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RETTA RECORD

The official newsletter of the River East Transcona Teachers' Association
October 2009

President's Message - Jennifer Schlag

Welcome back! I hope everyone has had a relaxing summer and was able to stay dry.

I've been reflecting over the summer on how well we have all worked together. It seems to me that developing moral support within our organization lies at the very core of stewardship. Stewardship focuses on service and nurturing rather than direction and control, and it addresses the degree of ownership and responsibility each person feels for the success and reputation of our Association, our community and our personal lives. My question for us- present and future leaders- to think about is: if stewardship is best viewed as management by service of others, where can we find evidence of the courage it takes to anticipate the future, to strive for continuous betterment and to take risks? The answer at least in part is found by our actions:

Our Executive has been hard at work planning the 09/10 year and we have some important events that will be taking place. This year will see our request to open negotiations with the Board to renew our collective agreement that is currently in its third year. We are continuing our efforts to educate our members about local and provincial issues that affect us. We can look forward to some great wellness initiatives including our annual Volleyball social, Scrapbooking Club and Poker Tournament. I am proud to be the President of an Association that has been at the forefront of negotiations, has continued to build on positive relationships and is full of strong and capable members. We are the second largest Association in Manitoba and we will continue our progressive initiatives.

Our collective agreement is a written agreement between RETTA and the River East Transcona School



Division. It contains the terms of employment such as salaries and working conditions. Once signed, all members are legally bound by the agreement. This year is particularly exciting as we will enter into negotiations with the Board to renew our Agreement. For the past two years, RETTA has taken great care to establish our members' priorities through several different means including surveys and conversations. However, we still need your active participation! What can you do? As an active member of RETTA, I encourage you to READ your Collective Agreement. Reading and understanding your Collective Agreement is the best way to understand what the terms of the agreement are. If you find that you have questions throughout the year, we welcome a phone call or e-mail anytime. We are also willing to come and see you! RETTA has our RETTA Record newsletter and the RETTA website that will update you on important events and information. Even having that professional dialogue with your colleagues and/or contact rep. will help keep up awareness of current topics and issues.

In the past issue of the "Record", I wrote that the future is always a possibility or series of possibilities, and when it arrives it will always be a function of our individual and collective actions that we take today. As Mahatma Gandhi said, we are "being the change we wish to see"...We are being responsible for creating a future worthy of who we are and what we stand for. I continue to be excited about our future and look forward to working with all of you in the stewardship of our organization.

Please forward questions or comments to jschlag@retta.ca

Viced-President's Message - Jennifer Levesque

Greetings from the RETTA office! I hope that you have had a great start to your school year. It is always an exciting time to meet or reconnect with colleagues, students, and parents. Summer seems so long ago and winter is just around the corner. I have enjoyed settling into my new position as your Vice-President. It has been a whirlwind start to what looks to be a very important year for us. I am excited to be chairing our Collective Bargaining committee as we will be preparing our opening package for negotiations in the new year. I am also co-chairing the Personal Professional Development Fund committee and am envious of all the teachers who have been



approved for some fabulous training opportunities. There is still a bit of money left so get your application in as soon as possible. You can get the application online by visiting the RETTA website at www.retta.ca. I have co-chaired one meeting of the Divisional Workplace, Safety and Health committee. I am happy to report that the division has hired a new workplace, safety and health officer who will be a great resource to the committee. But all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy as they say so take a break from all that marking and get your teams organised for RETTA's annual Volleyball Social at Valley Gardens Middle School on Friday, November 6th. I look forward to meeting you at our upcoming school visits throughout the year.

Please forward questions or comments to jlevesque@retta.ca

SCRAPBOOKING STAMPING

The Wellness Committee is pleased to announce that the Scrapbooking/Stamping Group is back for the 5th year.

There is NO COST to come out to scrapbook on your own.

We will be meeting 4 times this year at Neil Campbell School in the Library from 4pm-8pm. (right through the front doors) Our first night will be Wednesday, Oct. 21st. We will book the other 3 nights as the year goes on.

We have an abundance of supplies such as punches, stamps, sizzix machine, die cuts, ink and much, much more that you are welcome to use at no cost. Please contact Liz Loewen at eloewen@retsd.mb.ca to register as spots are limited. We are located at 845 Golspie Avenue.

As well we will have specialty classes you can sign up for. (There is a cost to do this)

BYO supper

Prepared By
Approved By

Magnolia Designs presents:

*Mini Accordion
Album Class*

Wednesday, October 21, 2009
Neil Campbell School, Library
at 4:00 p.m

Bring a friend and join us for an
afternoon of fun and craftiness
as we make an ADORABLE
Mini Accordion Album perfect for
celebrating a special occasion or
holiday gift-giving.

