



February/March 2018

RETTA *Record*

Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear

Now that we are well into 2018, I've been reflecting upon the achievements of the past year as we prepare to embark upon the challenges ahead.

As is the case every year, 2017 once again saw the Manitoba Teachers' Society being front and center in representing teachers and public education. However, 2017 was also a year that presented some new challenges that were suddenly thrust upon teachers and the system of public education. A few of these challenges included:

- Early in 2017, the provincial government announced the smallest increase to the province's share of public school funding since the 1990's;
- March of 2017 witnessed the provincial government dropping the class size provisions for K - Grade 3;
- In the Spring, the provincial government passed (but did not proclaim) Bill 28 to bypass collective bargaining on compensation issues and to freeze and limit teachers' salaries and benefits for four years;
- This past Fall, the provincial government implemented cuts to French-language services.

Your Society was very vocal in opposing these and other challenges, and in the case of Bill 28, MTS has joined with other labour groups to oppose, through the court system, the unconstitutional nature of Bill 28.

Inside this issue

President's Message	1
Vice-President's Message	3
PPDF Reports	4
Young Humanitarian Awards	5
MTS Tips for writing letters to your MLA	7
PD at MTS	8
Dates to Remember	8

Continued on pg. 2

Educator Assistance Program

Did you know that the Manitoba Teachers' Society has an Educator Assistance Program, which offers free individual or relationship counselling in English and French?

This is in order to:

- Provide confidential and voluntary professional counselling and referral services for MTS members.
- Provide help and intervention at an early stage of difficulty.
- Enhance the health of members.

Visit mbteach.org or contact the following:

Winnipeg:

Leanne Lewadniuk
EAP Administrative Assistant
llewadniuk@mbteach.org
Phone: 1-800-378-8811

Brandon:

Arlana Anderson
EAP Administrative Assistant
aanderson@mbteach.org
Phone: 1-800-555-9336

For the River East Transcona Teachers' Association, 2017 was a very busy year that was marked by local achievements. For example:

- The RETTA Council and Executive have a full complement of members representing and working on behalf of colleagues in all worksites. In addition to Council and Executive, RETTA members have volunteered their time to serve on our many committees. The strength of our Local has always been the active involvement of members.
- The RETTA Bargaining Committee deserves special mention. This committee has been working industriously for the last couple of years in preparation for the upcoming round of negotiations this Spring.
- As always, RETTA is proud to be a leader at the provincial level and many RETTA members serve on a variety of MTS Standing Committees, in elected and appointed positions. At the MTS AGM, RETTA delegates are active participants and mentors.

The primary responsibility of the River East Transcona Teachers' Association will always be to serve members. Your Local is here to serve you, support you and to advocate on your behalf.

2017 was a very busy year marked with many challenges, achievements and successes. With what has been announced by this government already this year, we know that there are challenges ahead.

The government has announced what constitutes a 1.5% reduction in education spending when inflation is taken into consideration. They have also indicated their desire to begin the legislative process of moving to a provincial bargaining model. We have many unanswered questions at this point and there will be a great deal to watch as the year continues. Now, more than ever, it is important that we be connected and in touch with MTS. If you have not yet signed up for MyProfile, please do.

The power of collective action brings about positive change and the 15,000 MTS members need to be involved in order that our voice is strong, that our voice resonates and that our voice is heard. We have a great responsibility as the vanguard of public education and each of us must fulfill that responsibility.

You have read just a bit of what your Society and Local have done for you last year.

For 2018, what are you going to do for your Society and Local?

Take care of yourself and take care of each other.

Tim Breen
President, River East Transcona Teachers' Association



Vice President's Message

As Tim and I tour around and visit the RETTA members in our schools, there seems to be a common theme we are coming across. This theme can be summed up in a few words: workload, work/life balance, burnout, stress.

I don't need to get into all the reasons why, but we all know the job can be demanding and take its toll on teachers. Below are a few of my thoughts that have occurred to me over the last several months of listening to teachers as well as my own years of teaching experience. These are just ideas but please consider them:

1. **Keep your work email separate from your personal email.** It's extremely difficult to keep a work/home balance when these crossover. (You really shouldn't be using your work email for personal matters anyway.)
2. **Don't have your work emails sent to your phone.** You are under no professional obligation to answer work-related emails on your personal time. That's your time - time to shut work off for a few hours. If someone from the school absolutely needs to get ahold of you, they will call. (Not to mention that you don't want sensitive information on your personal phone in case your device is lost.)
3. **If you feel the need to check your work emails in the evening, set a specific time to do it.** For me, when I was in the classroom I made a point of not checking my work emails in the evening. That said, I did login to my email every Sunday evening so that I wouldn't have any surprises Monday morning. I'm not saying this one is a good idea for everyone - it did cause some sleepless Sunday nights - but often it put my mind at ease.
4. **Take your personal days.** This is a hard-fought-for benefit that we all have earned. Take the days, take care of yourself. No explanation needed.
5. **If you aren't feeling well enough to work, don't.** Plain and simple, you aren't doing anyone, you or your students, any favours by showing up to work while sick. I know that preparing for a sub is difficult. As a music specialist, believe me, I get it. However, the students will survive your absence. I'm sure most of you already have a "sub binder" full of activities. Use it, and trust our substitute members.
6. **Take your duty-free lunch hour.** You know you need that time to recharge, and this is another one of those hard-fought-for benefits that you are entitled to. You work long enough hours, take your lunch break. Sit with your colleagues, sit alone in your quiet room, go for a walk around the block, whatever you need to do. It will make you a better teacher.
7. **Check out the MTS Balance program.** There is great information on the website as well as in their publication that is sent to you regularly. It's full of strategies for self-care, vocal hygiene, healthy recipes, and general things to make your home and work life more pleasurable.

