know as professionals that the words "I'm sorry" mean tremendously more to each other than to say, "What's your problem with it?" or "What's the big deal?" The end result could be lasting animosity as opposed to a lasting respect and perhaps friendship.

The Association is not opposed to technology, but wants to remind all members how the Code of Professional Practice applies to all of our dealings. The Association wishes to protect and respect the rights of all LRTA members.

Code of Professional Practice - Recent Changes Collective Bargaining – James Bedford

In December, the Provincial Government

passed amendments to the MTS Act to bring it in line with resolutions passed by the MTS Provincial Council in May 2012.

These changes affect the penalties for Members who are found to be in violation of the Code. Previously, only two options were available for violations of the Code. They were a letter of reprimand/censure or suspension of a Member's Teaching Certificate. Obviously, the latter option was only exercised in the most egregious of circumstances. Many Members felt that a letter served of little use to discourage unprofessional conduct.

The changes now include a clearly defined list of penalties. They are:

- a) admonishment;
- b) censure;

- c) recommend to the minister responsible for education that the Member's certificate be suspended or revoked;
- d) terminate the person's membership in the Society;
- e) suspend the person's membership in the Society with or without conditions;
- f) order the Member to pay a fine in an amount not exceeding \$2000 to the Minister of Finance for the Province of Manitoba;
- g) order the Member to pay all or part of the costs incurred by the Society in connection with any investigation or proceedings relating to the matter in respect of which the Member was found guilty, up to a maximum of

\$5000 for costs incurred in investigating and proceeding to the hearing, and/or \$500 for each one-half day of hearing.

Because these penalties

are part of the MTS Act, they are enforced through the Province of Manitoba. Loss of membership in MTS does not release the member from paying local or provincial dues, as the Labour Relations Act requires fees to be paid, but redirect those monies to a charity of the union's choice. Loss of membership could also result in loss of representation and participation in benefit plans.

The Code of Professional Practice

can be found in numerous locations; your worksite, the MTS webpage (www.mbteach.org) and in this month's Rielity Check. Questions regarding the application of the Code may be directed to the LRTA Office.

MTS CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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The Code of Professional Practice establishes the required standards of conduct for all members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. A teacher's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of the Code.¹

1. A member's first professional responsibility is to her or his students.
2. A member acts with integrity and diligence in carrying out professional responsibilities.
3. A member avoids involvement in a conflict of interest, recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological or other advantage.
4. A member's conduct is characterized by consideration and good faith. She or he speaks and acts with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights.
5. A member respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give the information only to authorized personnel or agencies directly concerned with the individual student's welfare.
6. A member first directs any criticism of the professional activity and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private. Only after informing the colleague of the intent to do so, the complainant may direct in confidence the criticism to appropriate officials through the proper channels of communication. A member shall not be considered in contravention of this section in the following circumstances:
 - a) consulting with the Society or the president of the member's local association;
 - b) taking any action that is allowed or mandated by legislation;
 - c) where the member is acting in good faith and without malice in the discharge of the legitimate duties of his or her appointed or elected position.
7. A member does not bypass immediate authority to reach higher authority without first exhausting the proper channels of communication.
8. A member makes an ongoing effort to improve professionally.
9. A member adheres to collective agreements negotiated by the professional organization.
10. A member or group of members makes only authorized representations to outside bodies on behalf of the Society or its local associations. Without the express permission of the Society, no member(s) conferring with outside bodies may explicitly or implicitly claim that they represent the Society or its local associations.

¹Violations of the Code shall be addressed through application of the Bylaws. Revised 2012

Technologies Present Challenges for Manitoba Teachers

MTS Assistant General Secretary and former Staff Officer, Teacher Welfare Department - Bobbi Éthier



The Manitoba Teachers' Society has been

working with an increasing number of members who have found themselves in difficulty due to their uses of technology. The Society anticipates an influx of these cases until its membership becomes more aware of the ramifications of its actions.

Blogging is almost a norm among teachers.

Many of their humorous blogs or online diaries have provided great fodder for staffroom kibitzing. Indeed, reading a blog about some else's struggles in teaching calculus or the interpretation of Shakespeare's soliloquies has been reaffirming to those in the trenches. However, like all good things, they have a dangerous side too as one Manitoba teacher found out.

This teacher was geographically isolated

and maintained a blog as a means of survival in a very small and closed community. The intended audience was the teacher's friends and family in Winnipeg, but, as with everything on the web, it was accessible to anybody.

When the blog was discovered by the students, the teacher's teaching community was not amused to see the personal anecdotes, satirical comments, and names of students and colleagues included in the blog. Given that there were over 400 entries in its entirety, the community, school, colleagues, students and their families could easily be identified. The employing Division felt that the teacher's musings on the blog were akin to being disloyal to the employer, a breach of the MTS Code of Professional Practice and a possible breach of both the Personal Health Information Act and the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act. The teacher never dreamed in a million years that this would be the outcome of a personal online diary.



