



**BLACK GOLD
REGIONAL
DIVISION NO. 18**

PIPELINE

Volume 13, No. 2 – February, 2010



Chairman, Board of Education



Trustees ended 2009 attending as many of our school Christmas concerts as possible. The many hours all staff and students devoted to rehearsals, costumes, stage set-up, clean-up etc. was most appreciated. Concert nights are certainly full of action. Cameras flashing, video camcorders rolling and the smiles on the faces of the audiences make it all worthwhile. It is another reminder that children are our gift.

We are in a new calendar year, and school visits are on schedule. Trustees have visited 16 schools since the beginning of the school year. Each school is unique and the visits give trustees a hands-on experience of the many great things happening at each school. Kudos to our custodians and maintenance staff for keeping our schools in great shape.

Board and Committee meetings keep trustees updated on various activities occurring within the Division. As a Board, we continue to work on our Strategic Plan and Board Policies.

With the recent cabinet shuffle, the Board was pleased that the Honourable Dave Hancock continues to be the Education Minister. The many initiatives over the past year, with outcomes to follow, and changes to the School Act will still be a priority for the Minister.

Our annual Council of School Councils meeting is planned for February 23rd. The Chair of each school council and the Principal of the school will be invited to attend. Various topics will be on the agenda for discussion.

The Provincial budget was announced on February 9th, and although there were no cutbacks to the Education budget, there were no grant increases either. Decisions on how to deal with budget restraints will be a challenge but the Board will take advantage of all opportunities to influence public education.

Barb Martinson, Chairman, Board of Education, 780-955-6025 – barb.martinson@blackgold.ca

Superintendent

It continues to amaze me how quickly the school year goes by. It won't be long before the snow starts to melt and we can all get back outside. We're now into the second half of the year and I have to say it is going exceptionally well.

It's a testament to the hard work of all the staff in Black Gold working together – thank you.



Our new school in Thorsby is coming along very nicely although there have been some construction delays. We anticipate having the building ready for students in the fall of 2010. It's been a long process but the end is in sight. At the same time, we continue to lobby rigorously for our joint school in Beaumont but as yet we have not received approval. The growing student population there continues to create challenges for us but until the government relaxes the fiscal restraints on capital spending, we will have to wait for an approval announcement.

I'm sure by now most of you will have heard the budget announcement. The early fall discussions centered on significant rollbacks, but as you know those fears proved to be groundless. We will still face some serious challenges but we have already started analyzing our situation and the financial implications of the detailed announcement. We will begin meetings this week with our principals to review our budget and any possible implications at the school level. Please rest assured that we will do everything in our power to ensure that the quality of education provided in Black Gold schools will be maintained.



Again, thank you all for your hard work and commitment to students. Your efforts and skills are truly appreciated and recognized. I wish you all the very best throughout the rest of the school year.

Stuart Evans, Superintendent of Schools, 780-955-6026 – stuart.evans@blackgold.ca

Associate Superintendent Curriculum and Instruction

Wow! Somehow in all the activity, we passed through fall, most of winter, and (at least today) into spring. Conversations are about the next school year as though it is more real and imminent than our current school year. And the really sad news is, that means somewhere along the way we all became a year, or at least half a year, older.

The recent budget announcement will have a huge impact on Curriculum & Instruction for next year, since instruction is about 80% of our budget. While Ruth Andres sifts through the details so we may begin planning, we do know about a few areas. There is a change in the structure of the Class Size Initiative. We do not know if that will be to our advantage, but we do know there will be a change in how it is administered. Our three-year Health Pathways project will conclude after year two. It looks like the CTS Evergreening support will continue to the end of the project but there is a lack of clarity on details. And for all areas, a 0% increase creates problems because costs do not remain at 0%.

One exciting initiative, if we find a way to manage it in the current fiscal climate, is a proposal supported by principals to create an e-Library for the Division. Since e-books are virtual, it is logical to create a single e-Library for the Division. We just love the idea that when the checkout period expires, the book automatically returns to the library. No more overdue, lost, or damaged books!



Another great initiative is the work of Cheryl Hafso and her committee regarding Healthy Schools. Their work over the last two years has been fabulous and recently they secured a grant to further our work to create healthier schools. As part of that grant, you may see Lynn Bannah in your school. Lynn will work as the Division Lead Health and Wellness Teacher for the balance of the school year.

