



Garden Valley Teachers' Association

The Apple Core

November 2020

Upcoming Events

MTS Telephone Town Hall- 7pm, Tuesday, Nov. 24th

GVTA Executive Mtg – 4pm, Tuesday Dec. 1st

Virtual Rumors Comedy Club-8:30pm, Friday Dec. 4th

Non-instructional Day- Monday, Dec. 7th

GVSD Board Meeting- 7pm, Tuesday, Dec. 8th

CB Committee Mtg – 4pm, Thursday Dec. 10th

Virtual Paint Night –7pm, Monday Dec. 14th

December Apple Core – Tuesday, Dec. 15th

PD Committee Mtg – 4pm, Tuesday, Dec. 15th

Non-instructional Day- Dec. 18

President's Address

One month ago, I wrote to all of you in hopes of challenging our “perfect teacher” narratives, to make plans as to where you are going to pull back when times get tough.

In the past 30 days, we have had significant changes take place here in Garden Valley. We had our first COVID cases in our schools, multiple staff and student isolations, classes that have moved to remote learning, public schools shifting to a Restricted Orange response level, the introduction of legislation to move to provincial bargaining, and a provincial shift to Red, just to name a few.

Throughout these changes, I have heard the constant call for more staff to help fill needs, additional family and personal sick leave so that staff can adhere to provincial health guidelines, and a sense of exhaustion and frustration coming from multiple sources. One of the sources of frustration is the consistent lack of clarity from the provincial government. However, I do not want to discuss their faults or missteps in this address. Nor do I want to discuss the unsustainability of the current provincial practices. Preaching to the choir may be fine on Sundays but there is a reason that Sundays only happen once a week.

This month, I want to share a message of thanks.

An honest and meaningful act of gratitude-- whether it be mentally, through thank you notes, encouraging words, gifts etc.—shifts our focus from our issues to our supports. This shift is beneficial for our well-being and longevity. Our current state is far from perfect, but a sentiment of thanks can build that connection that we are all desiring right now.

Mr. Rogers has a famous quote about people who help in difficult times:

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' ”

Thank you to all the people who have helped and continue to help within our education community. Thank you to:

- Our retired teachers who choose to fill terms and serve as guest teachers.
- Our custodial staff who have put in many extra hours with unexpected deep cleans.
- Our principals, vice principals, guidance and resource teams who have worked hard to be creative as they solve the usual challenges in addition to COVID concerns.
- Our EAs, clinicians, library staff, and school liaisons who help us ensure that our students are well taken care of and that we are just one part of our students' villages.
- Our bus drivers who are often the first and last divisional staff that many of our students see in a day, and they take care of getting them between home and school with care.
- Our classroom, specialist, vocational, and itinerant teachers who offer consistency and kindness to our kids while adapting to unprecedented challenges.
- Our guest teachers and those on LTPs who are filling the gaps that help keep our system going.

This list could be pages longer to talk about supportive parents, those in decision-making roles who are choosing to support teachers, healthcare workers, and the community as a whole for the support that they have shown us. I want to finish with one last thank you to the members of GVTA.

Thank you to those of you who continue to engage honestly and openly about your struggles, concerns, successes, and triumphs. To all who are making choices that are the best for themselves, their families, and their specific situations. To those who continue to mask-up, wash hands, manage the inconveniences of these protocols in order to mitigate the risk for the rest of us – thank you. It is because of your continued diligence that we will be able to endure this COVID marathon and have more loved ones make it through with us.

As we move forward into the final month of 2020, I hope that you can access a mindset of gratitude to help support you and yours. I hope that clarity may find you so that you will be invigorated and that you may be able to continue this race. I hope that you find connection and solace to remind you how cherished you are.

In solidarity,

Mike Urichuk

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gvtapresident@gmail.com

Provincial Bargaining

Bill 45 has been introduced in the legislature. Bill 45 makes changes to existing legislation to allow for provincial collective bargaining. The theory behind the provincial bargaining model is that, if followed as intended, this model ensures greater equity in salaries and working conditions across divisions. Across the province, there are currently variances in collective agreement language regarding items such as salaries, preparation time, extra-curricular activities, and more.

