

Via the Seine | Special Report

Learning to thrive | *A message from Wendy Bloomfield, Chair, Board of Trustees*

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour and some style.”

This quotation from writer Maya Angelou has always resonated with me, but never more than now, with all of the challenges that have been tossed our way in the midst of this pandemic. We are all certainly learning to cope in a new world.

Our students and their families have been impacted significantly, and are caring for children at home, spending

time on school work, often working remotely or as essential workers away from their families. We recognize that this time is a struggle for everyone and we applaud you for everything you’re doing.

I’m equally impressed with all of our staff, starting with our Superintendent, Mike Borgfjord, who has been going non-stop to make sure our staff, students and families have the tools they need. All of our staff have done an incredible job – responding quickly and adapting with patience, flexibility and determination – to make the best of this situation

and ensure our students continue learning while our families get the support they need. The stories in these new digital issues of Via the Seine are great examples, and we hope they help you feel more connected to our division during these trying times.

As for our Board of Trustees, we are still meeting, virtually for now. You can find information on how to access the YouTube live stream of our monthly public meetings a few days before the meeting, on our website at www.srsd.ca. We hope you’ll join us on May 26 and June 23, 2020. ●

A virtual visit



● Darian, Grade 1 at RCH, built models at home of all the buildings in his community, including this service station and church.

Grade 1 students at Richer School took a walk around their communities together – without leaving their homes.

Teacher Lesa Chapman took her class on a virtual “community walk” as part of the Social Studies curriculum. Instead of an actual tour, they connected online and used Google Maps to explore their towns – Richer, Ross and Ste. Genevieve – visiting local landmarks, buildings and each student’s house.

The students discussed how their communities compared to the one they read about in a book and how the places in each of their three towns were similar or different. After the virtual community walk, they used materials they had at home to build communities and share their knowledge, by drawing pictures or using blocks, LEGO bricks, toys or Play-Doh.

“The students loved exploring in a new way, and we were still able to cover the curriculum authentically using technology along with a hands-on piece,” Chapman says. ●

Connecting en français

Speaking the language daily is key to keeping French Immersion students engaged and learning. So the idea that kids from families that don’t speak any French at home could spend five months without practicing their language skills worried teachers and administrators at Collège Lorette Collegiate.

The solution? Connecting students for some French conversation “en ligne” (online).

Two student support teachers and Vice Principal Francine Lepage-Lemoine created channels of groups of four or five students who meet virtually once a week on Microsoft Teams.

“We talk in French about our week, our challenges, our success stories,” says Lepage-Lemoine. “Students are happy to have that connection with someone from the school.”

They also created larger “teams” for each grade level, and post various activities and contests that promote connecting with the school and with the larger Francophone community. ●

Sharing Indigenous culture through storytelling

One of Manitoba's best Indigenous storytellers has been inspiring students at three schools over the past few weeks with virtual visits to their classes.

Author, retired educator and Métis Elder Joe McLellan is known for his book series featuring origin stories about Nanabosho – a shape-shifter who was sent to Earth by Gitche Manitou to teach the Ojibwe people. McLellan has been visiting students throughout May by joining their online class video conferences.

“Joe is a great storyteller who has been a really powerful resource and source of support for our Indigenous students to see themselves in the learning, and for our non-Indigenous communities in our schools to see a different perspective,” explains Sandy Turcotte,

the division's Indigenous Education Consultant.

McLellan has visited the four Grade 5/6 classes at La Barrière Crossings School (LBC) to tell stories and discuss the important role of oral history in Indigenous culture and the significance of Elders as storytellers and people with experience in life who pass on that wisdom, Turcotte adds.

The LBC students have been exploring the theme of origin stories and are now working on doing their own storytelling, retelling or creating an origin story.

McLellan has also done online visits with students from École St. Adolphe School to talk about the use of plants in Indigenous life, culture and medicines, and visited a biology class from Collège Lorette Collegiate. 🟡

Math by Minecraft

Some students don't have to choose between playing video games and doing homework: they get to do both in Andrew Slade's Grade 5/6 class at Dawson Trail School.

The Education Edition of the popular building video game Minecraft has been made available to schools for free until June. When Slade – looking for something to help students stay engaged while learning at home – proposed using the program to his students, they were overwhelmingly on board.

The program allows students to use digital building blocks to work on projects in online Minecraft “worlds” either independently or collaborating in real time. Slade – after teaching himself to use the program – now uses it to teach and practice math with his students. They have built two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and figures for geometry lessons, and used fractions, ratios, decimals and percentages to represent crops they planted in virtual gardens.

“It really helps with displaying things concretely, which is a part of math that can get overlooked. They have to think about what they're building and represent what they're thinking, helping to develop their number sense, while also catching up with their friends,” Slade says.

“Distance learning has been a challenge for everybody, but it has also been a neat time to try some new things and see what works.” 🟡

Strength in numbers

Every teacher has their own unique style of running their classroom. But now that classes are held at home, teachers from each grade are banding together more than usual to offer consistent programming to students.

At École Lorette Immersion, the three teachers for each K-8 grade group are meeting daily over conference or video call to plan and organize learning for students as a unified team. They build weekly learning packages, which are reviewed by the school's Student Services team to ensure the plans are inclusive and accessible to all students.



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“We have collaborated to focus on new platforms and applications to support learning for our students, limiting the choices to one or two platforms for each grade group to ensure consistency for families,” says Principal Mireille Bazin-Berryman.

For example, Kindergarten to Grade 4 teachers are all using SeeSaw to offer the French language to students, while Grades 5 to 8 teachers are having regularly scheduled meetings with students through Microsoft Teams, the school division's online platform. Both electronic and hard copy options for all work are available so families can access materials depending on their need. 🟡