

# MASTARS

## Kids without Choices

### SAG Report 2005

Wes Warren's presentation "Kids Without Choices" focused on the prevalence of mental disorders in today's society. The statistics that were cited were based on the N.A.M.I. research numbers gathered in 2003. Although, the numbers are reliable, it must be realized that predictions for some schools would be much lower because many students with these types of disorders do not (continue) make it into high school. Other realities, involving comorbidity of disorders (the prevalence

of more than one disorder in the same individual) and the fact that many disorders do not fully reveal themselves until early adulthood will also reduce the number of cases we see in our schools. Nonetheless, the numbers do not deceive us that drastically, and for that reason, MASTARS has taken the liberty of publishing these statistics for your perusal. Determining a estimate for your school is as simple as multiplying the prevalence percentage with your school's total population. The prevalence results may make for

some interesting discussions with colleagues.

### Disorder type Incidence

#### NEUROLOGICAL

1. A.D.H.D. 3.5%
2. ASPERGERS 0.3%
3. TOURETTES 0.4%

#### MOOD

1. DEPRESSION 4.5%
2. BI POLAR 1.2%

#### ANXIETY

1. SOCIAL 3.7%
2. PANIC 1.7%
3. OCD 3.0%
4. GENERAL (other) 6.5%

#### SCHIZOPHRENIA

1.0 %

#### SUICIDE (attempted)

2.1%

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## SAG 2006

Mastar's will be brining you two new speakers:

**Alan McEvoy**—will be speaking about Bullying by teachers and problems of violence and victimization.

**Nahanni Fontaine**—will be sharing her new research on 'Girls in Gangs' - based on research here in Manitoba.

**Hope to see you there!**

**MASTAR's 2006 SAG**  
*will be held at the Celebrations*  
**Dinner Theatre**  
 on  
**November 24, 2006**

## President's Message

This President's Letter has proven to be the most difficult to write. It is my intention to surrender the leadership of your SAG to another member. Over the past three years we increased our membership twice in size and have increased the SAG conference attendance by 60%. It has been my pleasure to serve as President of the Manitoba Association of Secondary Teachers of At-Risk Students (MASTARS).

As I reflect over this time, I remember fondly the following moments chosen from many:

- o Attendance at our SAG Conference, educators from all parts of Manitoba, NW Ontario, Alberta and Australia.
- o Feverish dialogue with other members of the Executive on what defines making a

difference with students at-risk.

- o Including University students as part of the SAG Conference Team.
- o Representing MASTARS both locally and at national conferences in the United States. Discovering that the education in Manitoba is far better off than we give ourselves credit for.
- o Meeting new people from all areas of education who share my passion for providing dynamic and enriching for young people.

I am now looking forward to the future in my new role as Past President, continuing to be involved with the Executive and with MASTARS. I value the benefits of SAG Day; learning new strategies, being confronted with ideas that challenge my beliefs, reenergizing

my battery through laughter, networking and meeting new teachers over lunch and during breaks and finally, gaining strength from others through the participation in an event with like minded people who share the same values as I do.

I hope you enjoy the new look of the newsletter; Carmelina Tarantino has spent countless hours putting together a great looking and information packed journal for you, our membership. I know you will find some value within its covers.

I look forward to seeing you next year at Celebration's Dinner Theatre on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 – Grey Cup Weekend.

Sincerely,

Jean-Paul Rochon

## Calling all MASTARS' MEMBERS...

Are you a team player?  
Do you like to get involved?  
Are you interested in current topics relating to At Risk Students in Manitoba?

If you answered yes to the above questions, then we need you!

We're looking for enthusiastic, high energy, motivated people to come aboard and join the Mastars Executive Council.

If you're interested, please email Jean-Paul Rochon at:  
[jrochon@retsd.mb.ca](mailto:jrochon@retsd.mb.ca)

We look forward to hearing from you!



## A Note from our SAG Volunteers

As volunteers from the Bachelor of Education After-Degree Program at the University of Winnipeg we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Manitoba Association of Secondary Teachers of At-Risk Students (MASTARS) Special Area Group (SAG) for having us. We volunteered for the conference that was held on October 21, 2005. Our volunteer duties included preparing conference packages before the conference date. While at the conference: preparing conference tables, and assisting at the registration table. Our experiences in volunteering at this SAG were very positive. The MASTARS executives made us feel very welcomed and appreciated.