Finally, if you have any curriculum and/or instruction questions, please contact me. Alberta Education changed timelines for implementation of certain Programs of Studies, particularly in the Fine Arts area. Changes to the Health and Physical Education programs are scheduled to begin in the next few years. New Programs of Studies for Science and Social Studies are fully implemented and Mathematics is nearly complete with only Division IV left to implement. As well, there are massive changes in the CTS program at Junior High and High School levels. The landscape continues to evolve and we are more than happy to help if you have any concerns.

Neil Fenske, Associate Superintendent, 780-955-6028 – neil.fenske@blackgold.ca

Associate Superintendent Human Resources



The 2009 – 2010 school year is already in its second half and it doesn't seem that long ago we were making final student counts and hiring teachers. A lot has gone by over the past five months and soon, we'll be getting ready for the next school year.

Everyone is wondering about the new automated substitute service through Employee Self Serve (ESS) and when it will finally be ready for everyone to use. It is soon coming to a computer near you – we plan on having all Black Gold teachers using the sub service before Spring Break. We will be giving an inservice to the people from each school who work with the substitute teachers the most. The program has been getting very good reviews from those teachers using it. Thank you to the three pilot schools; Leduc Composite High School, Caledonia Park School and Riverview Middle School for helping us get this program up and running and being so patient when it came to working out the glitches.

This is the time of the year to be thinking about evaluations for support staff as well as teachers on interim, temporary or probationary contracts. A list of those individuals who require an evaluation will be sent out to schools shortly. New administrators will also have surveys to complete in order to get feedback on their performance.



The Principal Quality Guidelines for Black Gold administrators is evolving as it should. The steering committee continues to work in conjunction with the ATA to make those guidelines reflect Black Gold's values and beliefs. All administrators will again be providing input and ideas at the February 25th Superintendent's meeting.

Associate Superintendent – Human Resources (continued)

Our administrative mentorship seminars continue with good response from the participants. Brian Andres from ATA Teacher Welfare will be February’s presenter with the topic “Teachers and the Law”. Our numbers have remained at 27 participants attending these seminars. These young people are keen and bright and a lot of good discussion takes place at these meetings.



This is the time of year some people think of retirement. If anyone is contemplating retirement or has already decided to do so, please be sure to contact Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund (ATRF) if you haven’t already done so. If you have made the decision to retire this year, please let me know at your earliest convenience.

On behalf of Jeannine Gervais, Lil Duhaime, Debbie Lambert, Tina White and myself, we hope the rest of this school year goes as well as the first half. Keep up the good work; it is your hard work that makes a difference and is the reason Black Gold Regional Division is considered to be one of the best in the province.

Dennis Nosyk, Associate Superintendent, 780-955-6032 – dennis.nosyk@blackgold.ca

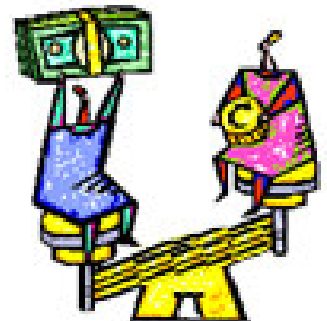


Secretary-Treasurer

The Government of Alberta has announced Budget 2010, which sets the framework for Black Gold Regional School’s 2010-11 budget. While the government is reporting that operating support to school boards increases by \$249 million, this does not provide for an increase to grant rates for the 2010-11 school year. The reported \$249 million increase only supports finishing the last five months of the 2009-10 school year and funding to address an expected student enrolment increase in the province of Alberta.

There will be no grant rate increases for the 2010-11 school year but the government will be instituting differentiated Basic Student rates for ECS, Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6 as well as differentiated rates for specific Career and Technology Studies (CTS) courses that will include a class size component. The distribution of funds for Small Class Size Initiative (CSI) will now focus on Kindergarten to Grade 6 as well as specific CTS courses. Over the coming days we will be analyzing how this change in funding will impact the money we receive for the CSI. .

A Resource Allocation Committee (RAC), comprised of representatives of the school-based administrators along with Central Office staff, provide recommendations on the allocation of instructional resources within Black Gold schools. Recommendations from the RAC are based on predicted demographics and financial resources for the upcoming school year and reflect the Board of Education’s Strategic Plan. This committee will be meeting shortly to start the budget for 2010-11.