Cost: \$30
includes album kit, class
fee and snack. Please bring a tape
adhesive (tape runner or gun) and
any additional embellishments you
might want to use.

to register, contact
Kathy Murray
magnoliadesigns@shaw.ca



Leadership in Times of Change

By: Frank Reeves, Retta Executive

Because of the many leadership roles I have in both my school and in our beloved association I chose to attend the COSL Summer Leadership Conference in early July to learn more about being an effective leader. I know, you must be thinking I am crazy! Well, you may have a point. The conference is a week-long endeavor held at Elkhorn Resort. By the way the weather was great! Oh, and golf at Clear Lake in the evening was fantastic! Seriously though, I was very impressed. All of the conference sessions were engaging and pertinent to life in the classroom.

The conference started with a two day session called "Talk About Assessment" led by Damion Cooper. For me this was the highlight of the week. Damion did an excellent job promoting a balanced approach to assessment that promotes learning for all involved while taking into account the increasing demands of accountability. It was very valuable to have the author there to answer questions and explain strategies in person. We discussed everything from the use of classroom rubrics to the big ideas of classroom assessment. If you are interested in Damion's book it is titled Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Learning. I know you will find this resource helpful.

The next day and a half was spent with Dawn Wallin from the University of Manitoba. She spoke on many leadership issues. Perhaps the most important discussion for me was about how leadership influences student learning. If you have ever had the pleasure of listening to Dawn speak you already know the information provided was invaluable for anyone who takes on a leadership role in our schools today.

Lisa Martin and Bobbi-Lynn Geekie then talked about an amazing program called the "Assets" program. There are 40 measurable developmental assets which are positive factors (relationships, experiences, opportunities, and personal qualities) in young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that are important in promoting young people's healthy

development. The gist of this program is that the more assets a young person has the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviours. This program is being used in Park West School Division. The framework encourages the building of positive assets in children. More information can be found at the Search Institute (search-institute.org).

Lastly, Susan Schmidt and Susan Marlatt were Manitoba's 2009 recipients of the TLP's "Canada's Outstanding Principals" awards. These women are award winners for a reason. They have each designed programs that made their schools better places for staff and students. Another aspect of their presentation was to identify qualities and characteristics of successful leaders. These sessions were the topping on a great educational experience. Many of the leadership qualities and characteristics identified during their session I could recognize in my current administrator, many of the teacher leaders I have worked with and in the present and past leaders of the River East Transcona Teacher's Association. This conference was well worth the money and I highly recommend it to any person who takes on the challenges of a leadership role.

I would like to thank Al Schroeder and Jim Beverage for all of their hard work putting together and hosting a great conference. Have a great year everyone.



Project Overseas 2009

By Jennifer Levesque

On July 2nd, 2009 I started an amazing journey. It began in Ottawa where I met the team of 5 other Canadian teachers that I would be traveling with to Ghana, Africa. After a fabulous 3 day in-service at the Canadian Teachers' Federation that focused on team building and inter-cultural effectiveness, we were on our way to Africa.

In the capital city of Accra we met with our Ghanaian co-tutors (and almost met President Barack Obama as our time in Accra coincided with his visit) and prepared our lessons at the teacher resource centre at the headquarters of the Ghanaian National Association of Teachers (GNAT). Here we had access to some computer technology and created handouts for our course participants. I would be sharing my time between 3 different classes - Junior High Math, Junior High Math - Women's Only, and Primary Math. My teammates would be focusing on Senior and Basic Administration, Senior High Math, Senior High English, Junior High French, and Junior High and Primary Science. I was most impressed by the professional knowledge of our skilled co-tutors, many of whom had conducted Project Overseas in-services in previous years. My focus was to deliver lessons that modeled activity-based learning and classroom management techniques through the curricular topics of shape and space, investigation with numbers, and collecting and handling data.

We conducted 3 one week workshops in 3 different locations around the country; Tamale in the Northern Region, Wa in the Upper West Region, and Sunyani in the Brong Ahafo Region. Our first stop was a gruelling 10 hour ride to Tamale. Now I can truly say that the potholes in Winnipeg do not seem that bad! At each location we would begin with an opening ceremony, attend information evenings on unionism and HIV/AIDS education, present information, trivia, songs and dance at Canada Night, conduct gender equity workshops, teach our individual classes, attend a lengthy closing ceremony, and be delightfully entertained by singing, dancing, and drumming at Ghana Night.

