



## Government commits to modest increase for education in its expenditure plans

Against the backdrop of the provincial government declaring a state of emergency as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this was never going to be a business-as-usual budget.

In fact, the presentation made by Finance Minister Donna Harpauer was well short of what would traditionally be labelled a budget. Instead, it was an overall announcement of planned expenditures without any revenue forecasts since the volatility of the global situation made it all but impossible to make such future revenue predictions.

Nevertheless, there was some good news for the PreK-12 education sector, albeit that as Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation President Patrick Maze suggested, "the big question in these times is if the government comes through with what they have said. But it is definitely a step in the right direction without question."

In terms of the overall budget provided via the Ministry of Education, there is an overall increase of \$86 million or 3.5 percent to support pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms, early learning and child care, libraries and literacy.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive an increase of \$42.1 million, representing a 2.2 percent hike from the previous year. The new school operating fund is now projected at \$1.94 billion for the 2020-21

school year. This marks the largest per annum increase in recent years.

Last year there had been a \$26.2 million increase for school divisions, while there was a \$30 million increase the year before. Both of these increases followed the \$54 million that had been pulled out of education in the 2017 budget.

Whereas the STF had proposed a \$100 million investment over a three-year period, Maze noted that depending on what happens with inflation and the volatile financial situation that currently exists, the \$42.1 million increase will be helpful in terms of increased enrolment numbers.

"It's not going to solve the problems we have with complexities that we see in our classrooms. But absolutely it's a step in the right direction. One of the positive things is that there is a recognition that the government has committed to paying for a collective agreement for teachers when that is eventually reached. It's nice to hear that commitment made public," Maze said.

Specifically, the education budget has earmarked \$130.4 for capital investment. That includes a new joint-use school in the Harbour Landing area of Regina as well as a replacement for the overcrowded St. Frances Cree Bilingual School in Saskatoon.

Saskatoon will also see a new school in the city centre that will ultimately replace Princess Alexandra, King George and Pleasant Hill elementary schools.

As well, a similar project is planned for Regina that will consolidate St. Peter, St. Michael and Imperial elementary schools.

Schools receiving money for renovations include Yorkton Regional High School, John Paul II Collegiate in North Battleford and Athol Murray College of Notre Dame along with ongoing projects in Weyburn, Rosthern, Moose Jaw and Regina.

Carrot River is also in the queue for a new



Patrick Maze, STF President

consolidated elementary and high school facility

Maze indicated he was pleased that given the challenges facing government there is no longer the urgency to balance the budget. As Harpauer acknowledged in her address, "we will go into a deficit position because of this situation."

Harpauer noted that the overall \$14.5 billion spending plan comes at an "unprecedented and challenging time in our province, our country and the world. That is precisely why we need to proceed with these expenditures now, providing stability and much-needed new spending at the start of the fiscal year."

Meanwhile, according to the STF President, the protracted bargaining situation cannot be the top priority given the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We fully understand that the government has to make sure the population is healthy, and in the meantime the current contract teachers have will remain in place and will provide a sense of stability for our members. This is obviously an unprecedented situation and we need to make sure that there is appropriate care given to the health budget. As a province, we have to make sure to have infrastructure in place and education is a hugely important part of that." ■

## Finding silver linings amidst new reality of pandemic

By Randy Schmaltz,  
STF Executive Director

It's a brave new world as people adapt to life during a pandemic. Although it is a little unsettling to see empty streets and businesses closed down, we still have a lot to be thankful for. Today I joined the ranks of the many who are working remotely and though it takes a little getting used to, we are all fortunate to be able to remain connected and engaged, albeit virtually.

Walking through the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation building yesterday was a little like being a sheriff in a ghost town: empty hallways, closed doors and only a few people remaining at their desks.

We at the Federation, like many other businesses, have been planning and re-planning over the last couple of weeks for the inevitable—working remotely. Our staff has been remarkable in that we have re-invented ourselves in light of the current situation. We have revised practices and processes to ensure that our core services will continue to be delivered. I can assure you with confidence that the cheques will be in the mail, the phones will be answered, members will continue to be served and the assets of the Federation will continue to be managed responsibly and effectively.

Though most staff will be working remotely, we will continue to have a few people on-site to manage essential services from our office. Members will continue to be served as always, and we remain only a phone call or an email away. I cannot say enough about our staff who has certainly faced these new challenges head on. We are fortunate indeed.

I must also acknowledge the STF Executive for their courageous leadership and commitment to members, the Federation and their staff. They continue to fulfil their roles and provide leadership amidst uncertainty.

It goes without saying that these are difficult times; there are few that are not impacted in one way or another. But as everyone

Randy Schmaltz,  
STF Executive Director

from the Prairies knows all too well, even the darkest clouds have a silver lining. Perhaps our silver lining is the reset of relationships, not only within the education sector but beyond.

Not unlike the Dirty '30s, I think people are finding community in times of isolation; it seems kind of ironic. I see people and organizations stepping up and working together to find solutions and provide support. I see signs in windows reminding us that we are all in this together, and politicians setting aside their agendas to work for the public good. Regardless of where you look, you will see people of all stripes selflessly serving others, whether they are front-line health providers or people supporting the less fortunate. Be they corporations or employers, they are all providing services and taking care of people as best they can. That is a silver lining.

As always, teachers have an important role to play. After all, teachers and schools are often the glue that holds communities together.

