

Highlights from the August 27, 2008 meeting of the Board of Trustees for Red Deer Public Schools

QUICK NEWS AND CELEBRATIONS

- It's back to school for more than 9800 students with classes resuming September 2nd. We are looking forward to an exciting year of teaching and learning.
- Forty teachers were welcomed to the District during the New Teacher Orientation. The session provided opportunities to learn more about Red Deer Public Schools, our core beliefs and values, as well as helping prepare teachers for a successful start to the school year.
- More than 900 staff attended the District Kick-Off Event to get the year off to a positive start. The morning included greetings, a look at new beginnings and new opportunities. The event concluded with the video presentation "For the Love of It" where National Geographic photographer Dewitt Jones discussed how we all have the ability to love what we do through honoring our passion, making a contribution to those around us, and expressing gratitude.
- Forty International students from around the world have arrived and are eager to start their Canadian school experience.
- Over the summer, the Aboriginal Frontline Program has moved to Glendale Middle School and looks forward to supporting more than 700 First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in schools across the District.

Relocatables Coming to Mattie McCullough

Trustees were delighted to have received a letter this week confirming that the District will receive two relocatable classrooms to address overcrowding at Mattie McCullough Elementary.

The Foundation for Red Deer Public Schools

The Foundation shared success stories on the support it provides schools to enhance and enrich learning opportunities for students across the District.

The Foundation is making a difference to teaching and learning in our schools by providing funds that support citizenship, fine arts, student wellness and matching grants. This year the Foundation will focus on Global Awareness and Understanding with a number of great initiatives.

The Foundation also plays a major role in recognizing student success through the annual Striving for Excellence Dinner.

All of this is possible thanks to the generous support of District staff, local businesses and individuals who are passionate about education in our community.

Quarterly Financial Report

The District Statement of Revenues and Expenses to May 31, 2008 were reviewed. Finances were right on track with 70% of expenses and revenues recognized to date. The financial year-end is August 31 so District staff are busy preparing for year-end.

Communication Protocol for Provincial Testing

A provincial protocol on the release of results for Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams has been established. Results for Red Deer Public and other jurisdictions will be released on October 2nd.

June 2008 Enrolment

Final student enrolment at the end of the 2008/09 school year was 9527 students. Of interest, 13 schools had higher enrolment than the same time last year. Compared to the previous year, there were 91 more ECS children (pre-K and K) in our schools which supports our projections for student growth.

Central Alberta Governance Circle

At times, meeting the needs of students requires close collaboration with other service providers in the community. Trustees approved participation in the Central Alberta Governance Circle which supports collaboration among various social services, health and educational authorities throughout Central Alberta. By working together, the agreement will enhance the design and delivery of services for children, youth, individuals and families.

School Fees Annual Report

Each year, middle and high schools are required to provide a detailed report on school fees for approval by the Superintendent. A breakdown of these costs is to be provided to students and parents. Annually, the Board of Trustees also receives and reviews a report on school fees.

Wanting to ensure that financial difficulties do not limit opportunities for students, the Board has developed a Fee Waiver Program that provides full or partial waiver of fees based on household size and income.

With concerns about costs to families, the Board would like to review its School Fees Policy relative to determining costs for textbooks and course fees. It is also interested in looking at our current practice of textbook purchases at the high school level.

Student Transportation in Alberta

The Alberta School Boards' Association produced a report "At the Breaking Point: Alberta's Student Transportation System" highlighting challenges and issues facing jurisdictions. Five priority areas were identified:

- Driver recruitment and retention
- The 2.4 kilometer walk limit
- School choice and its impact on transportation
- Concerns regarding the current funding model
- Transporting fees

A review indicates that the analysis is at a very basic level and provides limited hard data. While there are some challenges in the funding model, some minor changes may be all that is needed to address these. It is also important to recognize there are limited resources available for transportation so choices need to be made relative to services provided. Overall Red Deer Public has been able to handle transportation systems well within the existing framework.

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

- Jurisdictions across the province are concerned over the government's move to provide additional funding for private schools.

Correspondence

- Chinook's Edge School Division – we have invited the Board of Trustees for both jurisdictions to meet to discuss matters of common interest.
- Parkland Community Planning – providing details on the City of Red Deer's plans to annex 3000 hectares of land surrounding Red Deer. Children in these areas would become resident students of Red Deer Public.
- Minister of Health and Wellness – advising that our nomination of the new Nutrition Policy was not selected for the Healthy School Communities Award.
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta – extending appreciation to Jo-Anne Rogers, Director of Finance for her valued contributions to the Practice Review Committee
- Minister of Infrastructure - the government has announced that five standard designs for K to 6 and K to 9 core schools have been developed and adopted.
- Alberta Home and School Council's Association – requesting the District purchase memberships for all school councils to the association. Trustees believe that this should be decided by individual School Councils and declined the invitation.