

*Highlights from the October 28, 2009 meeting of the Board of Trustees for Red Deer Public Schools*

## **CELEBRATIONS**

- The Board recognized the work by staff in managing and responding to the influenza pandemic that has hit our schools. Approximately 17% of students across the District have been absent due to illness this week. Our schools have responded well in their prevention efforts and meeting the needs of ill students while maintaining our focus on teaching and learning.
- Congratulations to Trustee Lawrence Lee who was elected to the executive of the Public School Boards Association of Alberta as a Director and to Trustee Dianne Macaulay who was elected as Chair of Zone 4 of the Alberta School Boards Association
- *Inspiring Education*, a dialogue on education in Alberta included excellent speakers as well as discussions on the future of education.
- The Lindsay Thurber Hall of Fame inducted Kathy Lacey, a tireless community volunteer and leader as well as Harley Hay, a local filmmaker, for their valued contributions to our schools and community.
- We remember Ray Tulp, a former teacher in the District who passed away this week.
- An international conference of school business officials confirms that many of the issues and challenges facing education are common across the world.
- Premier Stelmach was at Lindsay Thurber to present the auto body program with a state-of-the-art paint booth as part of the WorldSkills Equipment Legacy Program.
- Our high schools hosted excellent Career Events, providing valuable information on careers and post-secondary opportunities that support students in making career choices.
- With expected changes to the *School Act*, the ASBA is advocating that first reading of a new act take place in the spring sitting of the legislature, then allowing time for public deliberation and discussion prior to final reading in the fall.

## **The Life and Learning at Aspen Heights**

Celebrating 50 years of providing quality education to students in north Red Deer, Aspen Heights shared its education plan as well as highlights and achievements with the Board of Trustees. The school is completing a major modernization that includes construction of four replacement classrooms. The school will celebrate its anniversary and grand re-opening in April 2010.

For several years, Aspen Heights has been recognized for its very high levels of student achievement and providing examples of best practices in developing literacy skills in students.

Believing that students learn best by doing, Aspen Heights is embarking on a "MicroSociety" initiative that develops a range of skills through cross-curricular and applied learning within a model society. MicroSociety attempts to mirror the realities of communities and develop the responsibilities of citizenship. A MicroSociety features a form of government, business and industry, service learning and community services. The program provides a 'real world' context for students. The initiative is expected to support student achievement, school climate, motivation, citizenship, creativity and preparing students for the future. In implementing the program, Aspen Heights looks to engage parents, businesses, and communities to support the initiative and changing the face of future generations—*today!*

## **K to 8 Reconfiguration Implementation Plan**

On June 10, 2009, the Board of Trustees approved a plan where GH Dawe Community School, Glendale Middle School and Normandeau Elementary School would move to a K to 8 grade configuration beginning in the 2010/11 school year.

An Implementation Committee consisting of parents, school representatives and District leadership have developed a plan to support grade reconfiguration and how we can ensure reconfiguration supports student achievement and success.

The committee shared, the *K to 8 Grade Reconfiguration Implementation Plan* with the Board that addresses eighteen key issues and identifies sixty-nine related tasks.

Key decisions include:

- the reconfiguration will be fully implemented in 2010/11 as opposed to being phased-in
- the reconfiguration will ensure a strong program of studies that will support student achievement
- the schools will offer the same range of option classes for students in grades 6 to 8
- school attendance areas have been defined
- programming for students with special education needs have been addressed
- accommodations to facilities, transportation, learning and library resources, support services, playground facilities as well as equipment and furnishing will meet student needs
- student access to a variety of in-school and inter-school extra-curricular and athletic activities
- processes will be in place to address staffing needs at each school
- professional development will support development of successful K to 8 schools
- activities will be planned to facilitate a smooth transitions for parents, students and staff
- a "Science and Technology Focus Program" at Glendale Middle School will also be developed

While the plan provides important decisions on key issues, all three schools still have considerable work ahead of them to implement the specific tasks.

An important component of the plan will be to keep parents, students and staff informed on the implementation plan. Following the Christmas break, families will be provided with an update on the changes and features of the new K to 8 schools as well as seeking intentions for 2010/11. The schools also plan orientation events in the spring to support the transition to K to 8.

## **Elementary Report Card Pilot Project**

With a desire to provide better information to parents on student achievement of curricular outcomes, elementary schools indicated a desire to update the elementary report card. A pilot project of three elementary schools, Gateway, Mountview and Normandeau, is currently underway for the 2009/10 school year. As part of the pilot, there is a desire to engage in public participation processes among teacher, parents and students to provide feedback that would ensure the report card achieves its intended outcomes and supports full implementation for the 2010/11 school year.

## **September Enrolment**

Our September 30 enrollment was 9906 students.

## **Stop the Cuts Campaign**

In light of anticipated reductions to budgets for public education and school jurisdictions facing tough budget decisions, the Alberta School Boards Association, Alberta Teachers' Association, and Alberta School Councils Association have joined forces in a public campaign to "Stop the Cuts." The initiative includes a media campaign that raises awareness and understanding of possible cuts and encourages the public to let the government know that cuts to education erase more than deficits..

The Board supports and will promote the campaign and encourages people to speak out for public education.

While there is a sense of concern, the Board noted that current prices for oil and gas are close to budgeted amounts which may provide some relief to impending budget challenges.

Investing in education is investing in the future of all Albertans. We believe our community strongly supports public education. The Board is planning to meet with our MLAs to share that message and discuss budget issues, urge government to consider other options to address budget challenges and continue to invest in education, infrastructure and government services.

Believing that public education is unique, vital and attractive, it truly supports our motto "Your Children, Our Students, Everyone's Future."