If there is one thing that everyone agrees on, it is the important role of teachers during this time of isolation. Certainly providing students with supplementary learning opportunities is important, but perhaps more important is staying connected with students and families. I have heard many stories of teachers reaching out and connecting within their communities and in all cases, how appreciated these efforts have been. This is perhaps another silver lining. ■

### Annual Meeting of Council postponed until fall

Similar to a host of other planned events in the province, the Annual Meeting of Council that was to take place April 29 to May 2 has been postponed and is now scheduled for October 21 to 24, 2020.

This unprecedented decision was made by the STF Executive on March 27 following an earlier decree from the Saskatchewan government and the Saskatchewan Chief Medical Health Officer to limit the size of public and private gatherings to a maximum of 10 people as part of dealing with the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

Planning is currently underway in terms of the many important facets of the Annual Meeting of Council, including resolutions, elections and presentation of the budget to councillors.

"We recognize how important the Annual Meeting of Council is to the work we do to support teachers and the teaching profession," Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Executive Director Randy Schmaltz said in making the announcement.

"We take our collective governance, legal and fiduciary responsibilities very seriously," Schmaltz added.

According to Schmaltz, additional details regarding resolutions and elections are being discussed and information will be shared at a later date as the STF continues to work through these challenging times.

As a result of this change, there will not be a 2020 Councillor Conference since those dates have now been set aside for the Annual Meeting of Council as mentioned previously. The meeting will be held in Saskatoon at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Downtown. ■

## Emma Stewart Resources Centre's move to new premises highlights 50th anniversary

By Joan Elliott, Librarian/Manager, Emma Stewart Resources Centre

December 2019 was a memorable month for the Emma Stewart Resources Centre and Pathways to Learning staff. It was the culmination of a year of planning and preparing for the move to the new Arbos Centre for Learning at 2311 Arlington Avenue in Saskatoon.

Thankfully, our movers were able to efficiently move our collection of roughly 40,000 books, DVDs and kits, as well as journals and research materials, in less than three days.

While being excited about and thankful for the opportunities to serve teachers that are provided by our new facility, it was also a time to reflect on some key milestones in our history.

Named after Emma Stewart, who was the assistant secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation from 1942 to 1962, the Stewart Resources Centre had been in its former location for 50 years. In that time a number of important achievements are worth highlighting.

It was in 1969-70 that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation's vision for a provincial instructional resources centre was realized. Under the leadership of librarian Doris Laing, the new centre contained a professional library and curriculum displays as well as a teaching materials centre, coordinated by Ann Lawson. The teaching materials provided a means for teachers to help each other through sharing lesson and unit plans that were sold at cost.

Those services continued under coordinator Jean Nahachewsky, who led the automation of the collection in 1988 and collaborated with the University of Saskatchewan Library to provide access to the online catalogue in 1992. She also partnered with the Curriculum Branch of the Ministry of Education in holding unit writing workshops for teachers

As Emma Stewart Resources Centre celebrates its 50th anniversary, it is an opportune time to reflect on its rich past while at the same time embrace its sumptuous new surroundings for teachers to gather and collaborate as an admittedly uncertain future unfolds.



when the Common Essential Learnings and Core Curricula were being implemented in the 1990s.

In those years, staff also began to provide reference service by email, and by 1997, all unit plans were made available free of charge on the STF's website. In the intervening years, more services and information, including an emphasis on providing research assistance, have been available through our website.

Another significant milestone occurred in 2014 with the beginning of the Exploring the Many Pathways to Learning project that was contracted by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. It is aimed at engaging teachers in evaluating resources for Saskatchewan classrooms.

According to Ron Sirois, the manager of Pathways, more than 300 teachers have been involved in evaluating resources and over 6,600 English and French resources have been posted to the resources pages of the curriculum site, most of which can be borrowed from the Emma Stewart Resources Centre.

Now that we are settled into our new space, we would like to remind you that we also have an extensive variety of teacher-prepared materials, in addition to leading-edge print and DVD resources for professional growth, all of which can be accessed through our online catalogue at [www.stf.sk.ca](http://www.stf.sk.ca). At this time, no login is required. The lending period is four weeks and renewals can be requested.

The website also provides access to our subject bibliographies, new arrivals lists and related links in addition to our email reference service and journal database search service. While the Emma Stewart Resources Centre and Arbos Centre for Learning are currently closed to walk-in visitors due to physical distancing requirements, materials can be mailed to your home at no cost. We can also be contacted at 1-800-667-7762.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents us all with extraordinary challenges, now and for the coming weeks and months. Through compassion, courage and connection, we will get through this difficult time. We are looking forward to serving you for many years to come. ■

## McDowell Foundation projects have to pause or adapt to current reality

By Colleen Ostoforoff, McDowell Foundation Fundraising Administrator

As the threat of COVID-19 is shifting throughout our province, so does our work at the McDowell Foundation. Our mission continues to be to address the needs of the educational community through both current and future research projects.

After I joined the McDowell Foundation team, many former colleagues asked about the work of the McDowell Foundation. If you are unfamiliar with us, we are an independent, non-profit, charitable organization created by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation back in 1991.

Our vision is to improve teaching and learning through teacher-led research in the classroom. Our projects and activities are student-centred and relevant to successful instruction in today's

classrooms. Now that we are all self-isolating and social distancing, ongoing projects will have to pause or adapt to the current reality.

As we continue to build our teachers' supports until we can get back to the "new normal," the McDowell Foundation will also continue to inspire and support many worthwhile research projects, just like those that changed your life. The number of future research projects will become increasingly more prevalent because of this pandemic.