While the Provincial budget announcement did not include cutbacks in Education, a zero percent grant increase will still present challenges for us in 2010-11. Costs in all program areas are increasing and employee grid movement alone is a costly budget line item. However, Black Gold Regional Schools is in a healthy financial position and I am confident that, as we move through the budgeting process, we will make it all work without affecting the quality of education that we provide for students.

Ruth Andres, Secretary-Treasurer, 780-955-6049 – ruth.andres@blackgold.ca



Business Services Benefit and Payroll Information

If you have a question or concern regarding your pay or benefits, please contact the appropriate person, as detailed:



Cindy Sobey, 780-955-6052 – cindy.sobey@blackgold.ca

Teachers and Substitute Teachers



Donna Kumpula, 780-955-6053 – donna.kumpula@blackgold.ca

Education Assistants, School Secretaries

Library Clerks, Technicians

Administration, Maintenance



Carrie Bendfeld, 780-955-6055 – carrie.bendfeld@blackgold.ca

Benefits for all employees

Custodians, Relief Custodians, Miscellaneous, Hourly

Substitute School Secretaries and Education Assistants



Address or Benefit Changes – If you have a change in dependant information, please notify Carrie Bendfeld in the payroll department. A new family member must be added within 30 days of arrival to avoid penalty. If you have a change of address, please use Employee Self-Service and click on [Change Name and Address](#)

T4 Slips

Regular employees will receive their T4 slips via courier to schools by February 26, 2010.

T4 slips for all terminated employees and substitutes will be postmarked by February 26, 2010.

If you have worked in more than one job category within Black Gold Regional Schools during 2009, you should expect more than one T4 slip, i.e. Teacher and Substitute Teacher or School Secretary and Educational Assistant. This also applies if you have had a baby during the year.

Health Spending Account – (HSA)

ASEBP has advised us that not all of our employees are using the Health Spending Account (HSA) or employees are not maximizing their reimbursements for the HSA. Please read through the HSA employee guide to ensure you are taking full advantage of the HSA and know how to effectively recoup your health expenses.

Eligible expenses are detailed on the Canada Revenue Agency website at www.cra.gc.ca under “Medical Expenses”.

If you are healthy and most of your medical expenses are covered by the ASEBP benefits, you can still claim the portion of ASEBP premiums that you pay as an expense on your Health Spending Account.



Contact Information:

Cindy Sobey - Certificated Payroll; 780-955-6052 – cindy.sobey@blackgold.ca

Donna Kumpula - Non-Certificated Payroll; 780-955-6053 – donna.kumpula@blackgold.ca

Carrie Bendfeld – Custodians & Relief Payroll, Benefits; 780-955-6055 – carrie.bendfeld@blackgold.ca

Laurel Kvarnberg, Finance Manager, 780-955-6059 – laurel.kvarnberg@blackgold.ca



Student Services

Please join me in welcoming two new members of the Student Services Team – Bernadette (Berna) Hawkins and Rebecca Aiken. Berna is replacing Denise Harrison as ECS Coordinator, and Rebecca has been hired as an Instructional Coach. As part of the Student Services Team, Rebecca will be helping to support student diversity and access to curriculum, through the Universal Design for Learning component of the Ed. Tech. Leadership Project. Both Berna and Rebecca bring strong skills in instruction, collaboration, and leadership to their respective positions. I would like to wish Denise well in her new role as AISI/PD Coordinator for the Division, and to thank her for her rich contribution to the ECS programs in BGRD over the past five years.



We are pleased to announce that our project proposal under the Mental Health Capacity Building (MHCb) for Children, Youth and Families in Schools Initiative was approved. Our project is entitled Community-Attachment-Purpose (CAP): Finding Our Way Home. During this three year project, we hope to learn from our at-risk students currently enrolled in our Outreach School what we can do to build resiliency and to reconnect these students with community, and use our new understanding to build capacity to apply preventative strategies in our junior/senior high schools.

Transition planning for children/students becomes a primary focus for Student Services this time of the year in preparation for the next school year, and it will be on the agenda at our next meeting with special education coordinators and counsellors in March.

Here's hoping spring comes soon!

Dianne Butler, Director, Student Services, 780-955-6037 – dianne.butler@blackgold.ca

Technology

Work has begun by the Technology Planning Committee to update the BGRS Technology Plan. Updates will be brought to the Administrators for feedback from staff. For example, our vision statement has been modified to include collaboration as an important aspect of what we are using technology for.



