

Highlights from the June 11, 2008 meeting of the Board of Trustees for Red Deer Public Schools

QUICK NEWS AND CELEBRATIONS

- High school graduations provide opportunities to recognize the work of all staff throughout the District who play a vital role from kindergarten to grade 12 in making high school graduation possible.
- The Board had a very good meeting with our MLAs to discuss emergent student accommodations issues.
- Trustee Lee had the opportunity to discuss our accommodation challenges with the Minister of Education.
- Board Chairs and Superintendents from Central Alberta school jurisdictions will meet with the Minister of Education on June 19 to discuss issues, challenges and opportunities.
- "World Showcase" provided grade 7 students with the opportunity to experience global languages and culture based on the international languages we offer in high school.
- Year-end concerts highlight the truly amazing music programs offered by our schools.
- Students in the International Baccalaureate Art program opened their year-end show.
- We appreciate the dedicated work of volunteers who support breakfast and snack programs in our schools
- Sessions at the ASBA and PSBAA Spring Conferences were most worthwhile in supporting the important work of Trustees.
- Board members from organizations that work with children, youth and families across Central Alberta met to consider formalizing opportunities for collaboration through the establishment of a Governance Circle. Our Board values working together with community partners in best meeting the needs of students.
- High School principals from Germany will be visiting our schools to look at programs that support school-to-work transitions including our successful Registered Apprenticeship Program.

The Life and Learning at Mattie McCullough

Serving 407 students from kindergarten to grade 5 in southeast Red Deer, Mattie McCullough is our newest school. Students and staff shared some of the programs and traditions that have evolved since the school opened five years ago including their: grade 5 camp; floor hockey championships; outstanding cross-country ski program; artist in residence programs and strong student award and recognition program. Students also demonstrated

the use of electronic, interactive whiteboard technology that create powerful learning environments.

Students Excel at Skills Canada Competition

Students from Hunting Hills and Lindsay Thurber participated in the Skills Canada Alberta Competitions and did exceptionally well. The organization runs competitions that allow students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in over 40 skilled trades and technology areas. One gold, one silver, three bronze medals as well as a safety award were earned by our students in 3D animation, carpentry and precision machining.

Student Accommodations in Southeast Red Deer

Significant growth in the southeast continues to place mounting pressure on the District with respect to student accommodations in our elementary schools. With the most recent utilization rates at 91% for the area, and with continued growth expected in these schools, we anticipate utilization rates to rise to 130% in just five years. These projections are supported by Alberta Education's own analysis of future growth in our community.

Growth as a result of new subdivisions development will only increase student numbers and add to the real need for more classroom space for Red Deer Public.

With schools considered to be 'full' at 85%, Trustees agreed that the construction of the Aspen Ridge Elementary and Timberstone K-8 schools are top priorities for the District. The Board will also submit an emergency request for three additional portable classrooms for Mattie McCullough Elementary.

The Board recently met with our MLAs to update them on these needs and Trustees appreciate their support and interest in addressing the issues. The Board is also requesting an emergent meeting with the Minister of Education to share our need for immediate funding to support these requests.

While the Board is optimistic, they are also concerned as these are long-standing priorities that have not been addressed. Together, we need to work with our parents and community to get support from government to address these needs and ensure we continue to provide quality education for our students.

Three-Year Capital Plan

The Board of Trustees will submit its three-year capital plan to Alberta Education with the following priorities:

- immediate construction of a 450 student K-5 elementary school in the Aspen Ridge neighbourhood
- immediate construction of 3 modular classrooms at Mattie McCullough Elementary
- construction of a new K-8 school in Timberstone with the capacity that is responsive to needs for the area
- additional funding to support the modernization of Aspen Heights Elementary

- acquisition of River Glen School from Chinook's Edge School Division to house the Gateway Christian School
- modernization of Annie L Gaetz Elementary

Anaphylaxis Policy

The Board gave final approval to a policy that provides guidance in responding to students and staff that may have anaphylactic reactions. The policy recognizes addressing these needs is a shared responsibility so the focus is on developing allergy aware and safe schools that provides a balanced approach in meeting the needs of all students. Schools will be required to develop a both school-wide and individual student plans that address prevention as well as emergency responses.

Field Trips Approved

- Band students from Eastview and Hunting Hills will participate in a collaborative band trip in April 2009 to attend the Canadian Anaheim Music Festival in California
- During Spring Break 2009, students in the Spanish language program at Hunting Hills will have the opportunity to develop their language skills as they explore the amazing and diverse regions of Costa Rica.
- Students in the Design Studies program at Lindsay Thurber will explore the architectural wonders of Egypt during Spring Break 2009.

Petition Received on Aspen Heights Project

The Board received a petition from 130 individuals requesting opportunities to share their concerns regarding the Board's decision to defer to the modernization of Aspen Heights due to cost issues. The Board hosted a meeting to review the project, address concerns and indicate their commitment to work at acquiring the needed funding to modernize the school.

Public School Boards' Association of Alberta and Alberta School Boards Association

- More than 200 delegates attended the PSBAA Spring Assembly to consider issues related to local autonomy, locally levied property taxes, as well as practical advice on community engagement. PSBAA is also looking at ways to work with the Kettering Foundation and its work on public engagement and addressing the challenges of making democracy work as it should.
- The Board is looking at amalgamating our proposed ASBA Directive for Action with a similar one that speaks to concerns about proposal-based funding of various educational and research initiatives.

Correspondence:

- Minister of Education: follow-up on the joint school capital initiative to acquire River Glen School from Chinook's Edge School Division
- Alberta Infrastructure: Regarding School Facility Evaluations at Lindsay Thurber and North Cottage.