

President's Message – First Quarter in the Books

The arrival of December means the completion of the first quarter of the year in my role as ITA President. Time to reflect on the first quarter and share some items with you. I have had the opportunity to attend several MTS training sessions and conferences, and complete 10 out of 24 school visits. I wish to share some information and experiences I have been collecting in my travels.

School Visits:

Schools visited so far:

Rock Lake Colony School, Grosse Isle School, Clinicians, Lightly School, Teulon Elementary, Rosser Elementary, Omega School, Teulon Collegiate, New Haven Colony School, and Brant-Argyle School.

My impression of visits so far:

- Building a bush fort when you are a kid is still a thing, and especially fun at school.
- If you visit colony communities at lunch, they treat you like family and of course, feed you.
- At holiday concert season, teachers in elementary schools don't sit long for lunch, if at all.
- Something I'd like to try in my class: When your students come in from lunch or recess, get them settled and ready to work by; dimming the lights, playing music, or projecting a fire place on your board. No doubt it took time to establish this routine, but it was very effective.
- My biggest observation, without doubt... [ITA teachers are incredible at what they do, no matter where you go to witness it.](#) First, with their students; from knowing the person inside and the needs of each one, letting them make choices, helping them understand consequences, comforting them, feeding them when necessary, and making them feel as one of the team. Second, with each other; by being part of a caring staff of adults, communicating, working with and for each other, and making each other better. Third, they are all amazing ambassadors of the communities they teach in, and are the proof relationships and communication provide the backbone for a thriving school and educational path.

I am looking forward to the rest of the visits in the months of December and January, and to meeting you all in your world, with your people, doing your thing.

Short-Term Disability Reminder:

Last year, the members of the Interlake Teachers Association approved a Short-Term Disability Insurance Plan. I often get asked if it was worth it, and my response is, if even one person has to access it, yes. We have had several, and it will be in place for all of you, should you need it.

Some Interesting Items to Pass Along:

October 20: Presidents' Council:

- **Did you know you can make additional contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Fund (TRAF)?** Traditionally TRAF investments have been getting above average rates of return. Below is an overview, but visit the TRAF website at www.traf.mb.ca for more details.
- **What are TRAF Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs)?**
Contributing members may make tax deductible Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs), up to the lesser of:
 - 18% of your salary, or
 - The Money Purchase limit as prescribed by the *Income Tax Act* (Canada), less your pension adjustment.
- **How do I make Additional Voluntary Contributions?**
You will need to use the [Additional Voluntary Contribution Calculator](#) to:
 - Determine the amount you can contribute, and
 - Complete the application in the Additional Voluntary Contribution Calculator to have AVCs deducted from your pay, and
 - Print, sign and submit one copy of this form to ISD and one signed copy to TRAF.
- You may increase, decrease or stop your payroll deduction at any time

November 7: Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar – [LINK](#) to the document

- **Did you know the time you can be off with your child has increased, or that you can share the parental leave with your partner?** If you are planning a family, I strongly urge you to contact MTS staff officer Arlyn Filewich at afilewich@mbteach.org or (204)-831-3070. She is extremely knowledgeable about maternity leave, which can be confusing to navigate through on your own.
- **Did you know that you can buy back your pensionable service time?** If you have taken a parental or adoption leave, you may want to purchase this service back so it can count toward your pension. Your TRAF pension is calculated using your years of service and average salary. The higher these two factors, the larger your pension. Check out the [LINK](#).

November 14: Violence in Schools – SafeWork MB Seminar

- **Did you know that reporting violence in the workplace is everyone's responsibility, including violence from students or parents?** The Interlake School Division has a violence incident report form which can be found on all the WS & H bulletin boards and [HERE](#).

November 26 & 27: Crucial Conversations

- **Did you know that the root of many – if not most – human problems lies in how people behave when others disagree with them about high-stakes, emotional issues?** By learning how to talk with colleagues and students when it really matters, rather than ignoring them or the issue, we can build relationships that will be more productive for all.

News Items:

Lakewood Regional Presidents' Meeting (December 3):

- Local Presidents met to discuss regional issues and build capacity within our group.
- MTS staff presented on various topics such as the continued importance of communication and relationship building within the education system structure.
- The local Collective Bargaining Chairs joined the Presidents in the afternoon, and we were given a bargaining update. We were presented with the work of the Society's Collective Bargaining Standing Committee (CBSC), which had been tasked with developing the MTS model and procedures.
- The Society continues to prepare in advance of government announcements.
- As has been previously stated, MTS is staying the course as the Province goes through the Education Review. We are working closely with other major labour unions in the province.

100 Schools in 100 Days Tour:

On Monday December 10, Myles Blahut (current COSL President and former Principal in ISD), James Bedford (MTS Vice-President), Susan Hannah (ITA Vice-President) and myself, will embark on a tour of some of the schools in our division. 2019 marks the 100th Anniversary of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. To help celebrate, Myles and James have decided to visit 100 schools in Manitoba in 100 days during this school year. When planning the tour, we wanted to cover as much area as we could, and see a variety of schools. We will visit Rosser Elementary, Grosse Isle School, Warren Elementary, Warren Collegiate, École Stonewall Centennial School, Stony Mountain School, Lightly Colony School and Teulon Collegiate.

Quiz Night:

It may not seem like January is approaching, because of course, there is a busy concert season and winter break to first put our efforts to.

The ITA's 8th Annual Quiz Night will take place on Thursday, January 31st, at the Parochial Hall, 310 1st St. W in Stonewall.

Please check out our website at interlaketeachers.ca for more details or look for the poster on your ITA bulletin board.



Upcoming Important Dates:

- On Thursday December 6th I will be attending the State of the Province Address being given by Premier Brian Pallister. It is being hosted by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce at the RBC Convention Centre, and the MTS delegation consists of provincial executive members, staff officers and local presidents. It will be a new and I'm sure, a very interesting experience.
- On Monday December 10th, the ITA Education Finance committee will present to the ISD Board. We will show where there is lack of support for teachers in certain areas of their job. We then hope to present how increased financial support can effectively provide the resources that will reduce the adverse affects on teacher workload.