One of the most important things to remember is don't give up! Anxiety at high levels, social distancing as a new normal and economic struggle for all has created a new reality for everyone. We know that in times of great transition and change, teachers emerge as unsung

heroes supporting students, parents and communities as we move through these uncharted waters.

We are so grateful for the dedication of teachers and the hard work that goes into supporting the teaching profession and its research.

If you would like to keep updated on our current research projects and events (virtual or not), you can join our Twitter page [@STFmcdowell](https://twitter.com/STFmcdowell), online at [www.mcdowellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca) or contact us by email at [mcdowell@stf.sk.ca](mailto:mcdowell@stf.sk.ca).

I want to personally thank you, our teachers, for all of your hard work and dedication to the education industry. You are vital to our children's growth. This pandemic will pass, and please remember that your work matters! Keep strong and wash your hands. ■

## Spotlight on Superannuates



By Sunil Pandila, STS President

### Much to ponder in reality of new world

Welcome to a new world—after we started with such an optimistic view heading into 2020!

How quickly one event can change the lives of people nationally and around the globe. Even as I write this article, events and circumstances are changing by the hour. While we have gone through other periods of infection, I am sure that it is safe to say that all of us have never experienced the current situation and heightened state of emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the health and safety of people is paramount, and on behalf of the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan, I would like to say that our thoughts are with everyone who is facing this crisis and the front line health-care workers. We at the STS have taken necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of everyone, including closing our offices to the public and cancelling upcoming Retirement Lifestyle Sessions until further notice. Let us hope that by working together and following guidelines from our health officials, we can put this pandemic behind us and learn for the future.

In spite of the events over the past two months, I hope everyone had a wonderful winter. As we welcome spring, it is not the same this year. For the rest of 2020 there will not be a shortage of events affecting all of us in the province. While it has already started with a huge bang, there is the sense of getting back to normal, dealing with the current situation in education and then the fall election.

With the election comes the advocacy for all issues facing the people of Saskatchewan. One of the major initiatives we are pursuing as older adults is the moving forward of the *Strategizing for Positive Aging in Saskatchewan*. This movement will generate questions for our current elected representatives and future election candidates. The report identified key areas of transportation, community involvement, accessibility of services, financial considerations, health care and housing.

The advocacy will begin with an emphasis on putting in place a government infrastructure to deal with the issues affecting older adults. Currently, while we may have a Minister Responsible for Seniors embedded in the portfolio of Rural and Remote Health, there needs to be greater structures put in place such as budgets, staff and a dedicated senior advocate to deal with these very relevant issues.

The STS Executive made a commitment to support initiatives affecting our members through our Advocacy committee and also by supporting Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism in a provincewide effort to bring these issues to the forefront and supporting the government in finding solutions to the issues identified.

This is a long-term project, but one that is very necessary as it affects a huge segment of our current population and eventually will affect everyone in our province. By paving the way for healthier aging structures, it will have a long-term positive effect for the entire province.

As I mentioned in the January edition, when looking at the population of Saskatchewan, the fastest-growing segment is the 55-plus age group. Older adults now contribute almost \$1 billion to the Saskatchewan economy. This is through the amount of time spent volunteering for all sorts of community activities (\$400 million), caregiving for elderly parents and grandchildren (\$25 million), and going back to work in a second career (\$500 million). We all need to begin by asking our elected officials what they are prepared to do to put structures in place which will eventually assist everyone in our province.

I would also like to welcome any new members to the STS who have joined since January 2020. Welcome to your new family of 11,719 members and please join activities at your local Chapter to keep a connection with education and a new lifestyle. It is well worth the effort towards a long and healthy retirement.

For the rest of our colleagues at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, we are supportive of your efforts to bring about a resolution to the education shortfall that affects all of our students. Let us hope the current addition of funds announced in the preliminary budget is a start to this process.

In the interim, I know the challenges this school year is facing are unprecedented, and the most important task is to get students back in school. We wish you the best in your efforts and now "it takes a whole country to get back to normal!"

For more information about any of our STS programs or initiatives, please do not hesitate to call the office at 306-373-3879 or visit our website at [www.sts.sk.ca](http://www.sts.sk.ca). You can also contact me at [sunil.pandila@sasktel.net](mailto:sunil.pandila@sasktel.net) or 306-692-2420. ■

## Fiddling makes sweet music for St. Michael project

This was not how it was supposed to unfold, but then few things have been in recent times since the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The intent was for Saskatoon's own rock band, The Sheepdogs, to be on hand at St. Michael Community School to unveil \$10,000 in new instruments for the school from the MusiCounts Band Aid Program.

However, similar to other events scheduled as part of the JUNO Awards that were to be held in Saskatoon, this concert, as envisioned, was cancelled.

Nevertheless, the trove of music and recording equipment underneath the tarp in the school gym would still be put to good use at the school, which is a designated a Métis School of Excellence with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools.

Ironically, the planned involvement of a "famous" band like The Sheepdogs was just the latest in a series of connections for the school and its burgeoning fiddle program, which is an integral part of the Michif program at St. Michael.

Cort Dogniez, the Métis education program leader at GSCS, recalls how in 2016 the program received a major shot in the arm. Celebrated Maritime fiddler Natalie McMaster was in Saskatoon to play a concert and had arranged to visit the school.