As a result of our volunteering, we had the privilege of sitting in for the conference presentations. This was an excellent opportunity in that there was a very impressive team of speakers, each of whom was very knowledgeable and experienced in his or her particular field.

Dr. Laura Sokal presented her research on Gender Differences, particularly in regards to the academic

underachievement of male students. I found both the presentation and the research to be very interesting. Although Dr. Sokal was restricted to a lecture type format, due to the large number of audience members, she still managed to keep us thoroughly engaged and entertained.

Big Daddy Taz did a great job providing the audience with lunch time entertainment. Not only did he provide comedy relief, he also provided expressed his appreciation for educators and the wonderful job they do with a motivational pat on the back and a reminder that it only takes one person to make a difference in a person's life.

Wes Warren's presentation was great in that it featured his own student and his experiences. The realness of these illnesses and disorders that he spoke of came through. As well, Wes' passion and compassion for his students was both apparent and contagious. Mr. Warren was very insightful by providing teachers what they need to look for and possible strategies to employ when dealing with students who have

mental illnesses.

Aside from the presentations, both the meal and resources provided were outstanding. We especially appreciated receiving a copy of Chad Foster's, *Teenagers Preparing for the Real World*, along with the many brochures that related directly to topics covered in the presentations.

We are very glad to have had this experience. We were not only able to acquire new knowledge, but also able to acquire new acquaintances and perspectives. Our only hopes for future conferences would possibly to have selection on topics covered, for example to have two speakers in the morning and two in the afternoon. As this would provide more opportunity for more registrants, and could possibly eliminate those that only come for one speaker as it would allow more topics of interest to be covered. We thank you for having us as volunteers, as we enjoyed the day and found it to very valuable to academically and professionally. Denise Marks and Lindsay Girard

**Book your hotel room soon at the Canad Inns Fort Garry - 1850 Pembina Highway 261-7450 (SAG is the SAME weekend as the Grey Cup!)**

## Seven Guidelines for Providing Positive Reinforcement in the Classroom

- 1. Be specific and detailed when providing students any type of positive reinforcement.** Be sure to specifically tell the student what he or she did to earn the reinforcer and why their positive behaviour was important. For example, instead of just saying "Excellent job, John." you should say "John, excellent job on lining up quietly."
- 2. Reinforcement should always be contingent on specific student behaviours.** Your reinforcement should be delivered immediately following the occurrence of the social or academic skill that you are trying to teach or maintain. There are three learning situations when using contingent positive reinforcement for decreasing the probability of disruptive behaviour during class. These learning situations are (a) when a student is learning a new academic skill or important social behaviour, (b) when the new academic or social skill will require a lot of effort from the student, and (c) when learning an academic or social skill that is important to the subject.
- 3. The reinforcer you select should be age appropriate for the student.** For example, when praising students, use vocabulary that is appropriate to the age and the ability of the student. Listed below are several examples of age appropriate reinforcing activities for many students.
- 4. Use positive reinforcement frequently and intensively when students are learning new and difficult skills.** For example, JC is trying to learn math multiplication facts for the first time and math is JC's most difficult subject. Because of the difficulty of math for JC, he is more likely to cause behavior problems during the multiplication activity. To proactively increase

JC's learning success and increase his motivation, you should reinforce in a lively fashion all of his correct multiplication responses during the first few lessons.

- 5. Position yourself reasonably close to the student before you deliver the positive reinforcer.** Being close to the student will increase the effectiveness of your positive reinforcement. For example, if a student is working quietly and independently on a difficult assignment, walk up to the student and quietly tell her. "Tasha, your hard work on this assignment is going to pay off in a good grade. Keep it up!"
- 6. Use different types of positive reinforcement.** There are three separate categories from which a teacher can select positive reinforcers.

**Tangible** include any physical object that is given to students as reward for good behaviour.

**Social** involve interactions between two or more people. If the student finds the attention form interactions rewarding, teacher-student interactions are likely to increase the occurrence of the behaviours they follow.

**Activity** includes activities that children are allowed to do as a reward for appropriate behaviour. There are two types of activity reinforcers, nonacademic and academic. Nonacademic reinforcers include using a computer, listening to a CD, playing a board game, etc. Academic activities that serve as reinforcers are those that involve learning.