Although MTS does support provincial bargaining, there is current language within this bill that calls for major change. Although this language may change before it is passed and proclaimed, some information to be aware of is as follows:

Garden Valley Teachers' Association members work on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, and the homeland of the Métis nation. GVTA respects the Treaties that were made on this territory.

- This bill incorporates the division’s ability to pay into the arbitration process, which impedes the neutrality of an arbitration board. This clause is cause for concern, as it is reminiscent of legislation enacted in the 1990s, which undermined teacher collective bargaining.
- The word school “board” is removed from the legislation and is replaced by school “division(s) or district(s).” The only reference to school boards is the recognition of the Manitoba School Boards’ Association.
- The most recent local collective agreement will be in effect until a provincial agreement can be bargained.
- The implementation date of this bill will be dependent on its passage through the legislative process. This passage may happen as early as Spring 2021.

[Click here](#) to read more. [Click here](#) to read an FAQ on Provincial Bargaining.

Notice of Policy Change

During the GVTA executive meeting on November 3, a policy change was proposed and is tabled to be passed during the December 1 executive meeting. If you would like to speak to any of the motions listed below, please contact gvtapresident@gmail.com and you will be sent an invitation to speak at the meeting.

Proposed policy changes are as follows:

Topic/ Policy	Current	Proposed
Cell Phone	The GVTA provides the president with a cell phone or reimburses the president for using their personal cell phone at the basic rate of their chosen service provider. This includes unlimited text, a talk, & a data plan - to sufficiently serve the association.	“The GVTA provides the president with a cell phone or reimburses the president for using their personal cell phone through a service provider of their choice, following the current MTS cell phone reimbursement rate for MTS provincial executive members. ”

Social & Teacher Wellness

Brenda Richer & Carmelle Gerein

Teacher: Where is your homework?

Student: I lost it fighting this kid who said you weren’t the best teacher

s-relatable.tumblr.com

The activities planned will have to be postponed/virtual , however, we are hopeful that the new year will allow us to carry on. If you would like to be put on the list for the following activities, please email Brenda.richer@gvdsd.ca

Virtual Paint Night December 14 at 7pm.

The host location will be at ... your home! The Winkler Arts & Culture will provide all necessary supplies. This event is open to teaches and their children over 12. Spaces will be limited.

Postponed Cooking Class at The Central Station ~~December 8th at 4:30~~

In this hands-on class, students will be instructed on how to prep and organize 3 different meals, which can be heated in the comfort of your home or stored safely in the freezer for those busy days. Meals so quick and easy Jamie Oliver would approve! This event will have limited spaces and follow Public Health orders and Physical Distancing protocols. ~~Registration until November 30th~~ with limited spaces.

Virtual Rumors Comedy Club December 4th at 8:30pm

The virtual show will allow to finish dinner and put the little ones to bed, curl up on the sofa with your favorite snacks/beverage and workout your core with some laughter!

RULES AND PROCEDURES:

Your ticket gets you into the Zoom show. Be sure to download the app beforehand. We recommend doing it on your computer or phone. The audience will have the ability to have their mics on so that all can hear your infectious laughs. We simply ask that you minimize any ambient background noise. And obviously any attempt to interrupt the show will be muted, so please be respectful of that.

Once you buy the ticket, you be emailed a Zoom link. This will be valid only for you. If more than one person attempts to use it, both will be kicked out of the show

Winter fun at Winkler Bible Camp January 23 from 1-4 pm

Parents rejoice, we have given you the afternoon free or you are welcome to join. Winkler Bible Camp will be the host location for an afternoon of activities with horses & petting zoo, snow shoeing and tobogganing, weather dependant. Firepits and hot chocolate will be provided. at this time, it is still on, please email Brenda.richer@gvsd.ca as space will be limited!

