



BLACK GOLD
REGIONAL
DIVISION NO. 18



PIPELINE

Volume 13, No. 1 - November, 2009



Chairman, Board of Education

It certainly has been a flurry of activity since the beginning of the 2009-10 school year. Board meetings, Board Committee meetings, Minister of Education forums, School Visits, Public School Board and Alberta School Board meetings have kept your Trustees busy. The annual Board Organizational meeting occurred on October 14th. For information on committee structure visit the Black Gold website at www.blackgold.ca. Also on the website, you can access Board Highlights and Trustee Community Updates. The two-day Board Strategic Planning session was held on November 9th and 10th.



This year's Welcome Back and Long Service Awards Ceremony took on a new format. A high staff turnout and positive feedback were truly appreciated by the Board. Again, welcome to all new staff and thank you to all the long service recipients.

Black Gold announced new appointments to the Central Office administrative team. Stuart Evans, Superintendent of Schools and Dennis Nosyk, Associate Superintendent are now in their new roles. Their knowledge, experience and leadership skills are certainly an asset to Black Gold.

The formula for Black Gold success is a dedicated staff doing what is in the best interests of students. Our team of Board members, together with you, are committed to providing the best education to students attending Black Gold schools. As Trustees, we will continue to advocate education concerns to our local MLA's and lobby the provincial government. Funding for instruction, infrastructure, transportation and operating and maintenance must be continually addressed.

The recent government clawback of our school reserves was very disappointing and more cutbacks to education are on the horizon. The best investment we can make is educating the students of today so they will be productive citizens of tomorrow. I encourage everyone to contact your local MLA and make your voice heard: MLA for Drayton Valley-Calmor, Diana McQueen at draytonvalley.calmor@assembly.ab.ca MLA for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, George Rogers at leduc-beaumontdevon@assembly.ab.ca.

Working together we hope to have their recent decisions reconsidered. As a Board we will continue to do our best with any opportunities and face the challenges that arise.

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

Superintendent



It's amazing how quickly two months can go by! Stepping into a new position is, I'm sure, a lot like starting a school year – time becomes a precious commodity. It's an exciting time and a busy time but very rewarding. I know, based on both visits and conversations, that you are all continuing our history of educational excellence. Thank you!

We have faced a few issues so far this year. I'm sure you are all aware of the "clawback" of 80 million dollars from education that we faced in September. Fortunately, we dealt with that without any impact on schools or students. The rumours continue to swirl that we will be facing much deeper reductions for next year but no firm numbers have been brought forward as yet. When any further reductions are announced we will work as a team to do everything in our power to minimize the impact to schools.

On a more positive note, our exam results from last year and the "report card" we received on our accountability pillar results were fantastic. Your commitment makes these successes possible - well done!

This will be a very interesting year with all of the changes coming. Being able to rely on a dedicated professional staff is a great feeling. All the best for the rest of year!

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

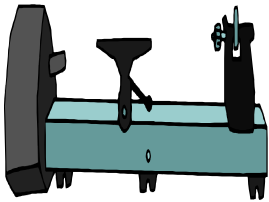


Associate Superintendent Curriculum and Instruction



Perhaps the Curriculum & Instruction topic that generated the most media coverage during the last few months is Pandemic. This note for the Pipeline was written on November 2. Hopefully, the observations are still accurate on the date the Pipeline is published. By November 2nd, we had experienced three school days of declining H1N1 absence rates. The flu arrived very quickly and departed with equal haste. Thank you to our principals who collectively refined our procedures earlier this year and to our maintenance and custodial staff for their preparations and cleaning. Was H1N1 to be feared as much as had been hyped? We may never know. Did the work of all our staff in communicating “best practices” and the cooperation of our parents and students mitigate the impact? Probably. Has this experience helped us make schools a safer environment, even in the absence of a Pandemic? Definitely.

Now, how about if we switch to a couple of more uplifting topics? Class Size Initiative (CSI) is alive and well in Black Gold Regional Schools. As a system, we met the targets and all but one of our schools (Ecole Bellevue School) met their targets. Ecole Bellevue simply has no more space for students and are renting space in the community hall across from the school to meet the educational needs of their students. Would this be a good time to put in an interesting statistic? There are approximately 35 attached and detached portables in Beaumont. If there were no portables in Beaumont, how many new schools would it take to educate all those students?



