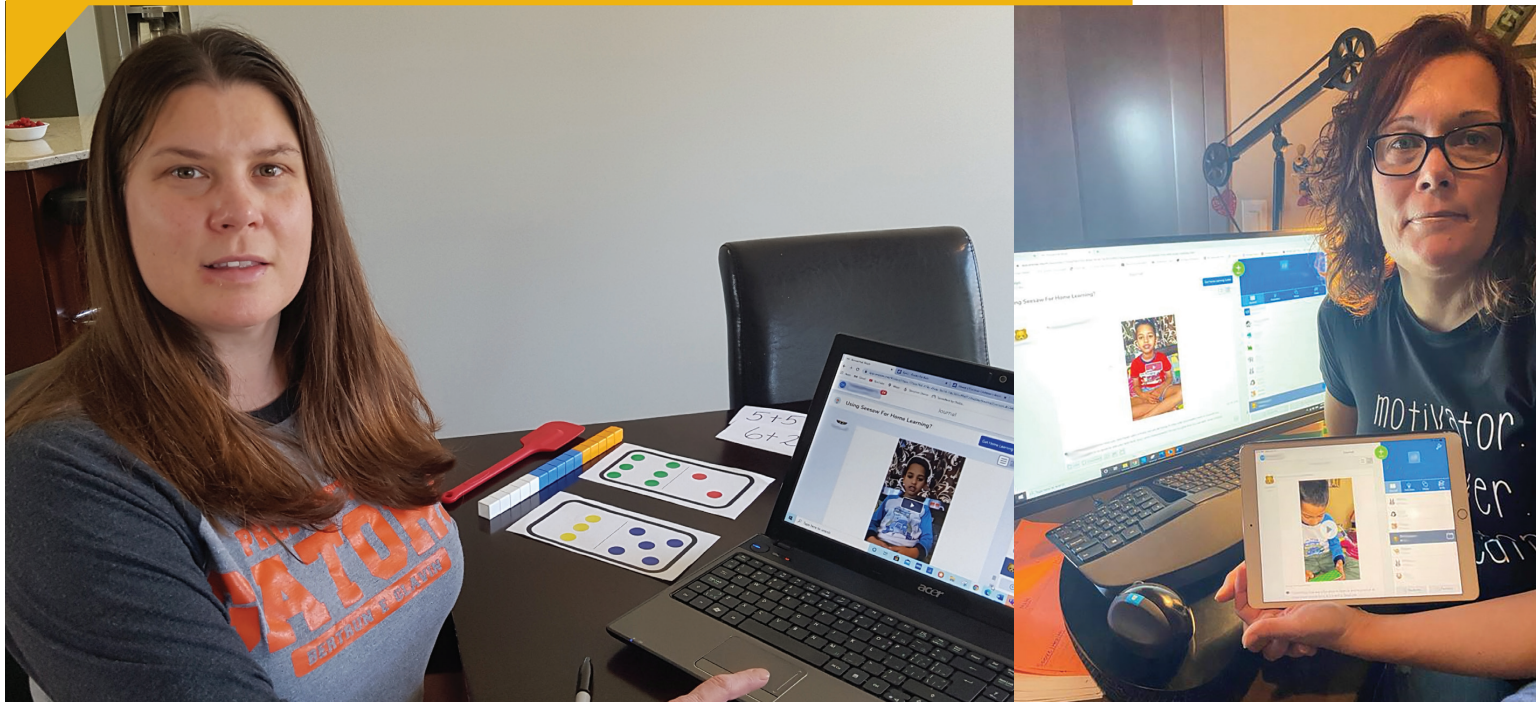


Issue three
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the torch



Grade one team teachers Dayna Kowalchuk (left) and Gwen Relph (right) work from their homes supporting their students, including two boys currently in India.

Learning continues at RETSD

In-school classes for RETSD students may have been cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but learning is certainly not over.

While staff and students are at home, teachers continue to work with their students in different ways, including online, phone and hardcopy packages sent to students' homes. Online tools connect teachers and students through meetings, calls or chats. These tools include a space for work to be assigned and submitted and for teachers to give feedback. For students without access to online technology, work is provided in other ways, including printed materials.

No matter how students are doing their work, there is no intention to have them sitting in front of a screen all the time. Teachers are providing work that is creative, challenging and interesting in a variety of ways that include non-screen time.