Our Vision: Learning and teaching in a digital world

We envision classrooms where readily available digital tools and media engage learners and teachers in the **collaborative** pursuit of challenging and personalized curricular experiences reflective of today's global, digital world.

Netbook rollouts are underway, with Susan and Ray working closely with teachers, and the Educational Technology Admin Leads supporting the school administrator in charge of each project. This is an incredibly exciting project for all of us. Kudos to all the teachers involved – some really great things are happening.

As you may have noticed, the Classroom Innovative grant will continue in its final year (though based on previous student counts). Therefore, we will be able to purchase the remaining projectors necessary for those classrooms without one, when we receive the grant in the fall.

I hope that within the next few weeks you will notice some increased bandwidth for Internet use in your school (though given the nature of Internet use, it may disappear quickly ☺). We are installing bandwidth compression devices that should, in effect, double your existing bandwidth. Having said that, we know there is also only so much room at the head-end here as you go out to the Internet and we will, of course, be preserving bandwidth for the web-based applications schools need to function – such as PowerSchool, Bellamy and Destiny. We will also, as part of a scheduled software update to our firewalls, be able to unblock all unobjectionable multimedia sites, allowing some of that increased bandwidth at schools to be dedicated to multimedia exclusively. Therefore, if there is too much multimedia traffic, it will just slow down the multimedia, not everyone else in the school or across the Division trying to use the web.

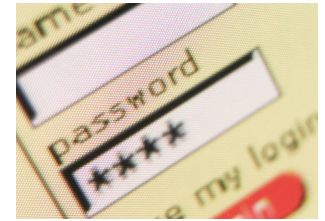


Technology (continued)

Our remote access procedure will also be changing as we update our firewall software. Instructions on how to use the new login procedures will be sent out shortly, prior to the change.

Finally, as part of a security review we are undertaking it is time for all of you who do not have remote access to upgrade your passwords to our minimum requirements.

1. **Network** (how you log onto your computer) and **Email** passwords must be different.
2. Both passwords must be **8 characters** with at least **one number and one symbol**.



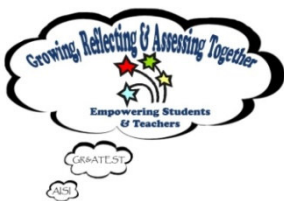
If your passwords do not meet the above criteria for acceptable passwords, please send a HELP desk request indicating a change to your network and email password before Spring Break.

Peter Balding, Division Technology Administrator, 780-955-6040 – peter.balding@blackgold.ca

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement



I am very pleased to serve Black Gold Regional Schools as your new AISI-PD Coordinator. It is very exciting to join such an inspirational team of Instructional Coaches and school Lead Teachers. I wish Faye Gertz all the best in her retirement. On behalf of Black Gold, I truly have appreciated her dedication to our Division and to improving student learning.



In the first six months of our Cycle 4 AISI projects, our Instructional Coaches, Kim Epp, Terra Kaliszuk and Steve Trueman (Growing, Reflecting and Assessing Together: Empowering Students and Teachers – GR&ATEST), and Simone Lapointe (Collaboration liant l'apprentissage et les stratégies scolaires efficaces – **CLASSE**), were very busy working in their coaching schools as well as supporting our Lead Teachers in their schools. The coaches have also been working on our ICT site with the Tech Facilitators to post

AISI-Tech projects for teachers and students. On February 8th and 9th, **CLASSE** and GR&ATEST were showcased at the 2010 AISI Conference. It was a great opportunity to share the outstanding work that is happening in Black Gold. Within the next month, our coaches are going to be hosting parent workshops and information meetings at various schools within the Division, sharing with parents what is happening in our two AISI projects.



Division Professional Development Days

On January 29th, we had our first Division PD day. It was a great success, with many knowledgeable presenters offering valuable sessions committed to student learning and growth as professionals. Many suggestions that were brought forth from this day have been included in our March 5th PD day, either in the form of follow-up sessions, or new sessions that were requested. The PD survey is now online and all Black Gold staff are encouraged to share their feedback and comments regarding professional development this year and for the coming year.



I look forward to working with all of you as Black Gold's AISI-PD Coordinator.

Denise Harrison, AISI-PD Coordinator, 780-955-4528 – denise.harrison@blackgold.ca



GO CANADA GO