- 7. Establish your reinforcement plan by following three steps:**

**Step 1:** Develop a list of potential academic and nonacademic reinforcers. Teachers should

**Continued on page 5**

## Embarrassing Traffic Stop

A police car pulled me over near the high school where I teach. As the officer asked for my license and registration, my students began to drive past. Some honked their horns, others hooted, and still others stopped to admonish me for speeding.

Finally the officer asked me if I was a teacher at the school, and I told him I was. "I think you've paid your debt to society," he said with a smile, and left without giving me a ticket.

More jokes can be found at:  
<http://www.basicjokes.com/djoke.php>



have a list of social, activity and tangible reinforcers. Because reinforcers are defined only by their effect upon behaviour, it is possible for even learning activities to motivate students. Because of the diverse backgrounds of students, their disparate learning abilities and their different reinforcement and learning histories, teachers must have at their disposal a diverse set of reinforcers to meet the individual needs of students. To accommodate these differences among students, it is important to develop an extensive set of potential reinforcers as part of their instructional classroom management planning. Many teachers suggest using learning activities as reinforcers whenever students find them motivating as these activities increase the time the students are engaged in appropriate academic activities.

### 7 Guidelines for Reinforcement, continued

**Step 2:** Consider the type of activity when selecting a reinforcer. During the school day, students are generally engaged in one of these activities: teacher direct instruction, independent academic activities, and social activities (e.g., collaborative or cooperative groups). Use the

most powerful incentives during instructional activities. Because the potential for disruption is the greatest during instruction, students need frequent encouragement. When students are engaged in social activities (e.g. recess), less powerful reinforcers, such as praise, can maintain appropriate behaviour.

**Step 3:** Restructure reinforcement as students become motivated and skillful. If the same reinforcer is used continuously during an instructional unit, the effectiveness of that reinforcer will decrease and have little impact on the performance of the students. When planning what reinforcers to use during instruction, the time of the school year should be considered. For example, tangible reinforcers (e.g., tokens, candy), are best utilized at the beginning of the school year, preferably during the first 2-3 weeks, while less obtrusive social reinforcers (e.g., eye contact from the teacher) are more effective from midyear to the end of the school year. Also, the schedule, intensity, and timing of reinforcement can be altered as the skill levels of the students increase.

#### **Reference:**

*Ontario Association for Students at Risk, Sept 05*

## Alternatives to Expulsion, Suspension and Dropping Out of School Conference

I was lucky enough to represent MASTARS at the Alternatives to Expulsion, Suspension and Dropping Out of School (Organized by the National Alternative Education Association and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay). I met teachers from all over the United States and Southern Ontario, who traveled to Orlando to share, learn and network with other professionals.

While there, Bob Sadler and I were able to choose from over 60 different sessions covering many topics. Please visit the website soon to see a description of the sessions attended. I also attended the NAEA Annual General Meeting – sharing our knowledge with them and being able to bring back new ideas for MASTARS.

I would like to share some of the more shocking conversations that I had there. First, I listened to a speaker, the Principal of a school that for students that would qual-

ify for Individual programming in Manitoba. Her district's Code of Conduct included a section for Sexual Misconduct. The descriptors used to define Sexual Misconduct include (no word of a lie) inappropriate touching – enforced as holding hands, kissing, hugging. Consider her students, physical boundaries are not very well understood or followed. The consequence for misconduct – 10-day suspension!!! Secondly, I spent a coffee break talking with a colleague who works at a transition school in the Mid-west (Her school is for suspended students who must complete their consequence there before being allowed to return to their home school). (Continued on Page 3) (Continued from Page 2)

Her district's suspension for a Drug and Alcohol offense is a 45-day suspension!!! Further to this, smoking, also an illegal activity for minors is also consequence with a 45-day suspension as well. Needless to say, she was shocked when I explained that our first

time offender consequence is a 5-day suspension.

Some other differences that arose through discussions; Manitoba has 39 divisions as compared to the 600 school districts in the state of Ohio, Federal funding constrictions and *No Child Left Behind* hoops to jump through before suspending students, and finally Charter Schools and School Vouchers (not that much of a difference from Schools of Choice).

