



interlaketeachers.ca



interlaketeachers@live.ca



@InterlakeTA

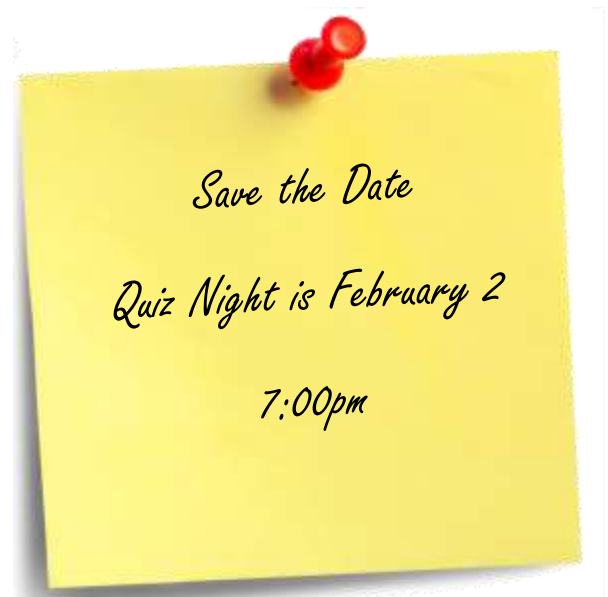
President's Message

Besides the usual shopping, feasts, and holiday music, the end of December brings with it a plethora of retrospectives, top ten lists, and most memorable moments. The world seems to be acting as if one year is ending and another beginning. We teachers know the year is not even half over and just when we are hitting our stride, along comes a two-week break. My advice about breaks remains unchanged. As much as possible, spend this week pretending like school will start again on Monday. Get everything prepped, marked, photocopied, laminated, and organized. Write into your daybook what you will do on Monday January 9, and then, when the final bell rings on Thursday afternoon, leave your school bag on your desk, grab your keys, and go home for a well-deserved rest. Teachers squeeze 50 weeks worth of work into 39; you have put in your hours by the time December 22 comes around; it's time for a break.

With that I would like to wish you and yours the best of the holiday season, may you enjoy a revitalizing two weeks, and return ready to do what we do best: educate the students of the Interlake School Division.

Quiz Night is Coming

The Interlake Teachers' Association is again hosting the annual ITA Quiz Night. The event will be held at 7:00pm on Thursday, February 2 at the Parochial Hall in Stonewall – the day before Curriculum Focus Day. You may register as a team or as individuals; we will find you a team. The event is open to all employees of the Interlake School Division, so feel free to team up with, or encourage non-ITA members to attend. Send your registration information to Cheryl Kooning.



CTF and Mental Health

The Interlake Teachers' Association is part of the Manitoba Teachers society which is a member of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). Frequently, in these layered hierarchies, there is a feeling that as one goes up in ladder, there is less understanding and knowledge of issues faced by those in the trenches. On the other had, it is only through these provincial and national bodies, that teachers can catch the attention of government. What follows is a slightly edited version of a letter sent by CTF to the Prime Minister. The content of the letter speaks for itself, but I believe this demonstrates that the CTF is listening to and acting upon issues important to teachers in the classroom while it exercises its ability to converse with government.

Dear Prime Minister,

As you prepare for the upcoming First Ministers' meeting ... I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) to urge a focus on child and youth mental health. In 2014, CTF surveyed over 5000 Canadian teachers regarding their top priorities; 95% of respondents rated child and youth mental health as their top concern. This is a staggering, yet all too believable, response that should not be ignored. When you meet the First Ministers, CTF asks you, ... to provide for adequate mental health care for children and youth in a renewed Health Accord. At the present time, ...many Canadian communities lack adequate resources to provide the preventative and interceptive resources needed to support child and youth mental health and well-being. In isolated communities and for minority populations, the challenges are often further exacerbated by distance, linguistic barriers, and lack of understanding about culture or group ... In 2012, in collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, CTF explored the issue of mental health and well-being in schools through a pan-Canadian survey. Over 3,900 teachers responded to the survey including 2,324 elementary school teachers and 1,603 secondary school teachers. ... Barriers identified in the 2012 CTF survey included the following:

- 85% of teachers agreed that a lack of funding for school-based mental health services was a potential barrier, including 59% who "strongly" agreed;
- 78% of teachers agreed that an insufficient number of community-based mental health professionals was a potential barrier, including 45% who "strongly" agreed;
- 75% agreed that a lack of coordinated services between the school and community was a potential barrier, including 38% who "strongly" agreed;
- 67% of teachers agreed that a lack of referral options in the community was a potential barrier, including 34% who "strongly" agreed.

One teacher respondent summed up the situation we know too well: "It is sad when you know there is a concern, or the student tells you there is a concern, you've followed the proper protocols, and for whatever reason (lack of services, family declines services for child, fear of stigma, etc.) the student does not get the help they need." ... We wish you a very successful First Ministers' Meeting and sincerely hope that the mental health and wellbeing of Canadian children and youth will feature prominently in your deliberations and, ultimately, in a new Health Accord.

Yours sincerely,
Heather Smith, President,
Canadian Teachers' Federation