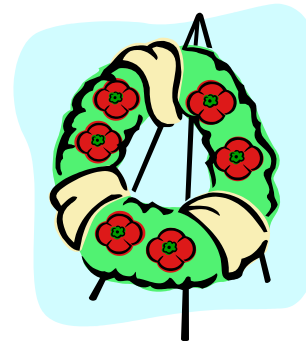


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RETTA RECORD

The official newsletter of the River East Transcona Teachers' Association
November 2011

President's Message

By Jennifer Russell

Perhaps you have always wondered what does the River East Transcona Teachers' Association do for you?

Our mission states that as the advocate for our members, we will safeguard, promote and advance the collective interests of our membership and the teaching profession. One way we do this is by bargaining on your behalf with the school division and board of trustees.

Highlights of our new collective agreement include 2% salary increases for the next three years, an additional personal leave day, improvements to our bereavement clause, an additional family medical day, a carryover of hours to obtain an extra-curricular day, and an increase in the personal professional development fund. You can view the entire collective agreement on our website at www.retta.ca.

We relay information about your benefits, professional development opportunities, and Manitoba Teachers' Society business. We liaise with the division and school board to help better your working conditions. We provide and help support wellness activities throughout the year. We are here to listen and provide guidance to our members.

You are always welcome to call the office with your questions and concerns. As a member, what can you do for the River East Transcona Teachers' Association? Become involved by actively listening to and questioning items presented at your monthly RETTA meetings. Soon we will be coming to your school to visit, so please stop by to say hello. Please bring issues to our attention so that we can work on your behalf. Join us for a Tuesday council meeting. Join a committee.

We are currently looking for members to join our collective bargaining, education finance, and workplace, safety and health committees. Come out and enjoy one of our wellness activities.

Our next activity is our volleyball social on November 4th at Valley Gardens Community Centre. If you aren't a fan of playing volleyball you can join us for the social. Every new member to the association that attends will receive a special prize.

Hope to see you there!



Vice President's Message

By Frank Reeves



I want to take this opportunity to welcome all of our hard working teachers back to school after what was clearly the best summer for weather and lack of bugs (especially the dive-bombing, blood-thirsty variety) that I can ever remember. I had a great summer at home and I hope you all enjoyed yourselves as well. Summer is our chance to regenerate and rest; I hope you had that opportunity. I am excited to be back at work as your new vice president and look forward to a positive productive year.

I have the pleasure of sitting on the Divisional Workplace Safety and Health Committee representing the interests of teachers throughout our association. I call this a pleasure because I believe teacher welfare is our number one issue. Our health is paramount to our longevity and effectiveness as teachers. The added stresses placed on teachers each and every year is mounting. A healthy workplace is essential to not only our well-being as teachers but also that of our students.

After two years in the making the division is in the process of rolling out the written WS&H program. Meetings are being held at each school introducing the processes that are to be followed as this program is implemented. The first year will be a data gathering exercise. We need to find out where we are if we are to improve the safety of our physical facilities and our safety processes. Even though we are just beginning this process, it has become clear that training for our members is needed.

New revisions to WS&H Legislation in the areas of Harassment and Violence Prevention in the workplace will become increasingly important to teachers as time progresses. The definition of harassment has been expanded to include the following highlights:

- objectionable conduct that creates a risk to the health of a worker; or
- severe conduct that adversely affects a worker's psychological or physical well-being.

Conduct is considered to be severe if it could cause a worker to be humiliated or intimidated and is repeated, or in the case of a single occurrence, has a lasting harmful effect on a worker.

It must be stated however, that the day to day reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor in managing, guiding and directing workers, including performance reviews is not harassment.

The employer must also develop and follow a violence prevention policy. This policy must describe the actions and measures employers will take to eliminate or control the risk of violence to workers. This policy becomes very important when teachers are working with potentially violent students. Student initiated abuse is the number one reported WS&H issue in the River East Transcona School Division.

Even though these regulatory and legislative requirements are good for the safety of our members, it is likely our teachers and administrators will be the ones who will carry out most of the employer's responsibilities, creating a workload issue for our members. It is essential that our members be given the time during the regular work day, to carry out these duties. We have to come to the realization that if more is added to our plate, something must also come off. I will make sure our member's voices are heard loud and clear on these issues. In that regard I would appreciate any and all feedback from members regarding the rollout of the WS&H program.

If you have any questions, contact me at freeves@retta.ca

Yoga and Music in the classroom

Nadia Krawchenko-Chaput—RETTA Executive Member-at-Large

Grade One French Immersion Teacher

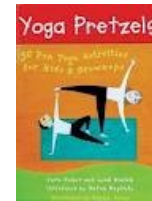
École Salisbury Morse Place School

Have you ever thought of using Yoga in your classroom? I have, and I am now a true believer in the power it gives to children to understand what they feel and to learn to take control of their bodies. Sounds weird...but, it works. Students in my class know that when they feel anxious or stressed, angry or tired, they can do some breathing techniques and stretches to invigorate their bodies and minds. A few resources I use are:

Yoga Pretzels (Yoga Cards) [Cards]

Tara Guber (Author), Leah Kalish (Author), Sophie Fatus (Illustrator)

I bought this at McNally Robinson.

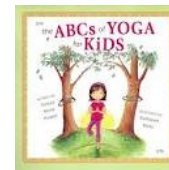


The ABCs of Yoga for Kids

Teresa Anne Power (Author) | Kathleen Rietz

(Illustrator)

I bought this book through Scholastic Book Clubs.