"Our teachers are being very resourceful in creating home learning opportunities," says Karen Boyd, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Programming at RETSD. "We also know families have to adjust to help their children during this difficult time. When we are able to welcome students back to school, teachers will support them to catch up if needed. In the meantime, please contact the teacher if you

have questions about your child's learning."

Families can help their children by providing time and space to read, write and pursue educational interests. Parents and other caregivers are such an important part of a child's world of learning, but they are not expected to become the teacher and they are not being asked to homeschool their children. Students still have their teachers—and the students' homes can be a place to learn through play, cooking, fixing the car, playing outside, playing cards, even some video games and drawing the world around them.

"We want to thank our wonderfully

supportive parents and families and our incredible teachers who are all coming together in fantastic ways to help students continue learning at home," Boyd says.

Making home learning happen took considerable planning in a short period of time. Once the division knew students would not be returning to their schools, principals and teachers around RETSD shared knowledge and ideas to best support their communities. Staff at Bertrun E. Glavin School were among the many division staff who were trained in the technology needed to continue connecting with their students.

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"There was great collaboration on the part of administrators from all schools to share ideas and co-ordinate the best plan," Bertrun E. Glavin Principal Ryan Francis said.

The plans have had some amazing results, with teachers going to great lengths to reach all students, whether they have technology or even if they're not in the country.

"One of our Grade 1 families was

caught in the middle of a visit to India and were unable to return," said Francis. "A teacher managed to get hold of a relative and connect with the family, allowing learning to continue for two students in India!"

School support for the community has also gone beyond distance teaching. Bertrun E. Glavin School is delivering hampers to some families, made from the school Breakfast Program pantry and

supported by donations from Maple Leaf Foods and school staff. They also ran a "need a lunch/take a lunch" station on the day when students could pick up personal items.

Across the division, staff have created strong relationships with their students and find it difficult not seeing them on a daily basis. Francis knows that staff will focus a lot of time on reconnecting with

their students when they can return to the classroom.

For more ideas about helping your children learn at home, visit the provincial government's resources at edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/mylearning. You also can stay up to date on school and division news and the impact of COVID-19 on our school community at retsd.mb.ca.

Board of trustees governing though the pandemic

Since mid-March, everyone has had to change their daily way of life, often very dramatically. This is no different for the nine trustees who make up the school board of the River East Transcona School Division. Despite the new reality of working from home, the trustees are continuing to fulfill their mandate to govern the division. Even in these times when schools and the division office are closed, the board is still responsible to our community for the safety, quality and cost of education in the division.

"It's business not quite as usual, but business is continuing on a routine basis," said board chair Colleen Carswell. "The trustees remain committed to do the job we were elected to do on behalf of our community, throughout the pandemic."

The board meets for its scheduled bi-monthly and committee

meetings using videoconference as a way to stay connected while protecting the community and each other by staying home. Trustees are still busy working from home with parents and community through phone calls and emails. The board and senior administration team at the division are in regular contact and are working together in responding to and respecting the COVID-19 measures set out by the province. Equally important to the board is making sure the teaching staff across the 42 schools are continuing to help the division's students learn from their homes.

Trustees understand these are difficult times and they proudly support the way RETSD staff have stepped up to the challenges. They have seen how school staff have found unique ways to help students learn and complete their school year from home.

"All of us on the board truly appreciate the efforts of our over 2,500 staff at the division," Carswell continued. "They have shown their strengths and dedication, with many carrying on with their primary duties and taking on additional activities to keep the division and schools going, even if the buildings themselves are closed."

Division staff, like so many others, are balancing how they continue working from home while sharing home office space with partners and juggling their own children's home learning needs. Some staff have stepped up to clean out lockers for students once schools were closed and others are starting to prepare for September's hoped-for reopening of schools by cleaning schools and buses.

The board encourages everyone to stay informed about the latest COVID-19 news as it affects

students and schools by regularly checking the division's website (retsd.mb.ca). The board also invites you to visit its page (retsd.mb.ca/yourretsd/BoardofTrustees) to view upcoming agendas and minutes of meetings, learning what the board is working on and how you can keep informed on our work.

Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, school or the division with your questions or concerns. Your trustees are always willing to speak to our community on their issues of concerns. The education, health and well-being of our students, staff and community is our top priority.

The board of trustees would like to thank everyone for their patience and support in these past weeks and we look forward to the start of a new school year in September. Stay well as we navigate these unprecedented times together.

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