

# Via the Seine

## Report to the Community

### Making their voices heard



🗨️ Members of the Student Trustee Board from all three high schools (about half the group is pictured here) at the MSBA convention, where they presented in March.

A group formed just over a year ago by our high school students to give themselves a united voice across the division is being recognized provincially for their efforts.

The Student Trustee Board (STB) was awarded the Manitoba School Boards Association's (MSBA) Student Citizenship Award in the Grade 9-12 Group category, recognizing outstanding young people who are active participants and leaders in their communities and schools. The STB includes students from Collège St. Norbert Collegiate (CSNC), Collège Lorette Collegiate (CLC) and Ste. Anne Collegiate (SAC).

"We know we have support from our SRSD board of trustees, but getting this approval from all these other adults on school boards across the province is awesome. It tells us this actually is a good idea, it's effective and we're going to make a difference," says Grade 12 student Taylor D., who founded the STB and leads the CSNC branch.

Before winning the award, the STB also presented at the MSBA's annual convention in March, sharing their story and impressing school trustees from across Manitoba.

Our board of trustees, who have embraced the student group and nominated them for the award, has formed a new Student Trustee Board Committee of three trustees and one superintendent to liaise with the STB. They also just passed a motion to add two non-voting seats at all board meetings, for representatives of the student board.

"The board believes in the group, the importance of engaging with these students, and helping them increase their voice along with their ability to collaborate and become contributors to divisional decisions," says Chris Szun, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction & Curriculum.

Having their voices heard in this way – while also learning communication skills, building confidence and forming new relationships – has been positive for all of the students, Taylor says.

"We're excited to see the results of all our work directly in the schools. But it's also exciting seeing everyone being ambitious, asking questions at board meetings and just becoming better people." 🌟

### Spreading kindness and thanks

Students across our division celebrated Random Acts of Kindness Day in February in many ways. At École Lorette Immersion (ELI), young artists in Lori Davis' Grade 1/2 class created and delivered colourful paintings with messages of love and gratitude to every staff member in the building, which includes both the school and the divisional board office.

"People greeted the students with big smiles and joyful messages of appreciation and kindness. They were so proud and excited," Davis says. "It helps them develop empathy and compassion, increase self-esteem, improve mood and build a class culture focused on kindness." 🌟



### Land Acknowledgement

Rivière Seine River School Division is located on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples and the homeland of the Red River Métis. SRSD respects the treaties that were made on this territory and are dedicated to working together in the spirit of reconciliation for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows.

## Dare not to swear



Grade 7/8 LBC students show their *Dare Not to Swear* pledge bracelets to City Councillor Markus Chambers (St. Norbert – Seine River).

Middle school students at La Barrière Crossings School (LBC) are swearing... that they'll make good choices about saying bad words.

Teacher Jeff Gusdal's Grade 7/8 class has been participating in a *Dare Not to Swear* campaign, spreading the word within their classroom, across the Grade 5-8 school and beyond about how profanity isn't cool.

"We're trying to not only slow down the current rate of swearing, but also build our school and community culture and create more positive relationships at school," Gusdal says.

The class received a \$500 grant from the Winnipeg Police's *Cool 2Be Kind* campaign, a positive behaviour, anti-bullying initiative that promotes the benefits of being kind to others and making good choices in school and in life.

"Some people believe they are 'just words' but what they don't realize is that most of these words have a negative impact, and are usually used to hurt someone," wrote Karter, a Grade 8 student, in an article for the school newsletter about the campaign.

The class has now implemented the *Dare Not to Swear* program schoolwide. More than three-quarters of the 170 students have signed a pledge to tone down any swearing and are wearing *Dare Not to Swear* bracelets at school. A group of program ambassadors from the class visited the K-4 students at nearby Parc la Salle School to talk about the program, and hope to bring the message to more students throughout our division.

"Students are really engaged in the campaign. They have fantastic ideas and some of them have been great ambassadors and promoters," Gusdal says. "We've also tied this into treating others better and not using phrases like 'shut up'. I think there has been improvement in all areas, and less negativity." 🟡

## Math students: please stand up

A new method of teaching math to high school students is standing out – because of the way it has students standing up.

Quinn Morris, who teaches Grades 9–12 Math at Collège St. Norbert Collegiate (CSNC), is one of several teachers in the division to embrace "vertical teaching," which he began using in 2019. This method helps students at all levels learn to solve math problems by showing their work on whiteboards that they stand at around the classroom, working solo or in small groups, instead of just sitting at a desk writing on paper. More than a dozen whiteboards now line Morris's classroom walls for students to use during class.

"There's no 'front' of the class – it's just an open concept learning environment, which seems to be more inviting," Morris explains. "I stand in the middle of the room, do a 360 and I look around. If I notice that a group is struggling, I go over and help out. It's an absolute visible way to gauge whether students are accessing the material, and giving them feedback right away."