*"It's a key component just like English, math or science. Music is so good for grounding our students, and they have a real chance to express themselves."*

*Cristin Dorgan Lee*

Dogniez recounted that McMaster was bemused by the fact that the school didn't have a full-scale fiddling program, which is a key component of Métis history and culture. When she was told the school just did not have the instruments, McMaster sent 25 of her fiddles to the school.

Since then, the program has expanded to the point

where students in Grades 6 to 8 can each have a fiddle to take home and practise their craft. According to Dogniez, the impact has been such that there were also several cases where parents of students in other grades would purchase fiddles for their children as Christmas presents.

A further catalyst for success was when Cristin Dorgan Lee (herself an accomplished fiddler) became the acting principal after having earlier served as the fiddle instructor while on staff.

Dorgan Lee recalled how she joined the staff in 2016 and has been acting principal for the last two years.

"They invited me to come here when they were starting the fiddling program, and it was a good fit from the start," she said after having witnessed the current group of students display their fiddling skills in front of fellow students and parents.

"I had no idea what I was walking into, but it's been so great to see how the arts curriculum has been such a huge part of what we're doing here. It's a key component just like English, math or science. Music is so good for grounding our students, and they have a real chance to express themselves," Dorgan Lee added.

According to Dorgan Lee, the benefits of the program for the students goes far beyond just the school and in fact impacts the entire community.

"When you see the concerts the kids play, there is a real sense of community. This is our program and there's such a connection we have been able to make. The kids have been able to make real friendships and relationships. The whole experience has built such confidence in our kids and opened them to so many opportunities. This program means so much to students and parents," she added.

Diane Boyko, chairperson of GSCS, spoke to students about the program and how it has been instrumental in helping them find out who they are.

"We look at St. Michael as a special place and a leader. My heart sings when I come to this school," she added.



The fiddling expertise exhibited by former Artist-In-Residence Karrnnel Sawitsky (left frame) and Acting Principal Cristin Dorgan Lee (right frame) have been instrumental in making the fiddling program an integral part of St. Michael Community School. Through their pride and passion as members of the initiative, students have brought pride to the entire community.

The new equipment will help the school program record additional CDs—they have already recorded two—and help make possible some touring in Saskatoon and beyond.

Karrnnel Sawitsky, himself a JUNO Award winner, was the artist-in-residence for two years previously as part of having secured Artists in Schools Funding (formerly ArtsSmarts Saskatchewan). It also allowed for former pupil James Kinistino to come on board as a videographer to document the journey of the program and the deep meaning it has had on the school.

Sawitsky said the new equipment will make it possible to have a sort of home studio located within the school.

While busy as a touring and recording musical artist, Sawitsky still makes time to come to the school when visiting family in Saskatoon.

"I love coming back here and seeing the joy this has brought to students. I find the whole experience contagious when you maybe just wind up jamming with some students who you didn't think were that into it.

"It makes me realize why I wanted to choose music as a career in the first place; sometimes when you're in the industry you can lose sight of that. But coming out here and seeing the joy and pride of these kids is just great, and it's something they will have for the rest of their lives. Music can be an outlet for any emotion and every time I come back, I see something new." ■

## More students choosing French immersion than ever

The week of February 3 to 7, 2020, was French Second-Language Education Week in Saskatchewan. It was a chance to celebrate the growing number of Saskatchewan families recognizing the value of French language education in our schools.

This year's theme was 50 years of French Immersion, 50 years of the Official Languages Act. Over the last 10 years, enrolment in French Immersion programming around the province has risen by 30 percent, with more than 16,500 students enrolled in French Immersion programs for the 2019-20 school year.

"It is wonderful to see so many students learning French from an early age," Minister of Education Gord Wyant said in a recent news release. "French Immersion is one of the many opportunities students have to learn a second language, enhance their communication skills and gain the benefits that come with being bilingual."

There are now 77 schools offering French Immersion programming in the province. In the 2019-20 school year, Saskatoon's École Silverspring School began offering French Immersion to accommodate increasing enrolment in the city. French Immersion programming has also expanded in schools around the province, including the addition of Grade 2 at École Traditions Elementary in Warman, Grade 6 at École Lumsden Elementary, Grade 8 at École Dundonald School in Saskatoon, Grade 10 at Greenall High School in Balgonie and Grade 12 at Carpenter High School in Meadow Lake.

"With the French Immersion program taking root in Saskatchewan more than 50 years ago now, the steady enrolment growth we are seeing reflects the high value an increasing number of parents are placing on official bilingualism and is another terrific example of how we all connect as Canadians," President of Canadian Parents for French-Saskatchewan Janet Loseth said.

"CPF-SK is proud to organize this annual proclamation, and last year more than 5,800 students

participated in celebrating French Second-Language Education Week around the province. We acknowledge all our partners who are creating lifelong opportunities for our youth during this week and throughout the year."

French immersion allows students the opportunity to learn French as a second language, with French used for a large part of the school day and as the language of instruction for most courses. Students who are in French immersion become proficient in English while also developing a strong foundation in French. School boards make requests to the Ministry annually to designate schools and grades offering French Immersion programming based on their local needs.

An additional \$3.4 million is being provided for French Immersion programs around the province in 2019-20. The Ministry of Education also supports French Immersion programming through the development of curricula and resources. Recently developed resources, including Treaty Resource Kits, are available in both French and English.

Saskatchewan schools offering French second-language programs also benefit from funding from the Canada-Saskatchewan Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language Instruction. In 2018-19, about \$6.3 million in federal-provincial funding was allocated to various organizations and school divisions to support French second-language instruction in Saskatchewan's K-12 schools.