Facebook, the social networking site that enables people with common interests, associations, and affiliations to network with one another through the site,

has proven to be another tool that can backfire. Originally designed for Harvard University students to connect with one another, the site has now expanded to the point where it is used by political parties, magazines, companies, universities, etc. as a place to promote their agendas. Since its creation, it has morphed into the largest free social networking site with over 500 million registered members' worldwide.

Two Manitoba cases have challenged the

Society to examine the negative utilization of Facebook. One of our members was subjected to a great deal of ridicule on a Facebook site that required people who were participating in the online dialogue to sign in. The conversation that ensued about this teacher criticized his clothing, his interests, and alleged that he was engaged in very serious illegal behaviour. The Division and the Society were able to take swift and severe action against these irresponsible individuals because we knew their names and who they were from their Facebook profiles.

Many teachers have created their own Facebook profiles and are using it effectively to communicate with their students and community.

Regrettably one teacher was astounded when her Facebook profile was poorly received by her employer (NOTE: Many employers now regularly peruse social networking sites). When creating the profile, you are asked to answer the following questions: relationship status, looking for ____, religious views, and political views.

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There is also a means of including photos and postings on a virtual wall. The employer was upset that the teacher had generously filled out all kinds of details answering the profile questions and then elaborated further in the postings.

The teacher had also uploaded photos of herself with many students, unfortunately without their permission and the Division felt that it reflected poorly on them and on the teacher.

Twitter is another great way to

communicate and connect with student and parents but can offer another mechanism for a faux pas. The question is can a teacher get in difficulty in 140 characters or less? The answer is absolutely!!!



If you don't believe it just google "teacher tweets" and you will see what can happen. Luckily to date we have not had such a situation in Manitoba. So as a precaution when tweeting remember that not every thought nor moment needs to be communicated – take that second look and see if there is value to you, to your career, to your teaching. Remember that pictures and identifying students and colleagues without permission is not permissible.

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and blogging have completely changed our

communication, mostly in a positive way. The Society urges caution when using these seemingly private tools. **The absolute rule to live by is that you would be comfortable to have your Facebook and blog activities appear on the front page of the newspaper.** If you are not, then changes need to be made before it becomes an issue.



LRTA Employee Benefits Seminar

Collective Bargaining – James Bedford

January 29, 2014

4:00 – 5:15 p.m.

Vic Wyatt House

In response to a number of enquiries regarding employee benefit plans, LRTA is hosting a seminar for all interested LRTA members. **The seminar will provide an overview of benefits covered under all group benefit plans and information on the governance of the plans.** Please contact the LRTA Office at 204 929-LRTA or email James Bedford at cblrta@shaw.ca if you are



ANNOUNCEMENTS & CELEBRATIONS!

Congratulations to Dallas Henson, from Victor Wyatt School, and her husband Brian, on the birth of a beautiful baby girl. Hilary May Henson was born on the 26th of December, 2013. She weighed 7 pounds, 6.5 ounces and measured 18 inches long. Mom and baby are doing well.

Do you have any special announcements to share? Know of any coworkers who have recently married or had a baby? Please send the good news to Shannon Gibson at Shansygg@me.com

Reminders: If you have recently changed your personal information such as name and or address, please contact the LRTA office at 204-929-5782 and have them update your information.

LRTA Calendar 2013 – 2014

September

Tuesday, 3 rd	Opening Day
Wednesday, 11 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 18 th	LRTA Council Meeting
Wednesday, 25 th	LRTA New Member Celebration
Friday, 27 th	LRTA Terry Fox Torchlight Run

October

Friday, 4 th	LRTA Executive Retreat
Wednesday, 16 th	LRTA Council Meeting
Friday, 25 th	SAGE
Wednesday, 30 th	Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar

November

Wednesday, 6 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 20 th	LRTA Council Meeting

December

Wednesday, 4 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 18 th	LRTA Council Meeting
Monday, 23 rd through Friday, January 3 rd	Winter Break

January

Wednesday, 8 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 15 th	LRTA Council Meeting

February

Wednesday, 5 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 12 th	Pre-Retirement Seminar
Wednesday, 19 th	LRTA Council Meeting

March

Monday, 3 rd through Friday, March 7 th	Operation Donation
Wednesday, 5 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 19 th	LRTA Council Meeting
Monday, 31 st through Friday, April 4 th	Spring Break

April

Tuesday, 8 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 9 th	LRTA Council Meeting
Wednesday, 16 th	LRTA Annual General Assembly - ATC
Wednesday, 23 rd	Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar
Wednesday, 30 th	LRTA Appreciation Dinner - ATC

May

Wednesday, 7 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 14 th	LRTA AGM Binder Meeting
Wednesday, 21 st	LRTA Council Meeting
Wednesday, 21 st through Saturday, 24 th	MTS AGM

June

Wednesday, 4 th	LRTA Executive Meeting
Wednesday, 11 th	LRTA Retirement Reception
Wednesday, 18 th	LRTA Council Meeting

Subject to change.



LRTA

LOUIS RIEL
TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION