

*Highlights from the November 12, 2008 meeting of the Board of Trustees for Red Deer Public Schools*

## **CELEBRATIONS**

- Schools across the district hosted outstanding and moving Remembrance Day ceremonies.
- Trevor Buckle talked with Grandview students about his experiences serving with the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan.
- Congratulations to Trustee Dianne Macaulay who will serve as vice chair of ASBA Zone 4.
- With a focus this year on early literacy Miriam Trehearne, is sharing her early literacy programming with our kindergarten teachers.
- Alberta Education hosted its consultation on “Setting the Direction” for the future of special education in the province.
- GH Dawe has been selected for Chapter’s “Love of Reading Fund.” The school will receive at least of 50 children’s books that will be added to its school library.
- Trustee Holland will be reporting to a community group on new and innovative learning opportunities in the District.
- The Lions Club of Red Deer is providing all children with Medic-Alert bracelets.
- Mattie McCullough students enjoyed Evergreen Theatre’s “Food for Thought” presentation that connects well to our Nutrition policy.
- Author Sigmund Brouwer inspired students to read and write and shared how it helps them reach their dreams. He encouraged students to read what excites them.
- Memorial Services were held for Roy Brassard, former Chair of the Chinook’s Edge School Division to honour and celebrate a great man.
- Red Deer Public attended celebrations in recognition of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Red Deer Catholic Regional Division.

## **New Initiatives Projects**

Twice a year, staff can make application for new initiatives and receive funding of \$750 to support projects that are unique and new that also align with the District Education Plan. Eight projects were approved this round including:

- Dare to Care – Glendale Middle
- Diversified Students Supporting Programming – Glendale Middle
- Friend 2 Friend Demystification Presentation – Joseph Welsh
- Tiered Lessons- Joseph Welsh
- Red Deer River Basin Water Quality Study – Hunting Hills
- Art Day ad RDC for Secondary Art Teachers – Lindsay Thurber

- K & E Cultural Diversity & Citizenship Awareness – Lindsay Thurber

- Making Connections – Lindsay Thurber

Students from Karen Kenny’s Horizon’s class at Annie L Gaetz highlighted benefits of the “Shakespeare for Kids” project that received initiative funds last year.

## **Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Report**

Provincial funding for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement provides the District with \$1.2 million to support action research projects and District priorities. “Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Effective Assessment Practices” has become a major focus for Red Deer Public. Highlights from last year’s project include:

- professional book studies
- conversations with an assessment consultant
- changes to the middle school report card
- enhancing communications with students and parents
- collaborative planning
- development of common assessments
- differentiated instruction coaches training
- participation in a Zone 4 AISI mini-conference.

The Character Education initiative includes a variety school-based projects that support citizenship, leadership development and effective behaviours supports. One of the major areas of focus is the District Substance Abuse Action Plan that focuses on education, prevention and intervention initiatives. Both projects have demonstrated success on a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures. Of particular interest is a reduction of drug-related expulsions as a result of interventions through the Drug Action Plan.

## **Class Size Summary Report for 2007/08**

The provincial Class Size Initiative supports reducing class sizes across the District. Average class sizes for 2008/09, based on all classes as well as provincial targets are:

Grades	2007/08	2008/09	Target
K-3	19.2	18.2	17.0
4-6	22.0	21.7	23.0
7-9	22.8	23.7	25.0
10-12	23.6	24.0	27.0

Observations for the current year include:

- a substantial reduction in the K-3 class sizes, yet the average is still above the provincial target.
- class sizes in all other categories met the provincial target for the fifth consecutive year.

Trustees noted the challenge with the reporting class sizes based on averages as there are some large classes that are still of concern.

## **2009/10 and 2010/11 School Year Policy**

The Board gave final approval to the 2009/10 and 2010/11 school years. Changes to the policy include:

- a change from staff meetings to “professional learning activities” to better reflect the use of this time by schools for job embedded learning.
- provision for elementary schools to dismiss students two Friday afternoons per month to allow for professional learning activities.

The policy maintains:

- a September start date for students.
- 197 operational and 185 instructional days.
- minimum instructional times of 475 hours for kindergarten 950 for grades 1 to 8 and 1000 hours for grades 9 to 12.
- a November fall break with Remembrance Day.
- a Spring Break/Easter Holiday that is intended to align with Red Deer Catholic Schools,

## **Harassment Policy**

The Board gave approval in principle for revisions to Policy 5.06.07 – Harassment. The amendments were made to align with current occupational health and safety requirements to address violence in the workplace. The policy also includes reference to both students and staff.

## **Public School Boards’ Association of Alberta & Alberta School Boards Association**

The ASBA Policy Bulletin was reviewed in preparation for the Fall General Meeting. Policies under consideration include accommodations for assistive technology, safe communities and safe schools, funding for full day, full time kindergarten and a resolution on proposal funding that urges funding of schools through adequate, sustainable, equitable and predictable funding that is not reliant on writing of funding proposals. Red Deer Public is a co-sponsor of this policy.

## **Correspondence**

- To the Premier and Ministers of Education, Environment, Energy and Red Deer MLAs – expressing support for Parkland School Division’s request to prohibit drilling of hydrogen sulphide formations within seven kilometers of schools.
- From the Minister of Education – commending the Board on the success in a number of areas on the jurisdiction’s accountability pillar report card measures.
- From the ASBA Zone Chair – Notice of the Minister’s Education Leadership Recognition Awards presentations.
- Government News Release – Province announces 10 point action plan for school bus safety.
- From the Alberta School Councils’ Association – results of the council’s survey and recommendation.