Remember, we are here at the RETTA office for you.
If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call us.

Chris Darazsi
Vice-President



RETTA Humanitarian Fund: Update

RETTA awards up to \$100 per school, per year, to support student initiated humanitarian projects that demonstrate compassion, self-sacrifice, leadership and creativity in advancing and promoting human welfare. Visit our library at www.retta.ca for details.

Check out the some of the projects who have been granted the RETTA Humanitarian Fund so far this year:

Salisbury Morse Place

The students held dog lunch fundraisers for Free the Children and Kiwanis' Project Eliminate.

Bird's Hill School

Their Support People In Need (SPIN) Club made ornaments to sell at their Christmas Concert to help support education initiatives in Nicaragua.

Sun Valley School

A grade 5 class is organizing a Read-a-Thon to raise money for the OSU Children's Library Fund that builds libraries in Africa.

PPDF Report: TCEA Conference

Thank you for enabling me to go to the TCEA Conference in Austin, Texas this February. I had heard about the conference through the Vice Principal at our school, and his recommendation was enough for me to jump at the opportunity. It helped that for the past three years, my personal growth plan has involved the use of technology in both my school and in my personal life.

This conference certainly forwarded that cause. I attended a wide range of sessions; ones that looked at the big picture (the division), where they dealt with the logistics of rolling out devices to a massive school division-one per person; ones that focused on information I would use myself-Google 360.

Most importantly there were sessions that would give me information I could pass on to the teachers in my school to further enhance the use of technology as a learning tool in the classroom. *The Viral Effect: Storytelling in the YouTube Generation* presented by Steve Denbo was one of the best and most useful sessions I have attended in years. I was standing outside the presentation room, when I saw a line start to form. I stood there without looking around, but when I did, I saw that the line-up snaked around the entire corridor. After hearing the presentation I could see why, Denbo was both informative and entertaining. He was incredibly energetic trying to get through all he had to offer. Alas he eventually ran out of time, though he did provide links to his presentation (and indeed others he did at the conference. Unfortunately, there were people who didn't get a chance to even enter the room as it was so crowded.)

TCEA is a conference worth attending, and I thank you again for the opportunity to attend.

Kieran Hunter
Valley Gardens Middle School

PPDF Report: Ron Clark Academy

The Ron Clark Academy is a nonprofit middle school in Atlanta that promotes innovation and engages its students through energetic teaching balanced with a strict code of discipline. The school has received both national and international recognition for their success in promoting academic rigor, passion, creativity, and increased student engagement in the classroom.

The RCA experience is not one you can easily explain. It must be experienced.

These are some highlights from my visit:

- 1) Incorporate your own passions and interests into the classroom and they will serve you well. Co-founders, Ron Clark and Kim Bearden did a phenomenal job of hiring educators who "do their thing" in their own rooms and make it count. Each teacher taps into their skills, interests and passion to bring excellence and authenticity to their lessons.
- 2) Consistency in your classroom and across school staff is key to successful implementation of procedures and expectations. The high expectations and rituals at RCA are felt in every corner of their school. The students thrive on knowing (and then executing) what is expected of them. Every teacher supports this culture by their own consistency and support in their rooms and into the hallways beyond. Even though individual teachers had their particular teaching style, they followed through on the Essential 55 rules that are the foundation of the school.
- 3) If you build a strong enough relationship with students, you create a safe environment for constructive criticism. Their kids feel loved, so when reprimanded or corrected, they don't feel crushed. These students can accept it with grace and move forward to better themselves.
- 4) Asking for help is not a weakness. It's a strength and when executed well, great things can appear in a classroom or school. The power comes from everyone meeting in the middle with their gifts and talents.
- 5) Children need to move and "feel" the academic content. RCA teachers explore every inch of classroom space and allow students to construct their own learning through song, chants, dancing and speaking. It was unbelievable to watch such confident middle school students stand on the desks and own the floor when they had something to say.
- 6) The design of an environment matters and can shape a school's culture. Each RCA classroom reflected the interests of its teacher. The creativity and innovation put into each room around a content area was incredible. It's all done to enhance engagement and it works.