This summer I went to a Yoga Kids workshop run by two people from our division: Karen Franklin and Cathy Spack. Wow - what luck to have such expertise here! They ran a program designed to teach little ones all the way up to teens. This is good news since everyone can enjoy the benefits of yoga in their classes.

Karen Franklin can be reached at yogawithkare@shaw.ca

Cathy Spack can be reached at cspack@mymts.net or www.calmnsense.ca

I started yoga in the classroom because, although I knew my students needed a movement break, I still was having very active students who were not learning as much as they could. So, now when I see very antsy students, I might get the class to do a little dance (Hokey Pokey, Mexican Hat Dance etc), and then do some yoga poses and breathing in order to calm them down. Individual students are reminded to do breaths and poses when they become too agitated.

Music is also a calming strategy that I use in the classroom. I use my daughters old 'Baby Einstein' CDs and have classical music continuously playing in my class. You might want to play classical music, nature sounds or any relaxing music. If the volume of the class goes above the music, they know they are too loud. A colleague noticed that even during lunch, the class seemed calmer while dining and listening to classical music.

Give it a try. I am sure there are many people on your staff who are already seeing the benefits of yoga and music in their classrooms. Talk to them to get other ideas. You can also feel free to contact Karen Franklin, Cathy Spack, or myself @ nkrawchenkochaput@retta.ca.

Nameste!

Nadia

A message from Chris Darazsi—RETTA Executive Member-at-Large:

I sit here in Starbucks, having recently remembered that I've been volun-told to write a contribution to the *R.E.T.T.A. Record* (thanks Tim!) and it's due in three days. Fantastic.

Having just left the RETTA Council Meeting, I was thinking about it on the way here. What the H-E-double-hockey-sticks am I going to write about? Like really, I don't have enough to do? Provincial and local committee meetings, parent phone calls, lesson planning, the pile of student work to mark and enter is getting larger. I need to prep for my sub later this week. Student-teacher evaluations need to be done, and I'm pretty sure I should get around to doing that Professional Growth Plan that was due last week. It seems that occasionally I teach children too.

I remember the last day of school well. It was June 30th and within minutes of that final bell ringing, I was on the front lawn of the school with my bags packed, waiting to be picked up by some friends for the long drive to Lake Placid, New York and Quebec for some downhill mountain biking. In some previous years I'd go back into the school for a couple days in July to set up my first few units for September. I guess that's not going to happen this year. Oh well, I'll do it when I get back from New York, right?

My wife had gone to Utah and by the time she returned, I had almost finished the list she left me. Unfortunately, a new and even more labour intensive list had evolved. Well, that's OK. I'll think about September while I'm in Panorama, B.C. for some more DH mountain biking.

Well it turns out that while I was pointed downward on the side of a 3,000 foot mountain on a bicycle I had other things on my mind than assessment and evaluation of the curricular outcomes. Considering I came back alive and in one piece, this was clearly a good decision on my part. Prepping? What prepping?

It was a mere four days later that my wife and I left for Seattle to embark upon our 7-day Alaskan cruise. And while there wasn't a lot of sun tanning going on, there were whales and glaciers to see. Not to mention mountains like you won't find anywhere else. Now at this point you may want to sit down because this will surely surprise you, but despite having my laptop with me, I didn't actually spend any time thinking or working on anything school related. And as you can imagine, when I arrived back in town the day before Labour Day, that single day between vacation that first admin day at work was spent unpacking and doing laundry!

I know what you're thinking. "But Chris, how could you NOT spend time working on school-related planning while you're on holidays"?

My friends and colleagues, the answer is in the question. For me, this summer was an experiment in holidays. What would happen if I took the summer holidays and actually put my foot down, standing firm in the idea that I am *on holidays*. This stemming from the belief that we, as teachers, work very hard between September and June and actually *deserve* those two months off. The realization that I couldn't name another profession that would feel obligated or worse yet *expected* to come in to work for free during their holidays. And the acceptance of the fact that I may have to work a little harder in September. So many of the conversations between my teacher friends and me begin with "when are you going in?" that it actually saddens me. What has happened to our profession that we feel we don't work enough? Or that we feel that we must go into work, unpaid, and spend even *more* time away from our homes and families. What are we saying about ourselves? Are we actually agreeing with those people (you know who they are) who say that teachers don't really deserve our holiday time and that we only work 5.5 hours a day for 40 weeks of the year?

So the remaining question is, do I regret living my holiday time to the fullest this past summer? If you haven't figured it out yet, the answer is a definite NO. I have no regrets. To those people who don't 'get' what our job really entails and that we do in fact deserve the time off, I remind you that there is a reason they don't teach. Deep down, they know darn well that they couldn't do the job we do. Period. And to the teachers that insist on spending their holidays working in the school, I commend you and definitely don't want to imply that this is not your right and choice. I also realize that there are certainly circumstances when the workload is simply too much and you must learn new curricula or courses. But ask yourself a couple of big-picture questions. Does going in to work during the holidays devalue what we do for the rest of the year? What message does it send when we are asking for more prep time yet voluntarily and, dare I say willingly using our own personal time to prepare our courses?

While I would never presume to tell my professional colleagues what to do with their personal time, I can tell you that my Christmas vacation is already booked.