

Highlights from the February 11, 2009 meeting of the Board of Trustees for Red Deer Public Schools

CELEBRATIONS

- The second phase for *Setting the Direction for Special Education* has begun.
- “Parents Matter,” the 3rd annual conference for parents by parents featured Deputy Superintendent Piet Langstraat as their keynote speaker along with sessions on the importance of parenting, understanding the early years and connecting with schools.
- “Education... it's not always black and white; there's grey matter, too!” was the theme for another excellent Central Alberta Teachers' Convention.
- Annie L Gaetz hosted the launch of author Sigmund Brouwer's latest book “*Rebel Drive*” that is presented to grade 5 students across the District.
- Earl Dreesen will visit Odyssey Middle School to talk with students about his role as MP for Red Deer.
- Thanks to all those who supported another successful Town Hall Meeting that focused on overall strategies for the District Education Plan as well as supporting student transitions to post-secondary learning.

The Life and Learning at Mountview

École Mountview Elementary School offers a dual track English/French Immersion program to 433 students from kindergarten to grade five. After a performance by their choir, Principal Bob Burrows reviewed the school's Accountability Pillar Report Card and School Education Plan. Highlights include:

- Mountview is particularly proud of its focus of learning using a variety of art forms integrated within the curriculum.
- high levels of achievement in all areas with a strong commitment by staff to continuous improvement.
- Effective Behaviour Supports, use of “7 Habits of Happy Kids” and its Bully Prevention Program play a strong role in the developing a respectful, safe and caring environment.
- PAT Results for both language arts and math continue to be very strong at

- both the acceptable and excellence standard.
- the AISI focus is on improving student writing using a variety of teaching and assessment strategies.
- technology integration has been supported by the District's evergreening program providing 60 new laptop computers, software and SMART Board technology.
- strong parental support and involvement in the life of the school and its decision-making.
- projections for growth in student enrollment are significant with classroom space at a premium.

Quarterly Financial Update

Trustee reviewed the first quarter results for the District's \$95 million dollar budget. With expenses at 24.9% the budget is right on track.

Monitoring Off-Campus Education

Red Deer Public Schools provides valuable opportunities for students to explore potential careers and develop employability skills through off-campus education. Proposed changes by Alberta Education that would require on-site visitations by coordinators for every 25 hours a student works, have raised concerns from both schools and employers. Our existing monitoring of placements and supervision of students using a variety of methods has been effective to ensure high quality learning opportunities and safe work environments. The Board of Trustees will forward a letter to Alberta Education expressing its support for strong monitoring and supervision, but that it has real concerns about the viability of these programs and the burden it places on employers should the changes to monitoring be mandated.

Progress Report on District Education Plan

Senior administration provided an update on the progress, accomplishments and successes made so far on the goals, outcomes and strategies contained within the District Education Plan. Some of the highlights include:

- support implementation of the nutrition policy
- success of the substance abuse intervention program
- planning for the next round of AISI projects
- considering new programs of choice
- strategies to address large class sizes

- development of a common literacy initiative
- use of technology to track credits and support increased graduation rates
- expansion of pre-kindergarten programming
- review data on the achievement of FNMI students
- restructuring Curriculum Specialists roles
- vertical articulation between grades and schools
- focus on achievement using a variety of strategies
- common curriculum based assessments
- marks available on-line for middle and high school students and their parents
- high quality PD opportunities

February 25th Meeting Canceled

With the Board and Senior Administration headed off for their annual planning retreat, the February 25th meeting of the Board of Trustees has been canceled. Instead, the Board will be meeting with their trustee colleagues from Chinook's Edge School Division to discuss opportunities, issues and concerns of common interest.

Public School Boards Association of Alberta and Alberta School Boards Association

- PSBAC is looking at key items that need to be considered if there are changes to the *School Act*.
- PSBAA is actively looking at opportunities for *Straight Talk* to consult, communicate and engage the public. A focus will be ‘what does the child of 2020 need to be successful?’
- ASBA Zones have had discussion on the pros and cons of local taxation by school jurisdictions.
- ASBA is seeking feedback on transportation policy. The Board supports reducing the elementary walk limit for transportation funding to 1.6 km from 2.4 km. The Board is also interested in equity in transportation funding for programs of choice similar to funding available to charter schools.

Correspondence

- To Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority outlining concerns regarding its decision on the allocation of modular child care spaces and our desire to meet with their Board.
- To Red Deer MLAs requesting a meeting to share concerns about the CACFSA decision on the allocation of modular child care spaces.
- From Chinook's Edge School Division supporting Red Deer Public's position about the suitability of the ASBA parliamentarian as a result of opinions expressed in a recent article.