In a recent search, I found a resource offering free educational games and stories. Parents can go to <https://www.pbs.org/parents/> to input the ages you are interested in for more ideas. For the little ones this is the direct link <https://pbskids.org/games/> , please monitor children online.

Monthly Recipe:

Did someone say delicious?

[This cookie is healthy, delicious and easy to make!](#)

MTS ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

YOUR UNION WORKING FOR YOU



Over the past months, MTS has heard from hundreds of members across the province about the challenges of teaching in this COVID-19 reality. This feedback has been instrumental in helping guide our advocacy and lobbying efforts with government.

Here are some of the actions we have taken on your behalf, along with some outstanding issues that we are continuing to raise with government.

Safety

MTS was successful in its call for the mandatory wearing of masks in public schools.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- reduce class sizes to help achieve the two-metres of physical distance
- hire more teachers and EAs to facilitate a reduction in class size
- provide better access to Health Links and COVID-19 testing for school staff

Consistency

MTS was successful in ensuring that teachers can now stay home when ill, without having to provide a sick note.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- mandate policies and protocols to ensure optimal safety for all staff, such as ensuring that all school divisions adhere to public health orders for conditions under which students can return to school after being ill

Achievable expectations

MTS was successful in lobbying the government to suspend Grade 12 exams for January 2021.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- review provincial report card requirements for teachers and school leaders
- suspend the requirement for teacher and support staff evaluations this year
- credit school divisions with the three non-instructional days that were taken on September 2-4, with the mandated early return to school for teachers
- permit school divisions to schedule weekly non-instructional time, up to a half-day, for schools to plan, prepare, pivot, and provide sustainable instruction and support for all students

Blended-learning

MTS will not accept a model in which teachers provide in-person and remote instruction simultaneously. In Code Orange, when temporary remote learning is offered as a choice for parents, the impact on teacher workload is intensified.

The Society is calling on school divisions to:

- discontinue the 'duplex model' (splitting one classroom into two to allow for two-metres of physical distance. This model results in one teacher being responsible for two distinct sets of learners in two locations.)
- hire more teachers and EAs
- provide increased planning time to coordinate new learning and delivery formats
- provide increased planning time for teachers who are reassigned
- provide resources and professional learning opportunities
- provide assurance that cameras required for blended-learning, will only be used for instruction purposes and not as a means of monitoring employees

Mental health

MTS continues to raise mental health and wellness as a serious concern.

The Society is calling on school divisions to:

- establish mechanisms for ongoing teacher feedback
- invest in supports to prevent teacher burn out
- provide supports for the social and emotional impacts of positive cases in a school
- set expectations and provide supports for teachers to set boundaries to maintain work/life balance
- provide clear and consistent communication of roles and expectations

Substitute teachers

There is a shortage of substitute teachers under normal circumstances, which will now be far more pronounced as teachers heed public health advice to stay home when sick.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- create a plan for recruiting and retaining substitute teachers
- establish a bank of sick days for COVID-19 related purposes, accessible to substitute teachers

When in doubt, reach out

Perhaps you are being asked to clean your classroom, move furniture or drive a child with flu-like symptoms home. Is this part of your job? When in doubt, reach out.

Contact a Staff Officer for any questions or concerns related to the issues here, or any that may arise over the coming months.

MTS Staff Officers can be reached at the numbers listed below:

Phone: (204) 888-7961 Toll Free: 1-800-262-8803

Use your voice

Speak to colleagues; speak to parents; speak to friends and neighbours (safely, of course) about the realities in your classroom.

Send a letter to your MLA, the education minister and premier – describe your day, your challenges – tell them what you need to succeed.

Tell us your experience. We can use the tools at our disposal to spread the word.

Your voice is a powerful tool. Use it.



USE YOUR VOICE!

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24,
2020 | 7 P.M. – 8 P.M.**

Join us for a telephone townhall with:
MTS President James Bedford +
General Secretary Danielle Fullan Kolton