French Immersion is one of three main options available to learn French in Saskatchewan's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system. Another 31,000 students around the province are enrolled in a Core French second-language program, where French is taught as an individual class, and the Conseil des écoles franciskoises offers French first-language education to more than 1,900 students around the province.

For more information and resources, visit Canadian Parents for French-Saskatchewan at [sk.cpf.ca](http://sk.cpf.ca). ■

## Government commits funding for relocatable classrooms

The Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$6 million in funding to support the purchase and installation of 15 new relocatable classrooms in seven school divisions throughout the province.

The relocatable classrooms will allow divisions to address growing student enrolment in their schools without undergoing significant renovations or requiring a new school to be built. Relocatable classrooms can be ordered and installed much quicker than a regular build and can be moved to another school with higher enrolment needs if they are not needed anymore.

"The Relocatable Classroom program provides divisions with opportunities to expand school capacity in order to address enrolment concerns," Education Minister Gordon Wyant said. "Adding these relocatables to our schools will provide both students and teachers with high-quality classroom spaces in which to learn."

Over the past six years, 12 communities have received relocatable classrooms through the program. This includes more than 100 relocatables that were purchased new and 29 relocatables that were moved from another school that no longer had a need for them.

In addition to this funding, the Ministry of Education's 2019-20 budget previously included \$4.5 million for the Relocatable Classroom program.

The government is also providing an additional \$5 million to support the Preventative Maintenance and Renewal program. These funds will help school divisions address infrastructure needs in their schools.

This funding announcement increases the government's overall commitment to capital infrastructure for education in 2019-20 to \$106.6 million—up from \$76.4 million in 2018-19. ■

## Financial literacy electives offered on provincewide basis

All Saskatchewan school divisions now have the opportunity to offer financial literacy courses to their students as an elective course.

The Financial Literacy 20 and 30 courses were piloted by 20 teachers in 12 school divisions and two First Nation education authorities.

“Our government wants to ensure Saskatchewan’s students are provided with relevant and practical curricula that will prepare them for their futures,” Education Minister Gord Wyant said in a recent news release.

“Developing additional opportunities for all Saskatchewan students to learn and improve upon their financial literacy empowers them to manage their money effectively and will be of significant benefit to students throughout their lives.”

The Financial Literacy 20 and 30 electives can be used to fulfil the practical and applied arts/arts education requirement for high school graduation. Teachers in Grades 7 to 9 are able to introduce financial literacy to their students by using content from this curriculum in middle-level practical and applied arts courses.

Financial Literacy 20 and 30 addresses financial topics and decisions that students may already be facing while highlighting others they are likely to face within the first few years of leaving high school. It also touches

upon more complex topics such as home ownership, debt management and planning for the future, which are part of a lifelong financial journey.

*“... we heard a clear desire from students, families and communities for increased opportunities to learn life skills such as budgeting and money management. We welcome the availability of these classes across the province.”*

Shawn Davidson

The areas of focus for Financial Literacy 20 and 30 are:

- learning—receiving money and/or resources as recognition for paid or unpaid work;
- saving—purposefully setting aside resources for future use and/or enjoyment;
- spending—consciously using resources to enhance the well-being of self and others;
- borrowing—taking something on loan, with a

promise of returning it, or its equivalent, often at a higher value, by a specific time;

- sharing—giving of one’s skills, abilities, time or resources to enhance the well-being of community and self;
- investing—engaging in reflective decision making for future benefit; and,
- protecting—recognizing, appreciating and maintaining the value and worth of oneself, community resources and the environment.

“Saskatchewan’s school boards recognize the importance of financial literacy and our members passed a resolution in support of developing elective personal finance classes for high school students,” President of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association Shawn Davidson said.

“In our recent engagements with more than 10,000 people as part of developing a shared vision for the future of education in Saskatchewan, we heard a clear desire from students, families and communities for increased opportunities to learn life skills such as budgeting and money management. We welcome the availability of these classes across the province.”

Boards of education will determine what schools will offer these classes within their division, thus supporting the local needs of their students. ■

## Les 100 noms en salle de classe

By Sarah Barrett, Teacher

Inspirée par l’initiative de la Société historique de la Saskatchewan *Les 100 noms*, ma classe de Français 20 à Campbell Collegiate a présenté des projets informatiques qui exposaient des francophones influents.

Les élèves ont choisi chacun une personne de la communauté francophone et ils y ont fait de la recherche pour créer une affiche, similaire à ce qui est fait dans le projet *Les 100 noms*. Lors d’une petite foire, où les autres classes d’immersion française ont été invitées, mes élèves ont partagé leur produit final ainsi que les informations recherchées par rapport aux héros et héroïnes francophones.

Nous étions aussi ravis d’avoir accepté deux invitées de la Société historique de la Saskatchewan à notre foire. Leur présence rendait les présentations des élèves plus raffinées puisque les élèves avaient un public qui dépassait les membres de notre salle de classe. À cet effet, j’ai vu des élèves qui ont pris ce travail très au sérieux et qui ont eu plus d’ambition de bien faire. De plus, ce projet permettrait aux élèves de s’intéresser avec des

personnes qui ont eu un effet sur la Saskatchewan et la préservation de la langue française.

En faisant mon stage de quatre mois dans le programme d’immersion française à une école secondaire, je voyais, tout de suite, un manque de motivation chez les élèves concernant l’apprentissage du français. Je me suis dit à plusieurs reprises : Comment est-ce que je peux intéresser mes élèves avec le français ?

