

Highlights from the September 9, 2009 meeting of the Board of Trustees for Red Deer Public Schools

CELEBRATIONS

- John Antonetti provided a great start to the school year as staff gathered for the annual kick-off event. Antonetti's inspiring and entertaining message got the year off to a very positive start.
- 10,004 students were back to school on Tuesday, September 1, which is the largest enrollment in Red Deer Public's history.
- Particular thanks to all the staff at GH Dawe and Aspen Heights for their extra efforts in getting school ready following major construction activity over the summer.
- Congratulations to Craig Spady, a Lindsay Thurber grad who was a member of the Team Canada at the World Skills Competition in Calgary. Spady earned a Medallion of Excellence in the electrical trades competition. Hundreds of our students were able to attend this event that showcases opportunities available in trades.

Organizational Meeting

The Board held its organizational meeting and confirmed Dr. Bill Stuebing as Chair and Bev Manning as Vice Chair for the 2009/10 school year. Committee and school liaison assignments were also determined. The Board looks forward to providing strong and visionary leadership for what promises to be an interesting and challenging year.

Support for Central Alberta Career Prep

Career Prep has supported career development in our schools for more than a decade. It provides resources that encourage students to develop career action plans that prepare them for post-secondary learning and/or entry into the world of work. The Board of Trustees received the Premier's Award of School Board Innovation and Excellence in 1999 for its leadership in establishing the initiative.

Career Prep has submitted a proposal to the provincial government requesting sustained funding for the program and has asked for the Board's support in order to maintain this important and valued work. The Board of Trustees is impressed by the services provided by the programs and will forward a letter of support to government recognizing the important contributions of Career Prep and its impact on our students.

Strong Results on AP and IB Exams

Advanced Placement, offered at Hunting Hills, and International Baccalaureate, offered at Lindsay Thurber, provide rigorous academic programs that provide students with the opportunity to experience post-secondary level studies while in high school.

Last year, 110 of the 474 students in Advanced Placement wrote 168 exams in ten different subject areas. Students achieved an aggregate average of 3.66 out of 5 compared to the global average of 3.21. Of those students who wrote, 81% received a passing grade, with 58% earning a mark of 4 or 5. Twelve students earned AP Scholar status last year. The number of students at Hunting Hills taking AP continues to increase.

Meanwhile 86 of the 290 students in the International Baccalaureate program wrote and passed all 165 exams that were written with an aggregate average of 5.11 out of 7 compared to the global average of 4.58. Twelve students earned an IB Diploma. The program is undergoing a program evaluation that includes program delivery, meeting standards and commitment to the program principles.

Many universities provide advanced placement or credit to students with higher marks in both these programs. Red Deer Public is proud of these achievements and the exciting learning opportunities it provides our students.

Building Together – It's time to Act

The Alberta School Boards Association has identified significant issues and concerns about planning and funding for infrastructure projects and has placed it as a priority area for advocacy. The report, "*Building Together – It's Time to Act*" provides an overview of school infrastructure challenges and identifies successes and pressure points. Priority issues include:

- difficulty in replacing or preserving aging school buildings
- providing facilities in growing communities in a timely and proactive manner
- the ad hoc nature of funding mechanisms and programs
- utilization rates for schools
- effectiveness of long term capital planning and approval processes
- lack of funding to non-instructional space

- lack of flexibility to meet community needs
- lack of funding for other provincial initiatives such as occupational health and safety
- site preparation and servicing costs as well as zoning and land use issues
- the current school closure process

The report identifies several promising practices, many of which have been incorporated within our jurisdiction:

- energy conservation measures
- security measures
- use of in-house trades personnel
- long term capital planning process
- positive relations with infrastructure partners

The Board was frustrated by the numerous examples of infrastructure challenges and how the government has failed to respond and address real needs across the province.

District Response to Funding Change

Further to the recent announcement by the Minister of Education on in-year budget adjustments, the District has been looking at how to best respond to the loss in funding of \$900,268. Revenue for the District is being adjusted by the:

- reduction in socio-economic status grant by \$106,679
- elimination of the fuel price contingency grant by \$77,901
- recovery of District surplus funds of \$715,688

In addressing the reduction in funding, administration endeavoured to minimize the impact on teaching and learning by using accumulated reserve funds. Administration is also looking at other ways to cut costs. The Board approved use of unrestricted net assets to cover the revenue adjustment during the current year.

Public School Boards Association of Alberta and Alberta School Boards Association

- The PSBAA is looking at some interesting alternatives to education funding that the Board is interested in understanding more about.

Correspondence Received:

- Red Deer Symphony: letter of appreciation for the District's support of the education and outreach programs of the symphony.
- Setting the Direction-Fact Sheet: update on the special education review planning and implementation phase.
- Minister of Education: approval for a land exchange related to the Aspen Heights modernization.