What is not different are the numbers of students who continue to be marginalized by the "Traditional" school system both in the United States and in the United States. Continuing to meet and share ideas, hear about new research and networking with old and new contacts continue to be a valuable source of information for all participants in these conferences. Continuing to send representatives to these national level conferences is vital to the growth of MASTARS.

### Spring Fever

Four high school boys afflicted with spring fever skipped morning classes. After lunch they reported to the teacher that they had a flat tire.

Much to their relief she smiled and said, "Well, you missed a test today so take seats apart from one another and take out a piece of paper."

Still smiling, she waited for them to sit down. Then she said:

"First Question: Which tire was flat?"

More jokes can be found at:

<http://www.basicjokes.com/djoke.php>



## The 2006 Census Teacher's Kit

Tuesday, May 16, 2006 is Census Day. Approximately 31 million people in Canada in 12.7 million households and all agricultural operations will count themselves in by completing and returning their census questionnaires on-line or by mail.

Statistics Canada has developed the *2006 Census Teacher's Kit* for use in elementary, intermediate, secondary and adult classes across the country. Students play an important role as future respondents to the census. Some students may help parents complete their household's questionnaire if their language skills in English or French are stronger than those of the parents.

The Teacher's Kit contains 8 teacher-ready activities as well as a guide to provide:

- an explanation of why Canada conducts a census and how census results benefit society

- an introduction to census data as an information source for school papers and projects

- an alternative approach to studying math, geography, English, French, and social sciences

A fun colouring book and game placement for younger students are included.

The activities have been prepared with the help of a professional educator and have been classroom tested in English and French for suitable content and grade level. They are appropriate for English, math, theatre arts, art, social sciences, geography, history, family studies, and physical education. Suggested grade levels are indicated on each activity, and all necessary tables, charts, graphs and data are included. A teacher requires one kit; photocopying is required for student handout sheets. There is also a separate ABE/Literacy Kit available.

The kit is available free-of-charge and contains activities on both the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture. One kit is suitable for a class and can even be passed on for use in other classes since the handouts are intended to be photocopied.

How to obtain the 2006 Census Teacher's kit:

Order the **kit online** at:

[www.census2006.ca](http://www.census2006.ca)

**Write to:**

Teachers Kit

Census Communications, Statistics Canada

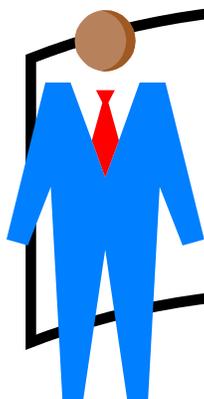
Ground Floor GE-11

Jean Talon Building

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6

**Fax the order form to:**

(613) 951-0930



**Remember to Count yourself  
Tuesday, May 16th, 2006 is Census Day!**

MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY  
TEACHERS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

[http://ca.geocities.com/mastars\\_mtssag/](http://ca.geocities.com/mastars_mtssag/)



**M.A.S.T.A.R.S. - Who We Are**

*M.A.S.T.A.R.S. has been affiliated with the Manitoba Teachers Society as a Special Area Group ('SAG') since 1999. This association evolved out of the former "Teachers of 04 Classes and Work Experience Programs" ('TOCWEP'). M.A.S.T.A.R.S. defines students at-risk as "Young people who have little hope for capturing their personal power, either due to lack of natural supports, failure in school, ridicule by peers, social deprivation, or lack of connection to society." (Else, 1997)*

*M.A.S.T.A.R.S. provides relevant professional development that focuses on current achievement and safety issues in Manitoba schools. We focus on topics that include: Justice and safety issues, vulnerable/fragile natural supports, significant and persistent performance difficulties in school and lack of access opportunities that lead to a meaningful livelihood. Joining MASTARS puts you in contact with other dedicated professionals working with this very demanding population.*

*Presently, there are almost 200 members in MASTARS. We have representation from all over the province of Manitoba. At last year's conference, we had more than 300 participants attend from all over Manitoba and Northwest Ontario.*

**We're on the Web**

[http://ca.geocities.com/mastars\\_mtssag/](http://ca.geocities.com/mastars_mtssag/)

**2005-2006 M.A.S.T.A.R.S. Executive**

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