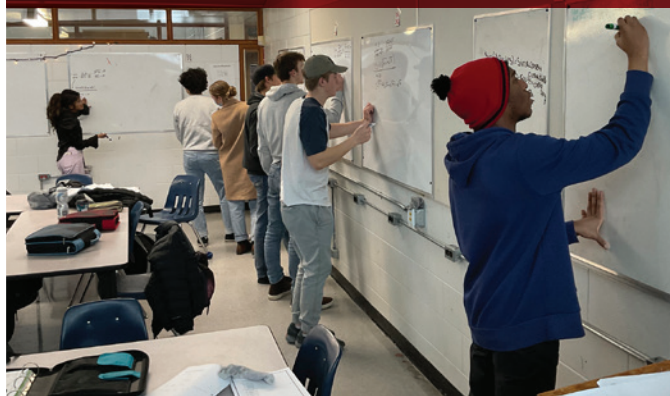
Morris says that in addition to the increased productivity that comes with standing up while working, this method helps students let go of any pre-conceived notion of a "one right way" to do math or arrive at a solution, and to see that everybody learns differently.

"It's a great way to have students feel confident, feel engaged, and get direct, immediate feedback on how they're learning."

Grade 9 students who are new to this way of learning math are often apprehensive about using the whiteboards at first, but by Grade 11 or 12 the same students are confidently jumping up, grabbing a whiteboard marker and getting right to work, Morris says.

"Seeing that everyone is doing their own thing and focusing on their own tasks, working towards the next level of their learning, takes so much of the pressure off a student, and they can express themselves in their own way." 🟡

Grade 12 CSNC student Dominion T. (front) and his classmates work out a Calculus problem on multiple whiteboards during a "vertical teaching" math class.





## Taking learning outside

Climbing trees, jumping off rocks and playing with sticks can be fun for kids – and can also help them learn.

Young students in many of our schools are enjoying these and other outdoor activities more and more these days, as part of the Kids at Play (KAP) program, the extended-day program for Kindergarten students that provides child-centred, play-based learning experiences with an Early Childhood Educator in the morning or afternoon opposite their half-day of regular Kindergarten.

“We’ve been working on enhancing land-based learning in all 10 KAP schools, using community parks, forest locations and spaces on school grounds as outdoor learning sites, visiting them anywhere from once a week to every day,” says Lisa Balcaen, SRSD’s ECE Program Coordinator. “A key part of land-based learning is for children to have repeated regular access to the same piece of land so they can observe changes and details and develop deep authentic connections with that land.”

Being outdoors and physically active is critical to children’s well-being and holistic development, helping them gain fundamental skills and knowledge that contribute to developing critical thinkers who are



Ste. Anne Elementary Kindergarten / KAP student Freya H. explores in the schoolyard as part of outdoor “learning on the land.”

engaged and grounded, Balcaen adds.

“One of our rationales for this approach to learning is the natural ways in which it fosters children’s environmental stewardship and connection to Indigenous ways of knowing. Teaching the connection between us and the land has a direct relationship to the calls to action in truth and reconciliation,” she explains.

Being outside allows students to challenge themselves and develop skills through active play, which helps build core muscles while also boosting emotional regulation, focus and self-confidence, says Ste. Anne Elementary School’s KAP instructor Nadine Lidgett,

who is certified as a Forest School Practitioner by the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada. Lidgett regularly takes her students and a wagon filled with magnifying glasses, nets, pails, blankets, nature books and more to a local park, as well as a treed area in the school playground.

“I set up different learning areas, but the children are free to move around and use materials as needed for their play, Lidgett says. “It’s clear to see the joy and engagement from the children when they’re given the time, space and materials to freely explore, move and learn outside.”

## Trying something new

École Lorette Immersion (ELI) students took a chance and tried something new while exercising both their bodies and minds at the school’s first annual *Wellness Fest*.

The March event was an entire day dedicated to choice, learning new skills, community involvement and belonging, says Tracey Kirby-Savard, the K-8 school’s Learning Support Teacher.

“Our school well-being committee had been discussing ways to promote a positive sense of mental health for our students and staff. This led to reflections on what we do to keep a healthy balance in our own lives, and how we can introduce our students to different experiences that could be practiced easily at home or found within our community of Lorette,” Kirby-Savard recalls.

The committee invited community clubs, divisional consultants, staff members and a few talented parents to facilitate sessions including Taekwondo, Métis beading, drumming, soccer, coding, hip hop dance, skiing, snowshoeing and chess. Students participated in three sessions of their choice – held at the school either indoors or outdoors – plus everyone went skating at the local arena with their grade group. The school’s Parent



ELI students try out Taekwondo in a *Wellness Fest* session.

Advisory Council (PAC) provided each student with yogurt parfaits for a healthy yet tasty snack during the day.

“It was important for us to offer a variety of activities that would appeal to the interests and abilities of all of our students, and to expose them to experiences they’ve never had the option to try before,” Kirby-Savard says. “They were able to take a chance by trying something new, which created a sense of pride and belonging, along with the opportunity to create new connections.”