En premier lieu, j’ai pensé aux raisons pour lesquelles je voulais apprendre moi-même le français en tant qu’adulte et aux expériences que j’ai eues au début de mon apprentissage de cette langue. Grâce au programme Jeunesse Canada au travail, j’ai eu l’occasion de travailler avec la Société historique de la Saskatchewan et pendant mon expérience avec cet organisme, j’ai beaucoup appris par rapport aux racines riches de l’histoire francophone dans notre province.

Durant mon expérience, je me suis beaucoup intéressée à leurs projets, surtout *Les Journées de Patrimoine et Les 100 noms*. Mon expérience en travaillant avec les membres de la SHS a mené à un partenariat avantageux puisque j’ai été capable d’utiliser les

connaissances que j’ai acquises pour rendre les programmes d’études plus pertinents pour mes élèves cet automne au cours mon stage.

L’incorporation du projet *Les 100 noms* en salle de classe était une occasion pédagogique dans laquelle je pouvais apprendre aux élèves l’identité francophone en contexte de l’histoire de la Saskatchewan.

Ce projet servait aussi comme une façon d’utiliser les ressources déjà créées par la SHS pour enrichir l’expérience scolaire des élèves en immersion.

Je suis toujours reconnaissante pour l’appui constant de la Société historique de la Saskatchewan, surtout avec leur implication cet automne. Je conseillerais fortement à toutes les enseignantes et tous les enseignants de l’immersion française en Saskatchewan de consulter leurs ressources pour créer des situations d’apprentissage enrichissantes et engageantes !

Sarah Barrett is a teacher in an immersion school in Regina, and developed a project in French for the students, based on the resources which were developed via the Société Historique de la Saskatchewan. ■

## EDITORIAL



### Is there a sign in all of this?

Turn the clock back just a couple months ago and the word wasn’t even in my lexicon. COVID-19 could be some person’s unique personalized licence plate.

As for social distancing, this could be just another term for someone who might not be all that enamoured with you.

Now, let’s get one thing straight. I am by no means intending to make light of this global pandemic that has pretty much brought the world to a virtual standstill. Yet somehow, it is my nature to at least leave the door ajar ever so slightly in looking for something positive in the face of the latest daily barrage that could just send a person closer to the abyss.

Call me naive if you prefer, but to me, I would like to suggest there might be a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel when you read through the numbers provided in the recent de facto budget delivered by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Sure I know it’s not a “real” budget without the revenue forecast, and nobody knows what tomorrow, let alone next month, will bring in terms of any kind of normalcy if that is ever to happen again in our daily lives.

Trust me I know that even in so-called normal times, the annual budget is somewhat of a shell game and it’s pretty hard to be overzealous about expenditures without the accompanying revenues. Still, when you hear there is an increase of \$42.1 million earmarked for school divisions this year as part of an overall increase of \$86 million, and when you include new and revamped facilities and all the rest, that to me qualifies as guarded optimism.

Moreover, in my view at least, if you allow yourself to go there, it might serve as a signal that somehow, somewhere the politicians have heard the message that public education in this province needs some serious investment to secure our future whatever that is going to be.

It would have been pretty easy in these turbulent economic times for the government to have suggested this is not the time for increases to a public service like education, but rather the prudent thing would be to hold the line.

One can muse whether it was the overwhelming sanctions vote by the province’s teachers that helped pique the government’s interest or whatever else seems to have convinced them to loosen the purse strings. Either way, they have come up with the single biggest increase to public education in recent times. It might not be all that the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation or teachers were looking for but right now with all that is going on, it’s pretty hard not to at least recognize the commitment, provided the follow-through is there.

By no means am I an ardent social media follower, but in talking to colleagues there has been enough of a murmur from teachers suggesting that now is the opportune time to accept the government’s latest provincial collective bargaining offer. Oh shame on me for suggesting that there isn’t an intersection in all of this. But people, timing is everything and right now is not the time to be pounding the drum for a better contract. This whole crazy pandemic has to be front and centre. The rest of it will wait, but at least there is some reason for hope that maybe there is a recognition as to the importance of education.

Maybe we can get to the place where SCHOOLS-20 is the new buzzword, and we can all just pray that for all the suffering it has caused, COVID-19 will have subsided at least somewhat. ■

SASKATCHEWAN  
**BULLETIN**

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# Ice-fishing derby brings land-based education to life

**TURTLE LAKE**—This resort community in West-Central Saskatchewan is a popular haven for those who prefer tranquility as well as what the expansive lake country can offer (it measures in excess of 20 kilometres in length).

It required considerable imagination to envision that scene on this freezing March day as it was one large sheet of thick ice populated by row upon row of schoolchildren and parents participating in the land-based learning student ice-fishing derby that was presented and organized by nearby Thunderchild First Nation School.

You could hear laughing and excitement among the many in attendance, augmented by the frequent sound of an auger as yet another hole was drilled in the ice and anglers sat patiently by their respective holes hoping for that elusive catch. Around the perimeter were several vehicles on the ice providing respite from the cold. There were also several donated tents erected to serve the same purpose.

My escape was driving around in a massive pickup truck with Delane Graham behind the wheel; a man seemingly intent on proving that you can in fact do 10 or 20 things more or less simultaneously. Multi-tasking does not even come close to aptly describing the scene.