Our generous Ghanaian hosts treated us to 2 very special cultural events. The first was a trip to Kakum National Park where we were able to criss-cross the rainforest on a canopy walk of 7 suspended bridges at times 40 metres above the ground. It was a breathtaking experience. The second event was even more spectacular than the first. We were treated to a one night stay at Mole National Park and enjoyed a safari in the morning. We saw many antelopes, bush pigs, birds, crocodiles, monkeys (one that stole my team leader's toast right out of her hand at breakfast), and accidentally stumbled upon a family of 7 elephants in the bush. It was a whirlwind tour of the country and I definitely came home for a rest.

I was excited to be part of a project that builds the capacity of teachers in a developing part of the world. This year we in-serviced almost 600 teachers. Just imagine the ripple effect that will have if every participant shares just one new idea with one colleague! Not to mention the thousands of children whose education will be affected as a result. Ghana is a beautiful country with beautiful people. I hope very much to return one day.

For an application for Project Overseas 2010 please contact Nancy Kerr, Staff Officer at The Manitoba Teachers' Society at 831-3086. Deadline for receipt of applications is Friday, October 30, 2009.



Making a human pie graph with my primary math participants in Wa, Ghana.

Conflict Resolution Skills - Fixing Problems with Integrity, Equity & for the Long Term

By Roland Stankevicius

One of the many good things about personal professional development is the opportunity to define personal needs for training or education. I have had the opportunity to pursue excellent personal "pd" in the area of conflict resolution through the Skills Resolution Centre (SRC) a division of Mediations Services Winnipeg located at 302 – 1200 Portage Avenue (www.mediationserviceswpg.ca). The SRC program is an in-depth approach to problem-solving that teaches skills and approaches that are grounded in integrity, equity and long-term solutions. The instruction is based on practical workplace and personnel scenarios that are presented by a well trained and knowledgeable staff. Courses are offered in a two day package that build from a Core Skills Program of four courses and then specializes in further modules for developing Leadership Skills or Mediation Skills. Courses are offered during the day during the work week and their structure, relevance and content are excellent as part of teacher's Professional Growth Plan or for your own personal professional development.

“Research tell us that conflict and workplace stress negatively affect 55% of working Canadians.”

Conflict is part of the human condition. Conflict is universal. The bad news is that research tell us that conflict and workplace stress negatively affect 55% of working Canadians. The impact of negative stress on personal wellness, absenteeism and morale at the work and at home is probably staggering. There is a need to invest in developing conflict resolution skills, as an important step forward, to make conflict events and problem-solving less confrontational, and more manageable. Probably the most serious issue in conflict is the aspect of human anger and aggression. Conflict can bring out intense and sometimes alarming emotions. How should you best deal with aggression and antagonism? Strategies for recognizing and then managing our own anger are important core conflict resolution skills.

The skills training in conflict resolution can transform conflict into a springboard for positive change. Through the variety of courses in the Core Skills Program, the theory and hands-on practice can help create effective skills and develop long-lasting solutions to conflicts in both our professional and personal lives. Skills and strategies include:

- The basic concepts and skills to deal with conflict in healthy ways.
- How to recognize cultural elements in conflict and gain understanding for working in cross-cultural settings.
- How to provide support to others experiencing conflict while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

The opportunity to improve skills or to learn new strategies to be effective in resolving conflict and solving problems is proactive and helpful. Check-out the Resolutions Skills brochure for more information and registration opportunities. It really is a program to successfully navigate the realities and conflicts of life.

IMPORTANT DATES

Oct 23 **SAG**

Nov 4 **Early Dismissal**

Nov 6 **RETTA Volleyball Social**

Nov 11 **Rememberance Day (no school)**

Nov 12 **Maternity/Parental Seminar**

Dec 18 **Last Day of Classes before break**

Random RETTA

Have you ever wanted to receive schwag no strings attached... well here's your chance. There are no hoops to jump through and no tunes to name.

Who: A RETTA Member

When: Once a month

Where: At schools chosen at random

What: Free gift

Why: Because you deserve it!

How: Chosen at random



It's our little way of saying "Hey, thanks for doing what you do."



RIVER EAST TRANSCONA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Presents

A VOLLEYBALL SOCIAL EVENING



- ✓ Free Admission
- ✓ Meet your colleagues
- ✓ Enter a school team
- ✓ Get out and socialize
- ✓ Dance and have fun

FRIDAY, 06 NOVEMBER 2009

6:30 P.M. – 1:00 A.M.

**VALLEY GARDENS COMMUNITY CLUB/
VALLEY GARDENS MIDDLE SCHOOL**



**Register by calling the R.E.T.T.A. Office 661-1823
or email office@retta.ca**