Thank you RETTA and the Personal Professional Development Fund. I recommend the following books written by *Ron Clark: The Essential 55*, as well as *Move Your Bus- An Extraordinary New Approach to Accelerating Success in Work and Life*.

Mario Beachamp
Sun Valley School

THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

LETTER WRITING TIPS AND MORE



The Manitoba Teachers' Society

Frame your message. Points to include:

Bill 28 - The Public Services Sustainability Act

- This bill is unconstitutional as it undermines the process of meaningful, good faith bargaining. This is an infringement on collective bargaining rights that are protected in the Charter.
- Assuming inflation continues to increase by a rate of two per cent, the net effect of this loss to purchasing power will be compounded year-over-year to the tune of 6.2 per cent at the end of the legislated wage pause. For an average teacher across this province, this translates to approximately a \$15,464 loss to every single teacher.

Class Size

- As a teacher with more than 30 years experience, I can attest to the fact that smaller class sizes improve outcomes, reduce distraction and lead to more engaged students.
- Children learn better when they receive more personal attention. One on one time is key to helping identify strength and weakness in my students. (give an example wherever possible, without naming students)

BEF

- A fully functioning BEF is essential to the quality of French-language education that Manitoba educators, like me, and schools provide to students.
- French language education is not a translation of the English curriculum, and it is unique and representative of the proud history of Franco-Manitobans.
- French language programming has represented the fastest growing segment of Manitoba's K-12 education system with enrolment up nearly 40 per cent. All indicators point to the need for more investment to strengthen French-language education, not less.
- I urge you to restore government funding and resources to the Bureau de l'éducation française and to reinstate an assistant to the deputy minister to ensure that French-language education remains a priority.

Guidelines for your drafted letter

1. Use this simple structure.
 - a. Introduce yourself. A simple phrase such as "I have spent the last 20 years teaching at Gillis School" creates a mental image which brings you and your point alive.
 - b. Establish yourself as a constituent when writing to your MLA or MP. "I have lived in your constituency for X number of years."
 - c. Use phrases like
 - i. In my experience...
 - ii. I have seen...
2. Be respectful. They are more likely to listen to your point if it is not accompanied by abuse. This is not an opportunity to vent.
3. Be concise. It's best to write about only one issue at a time. HOWEVER, since all of these issues affect the sustainability and quality of public education, you can write about more than one issue, but keep each issue to one paragraph. Try to keep the letter to one page.
4. Clearly state your point/concern early in the letter. "I am concerned that the government's removal of the cap for K-12 class sizes, the passing of Bill 28...(any other issues) will negatively impact our public education system."
5. Request that a particular action be taken. When writing to a politician, always have a solution to the problem. In this case, "I urge you to rescind Bill 28 and to reinstate the class size cap."
6. Aim for the public interest. Explain why you think your request will benefit the public as a whole, not simply you and your friends.
7. Get the facts right. You do not have to have all of the facts (much less recite them all), but the ones you put in your letter must be correct. Do not let the fact that you are not an expert prevent you from voicing your opinion.
8. Express yourself naturally. Remember that this is your expressing what is on your mind. You do not have to sound like Lincoln or Churchill.
9. Ask for a reply. The best closing sentence is "I look forward to receiving your response". As a rule, letters sent via the mail will receive a response within 30 days.
10. Consider if you should send a copy of the letter to anyone else. If writing to your MLA, consider sending a copy to the Minister of Education, or the Premier.

How to Address a Politician

PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVES

POSITION	Premier
ENVELOPE	The Honourable Brian Pallister Premier of Manitoba
SALUTATION	Dear Premier

POSITION	Minister
ENVELOPE	The Honourable Ian Wishart, MLA Minister of Education
SALUTATION	Dear Minister

POSITION	Member of the Legislative Assembly
ENVELOPE	Mr. Mrs. John/Jane Smith, MLA
SALUTATION	Dear Mr. / Mrs. Smith

River East Transcona Teachers' Association

We are the second largest of 38 teachers' associations in Manitoba. We represent over 1500 teachers who work in the River East Transcona School Division. We have two full time teachers and one full time administrative assistant in our office working on your behalf.

Tim Breen – President
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Chris Darazsi – Vice President
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Janice Bell – Admin. Assistant
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Dates to Remember

March 7	RETTA Maternity Seminar - ERC
March 20	RETTA Council Meeting – KEC
April 12	MTS Young Humanitarian Awards – 7 p.m. MTYP
April 17	RETTA Council Meeting - KEC
April 19	RETTA Trivia Night! - Elmwood Legion
May 15	RETTA Council Meeting - KEC
May 24-26	MTS Provincial Council & Annual General Meeting
June 12	RETTA Council Meeting - KEC



Professional Development at MTS

March 12, 13	Crucial Conversations
March 26, 28	Mental Health First Aid for Adults Who Interact with Youth
April 7	Crucial Conversations 2.0
April 13, 14	Women in Educational Leadership Symposium
April 23, 24	Mental Health First Aid for Adults Who Interact with Youth

See mbteach.org for more information.