There were in excess of 300 students on the ice—there would likely have been close to double that number if not for the omnipresent consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“An event like this is so important because it’s a way for First Nations people and non-First Nations kids to get together and build relationships. In the past, there was a lot of systemic racism and a lot of that is because people didn’t know about our history or culture. Something like this helps break barriers. It spreads like a fire.”*

*Delane Graham*

Undeterred, Graham’s enthusiasm for the task was contagious. A year ago he had organized a similar, albeit considerably smaller, ice-fishing derby when he worked at Loon Lake. It was on the advice of his school Elder (actually his kokum) that he decided to take things to a new level. This included inviting a host of provincial school divisions such as Living Sky, Northwest and Light of Christ, for example, as well



Turtle Lake was the scene of a groundbreaking event as this ice-fishing derby attracted hundreds of students, teachers and parents from both the mainstream provincial system and a series of First Nation schools. The purpose was to enhance not only the partnership aspect but to focus on land-based learning. There was also the moment to savour when the first fish of the day was secured on a chilly afternoon.

as First Nations schools from the area.

“I was way more prepared this year. We’ve been planning this for months, and you need a lot of things in place. The whole school at Thunderchild [about 30 individuals in total] were involved right from the start and so were lots of other people. Everyone kicked in and without my team, there is no way this would be possible,” Graham indicated.

Graham said for many of the students, this was the first time they had tried their hand at ice fishing, adding that several didn’t know what to expect or what they were supposed to do.

Graham, who is employed as the land-based educator at Thunderchild, is tireless in his promotion of how important land-based education is for students. When he’s not busy planning an event like the ice-fishing derby, he might be hosting traditional games, powwows or pipe ceremonies to name just a few.

“It’s such an important part of our identity and it’s a big part of who we are as Indigenous people. An event like this is so important because it’s a way for First Nations people and non-First Nations kids to get together and build relationships. In the past, there was a lot of systemic racism and a lot of that is because people didn’t know about our history or culture. Something like this helps break barriers. It spreads like a fire,” Graham insisted.



One of those attending with her students was Amanda Risling, principal from McKittrick Community School in North Battleford. She echoed Graham’s words.

“Land-based education is so important, and this is a real opportunity for our students to be part of it. This is about as good as it gets when you’re talking about experiential learning.

*“... it’s an opportunity for you as the teacher to learn a lot about the kids that you wouldn’t have in the classroom necessarily. You see that those students who have a hard time sitting still in their desks, this is where they can shine.”*

*Brent Keen*

“The event has been so well-organized and it’s so affordable [entry fee is \$5 per student]. I’m so happy we were able to have this

chance. You can deal with a bit of cold,” she laughed with what little you could see of her face as she was bundled up against the elements.

“I think this is beautiful and it’s great for the two school systems to work together like this. It’s a real blueprint for what we can do when we pull together,” she added.

Brent Keen, an elementary teacher from Turtleford Community School, was equally effusive about what an opportunity it was for students from his community.

“Probably half the kids from our school have never gone ice fishing, so it’s such a great new experience and to have a chance to really embrace land-based learning.

“Any time you get out in nature like this, the energy is so different—even just staying warm is one of the learning outcomes. It definitely teaches kids critical thinking skills that you would not get in the classroom. There is less structure than sitting in your desk, so it’s an opportunity for you as the teacher to learn a lot about the kids that you wouldn’t have in the classroom necessarily. You see that those students who have a hard time sitting still in their desks, this is where they can shine,” he noted.

Graham was eager to point out how, as part of the Indigenous culture and with considerable help from a wealth of sponsors, there would be free soup and bannock for all who attended.

He also underscored the cross-curricular connections that an event such as this provided, including math, art, physical education, health and science.

According to Graham, word about the ice-fishing derby has spread quickly and he cited numerous other schools who have been inquiring about the logistics of staging such an event. In addition, he indicated that in conversations with those attending, there was unanimous agreement that they would be back for future events.

“It makes me really happy to see this and to be able to have kids have this experience. I never had this opportunity when I went to school, but I was exposed to it through my family and it’s something I want to share,” Graham said between frequent stops to converse with those in attendance, discussing whether to find a place to build a fire or whatever might be needed. ■

## TECH TALK



## Fact or fiction? Navigating the sea of information

By Dean Vendramin, Teacher, Archbishop M.C. O'Neill Catholic High School

We have all probably heard the term fake news quite a bit lately. Whether it is in the realm of politics, economics, entertainment ... we seem to be inundated with wave after wave of questionable facts. Propaganda or misleading information is not an entirely new concept in the history of humankind. But, with the access to and amount of information available as never before in our history, separating the wheat from the chaff has never been more difficult or necessary. This phenomenon will not decrease (at least in the near future). So how do we prepare our students to become informed and empowered citizens?

We should always be encouraging students to question what is happening in their world and become critical thinkers. We need to help our students develop skills and provide tools so they can become good CRAP detectors. CRAP is an acronym that has been used in fact-checking advice and stands for Currency, Reliability, Authority and Purpose. I have also found it as CRAAP with an extra "A" for accuracy. A great site to learn more is <http://bit.ly/crap101>. This method encourages one to take a closer look at the information we consume and attempt to validate the facts presented. It is hoped that through this, one can become aware of biases and alternative motives for some of the information posted.

One strategy is to check the domain extension such as .com, .edu, .org and more. Extensions can indicate the potential motivation for a site. There are also numerous fact-checking sites out there like [snopes.com](http://snopes.com), [politifact.com](http://politifact.com), [canadafactcheck.ca](http://canadafactcheck.ca) or <http://bit.ly/craptoolbox>.

Images and memes are a huge source for news updates for many of our students. Using Google reverse image search and sites like [fotoforensics.com](http://fotoforensics.com) can help trace the source behind these images and give insights into their validity. We can also model and encourage lateral reading which entails opening up multiple tabs to check author information, references, and other

information presented with the site itself and also to cross-reference information with other sources and, dare I say, even a book. It is important to do our due diligence when consuming information.

There are many resources available to help teachers provide students with opportunities to become good CRAP detectors. [Commonsense.org](http://Commonsense.org) and [mediasmarts.ca](http://mediasmarts.ca) are great places to start your media literacy journey. There are many teacher-based "fake sites" such as [dhmo.org](http://dhmo.org) (I used this one in my class and had almost every student sign a petition to ban this substance without even checking the site). Here is a link to find more sites like this one: <http://bit.ly/hoaxsite>.

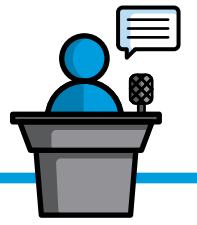
The digital age produces and consumes information like never before. With artificial intelligence increasing and "deep fakes" on the rise, it is imperative that we give students the media literacy skills to fact check and make sense of it all. Some of the websites I have been reading state that even democracy depends on being able to distinguish sophisticated fakes from the real deal.

I watched a great TED Ed video called *How to Spot Fake News*. The young lady used the acronym FABLE instead of CRAP where the E stands for exert. Exert some patience before you repost and become part of the wave of fake news. A moment of reflection can be the best way to deal with misinformation online and off-line.

Thanks for reading. If you have questions or have a suggestion for Tech Talk, reach out to me [@vendi55](https://twitter.com/vendi55). Looking to grow your personal learning network? Want to connect with a community of passionate and welcoming educators? Then check out #saskedchat Thursday nights at 8 p.m. CST and follow [@saskedchat](https://twitter.com/saskedchat) on Twitter.

Pro tip—you may have noticed I used a lot of links with bit.ly in them. This site allows you to take long web addresses and turn them into customizable shortened bit.ly links. ■

## INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP



## When there are no answers

By Jane Macleod, Senior Manager, Research and Records

For many today, images and stories of the coronavirus are consuming our daily lives and interactions. Be it Ministerial Orders, travel restrictions, social distancing, self-isolation or even lockdown mandates—the result is the same. Educational leaders, similar to leaders everywhere, find themselves questioning how best to live and work amidst the crisis of COVID-19. The reality is there are no easy answers.

The instructional leader's role is often analogous to that of an orchestral conductor, a cathedral architect or a ship's captain in that he or she is a wise and guiding light. These leaders give a sense of direction when the way appears unclear. They respond to the needs of the group in order to get things done. Finally, in times of stress or anxiety at school, instructional leaders inspire optimism, giving others hope for a successful outcome.

It is pretty certain that these are stressful times. Terms such as unprecedented, uncharted terrain and pandemonium have dominated the headlines. Threats of the spread of COVID-19 have thrown a veritable curveball at society and, understandably, society has been caught off guard. In schools, teachers, parents, students and community members have all felt the impact of the imposed restrictions and find themselves seeking solutions for meaningful student learning to what they hope is a temporary situation.

Charles Lemert, an American sociologist who has written extensively on social theory, globalization and culture, tells us that during a crisis, we often feel as if "our bright hopes have been darkened" and our familiar world feels less stable and "less hospitable" (2004). Lemert accurately identifies a very human response of "wishing the world could rearrange itself to meet the crisis." Over the past few weeks, I suspect we have all been there.

However, Lemert reminds us that the etymology or real meaning of the term crisis is "turning point." When confronted by a crisis, we recognize that however difficult, we must accept that things can go either way—better or worse. He asserts that we cannot say what will become as a result, except that things will be different. The bottom line is that there is no going back.

Today, many aspects of the teachers' professional practice are at a turning point. Some teachers may feel more like "instructional MacGyvers" as they "improvise quick solutions in less-than-ideal circumstances." While others, transitioning and trying different modes of instructional delivery, see this as a much welcome and long overdue opportunity. Regardless, it may be that the crisis in which we find ourselves today offers us the opportunity to take stock and recalibrate our efforts as instructional leaders and supporting our teachers as they migrate to a new approach to student learning.

Recent research of effective school leadership during anxious or crisis-laden times introduces a critical and timely component to some tried and true approaches.

- Communicate consistent messages. Communicate what you know and what you do not know. Acknowledge that sometimes there are no easy answers.

- Explain your plans. Transparency is a precursor to trust.

- Ask for input. You may not have all the answers but you can invite others to help you make the best plan given the situation. Actively involving others can help reduce others' sense of powerlessness.

- Be flexible. We often find that the situation is changing daily, if not hourly. Be open to new information and keep moving forward. Often momentum is more important than the plan.

- Be positive and project confidence in your team and their commitment to the students and their learning.

- Celebrate small wins. Remember, momentum and hope are critical and although those around you may be too busy to say thank you, regular words of encouragement and thanks mean a lot during a crisis.

These days we hear many people referring to the new normal. Lemert reminds us that, as no one knows how a crisis will pan out, we must begin to think of things in a new light. Perhaps that is the best answer—for now.

Stay well and be kind to yourself and one another. ■

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