Another piece of good news is the Legacy Equipment Grant from the recent World Skills Competition in Calgary. Schools were invited to submit an application for the distribution of lots of equipment at the conclusion of the competition. Calmar Secondary’s application was one of the successful submissions, to the benefit of four schools in our system. Calmar received two lathes, four milling machines, all the attachments, and other equipment and tools for their machining program. Calmar also received a three-dimensional coordinate machine. Leduc Composite High School received a lathe and two milling machines. Ecole Secondaire Beaumont Composite High School received a lathe. Thorsby Junior-Senior High School received a collection of hand tools, benches, and tool chests for their woodworking program. Thank you to Calmar Secondary, Principal Stephen Lindop, and CTS teacher Darren Roth for a successful submission.

With respect to Curriculum Leadership, there will also be a few changes since last June. Greg Luchak will be replacing Sean Flanagan as the Social Studies (Secondary) Lead Teacher. Greg joins Barb Roy/Chris Peacocke in Second Languages, Carrie Erdmann in Elementary Mathematics, and Carolyn Reny in English Language Learners. (We also have our principals: Ray Cable in Elementary Science, Howard Rasmusson in Secondary Mathematics, Bill Romanchuk in Secondary Science, and Henry Kozak in Junior High Knowledge & Employability.) As our administrators identify other high priority areas, other principals will pick up curriculum leadership roles.



One last note. Alberta Education has revised the Diploma Examination schedule twice and the Provincial Achievement Test schedule once since early September. Please check their website at: <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/testing.aspx> for the latest information.

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



Skewed Logic?



Changing the clocks twice a year makes just about as much sense as cutting off one end of a blanket, sewing it onto the other end of the blanket and thinking you’ve somehow made a longer blanket.



Associate Superintendent Human Resources



The 2009-2010 school year came upon us fast and furiously. Our total number of students within the Division has increased by approximately 140, with most of the increase in Beaumont. As a result, we have hired 10 more teachers over last year.

We are still working on the computerized substitute teacher booking system. It would have been nice to have all schools using it by now but as we get into it more, we tend to find a few minor problems that need to be addressed, however, we are making progress. Those schools using it have indicated that it has the potential to work well. Thank you to the three pilot schools – Robina Baker Elementary, Leduc Composite High and Caledonia Park for their help and patience.

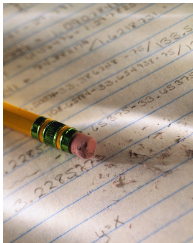
The mentorship sessions will be starting shortly. We have 30 individuals who have expressed an interest in learning about some of the responsibilities of a school administrator. The sessions run monthly from November through May and our presenters include Central Office staff, school principals and ATA personnel.

As a Division, we have taken on the task of working on and defining the “Principal Quality Practice Guidelines” which has been implemented by Alberta Education. This document takes into account the leadership responsibilities and expectations that principals face. We will be working within a committee, with an ATA presence, and bringing our work to the monthly Superintendent’s Meeting for further input.



I’ve been on a big learning curve these past two months but am enjoying the new position very much. I have enjoyed the support and direction of Mr. Evans, whose wisdom cannot be bought, to help me through some of the more tricky situations. I also feel very fortunate to have the support of so many of my colleagues throughout the Division and in Central Office. Thank you all for that support. If you have any questions or concerns regarding anything in human resources, please call me.

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



Secretary-Treasurer



Alberta Education has announced that they are making a “fiscal correction” to the previously announced Education Budget for 2009-2010. A number of grants have been modified and the Fuel Price Contingency grant has been discontinued. The funding for the Student Health Partnerships will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the accumulated operating surplus amount reported in their 2008-2009 financial statements. This amounts to \$117,716 for the Leduc and Area partnership. In addition, each school authority’s funding was reduced by a portion of their accumulated operating surplus reported at August 31, 2008. With this calculation Black Gold Regional Division will be losing \$390,475 in previously announced funding.

Despite these unexpected cutbacks, Black Gold Regional Schools has the capacity to maintain the planned level of services to students and retain staffing this year. The Division has \$396,382 in Unrestricted Net Assets that will be accessed to offset the reduction in funding for 2009-2010. However, we will face significant challenges in the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Meetings with Alberta Education have been ongoing since September and we are waiting to hear how significant the cutbacks will be. Once the announcement is made, we will start addressing how further cutbacks will be incorporated into the following year’s budget.

We at Black Gold Regional Schools have always managed our financial resources responsibly and will continue to do so. I am confident that we will weather these cutbacks and continue to offer an outstanding education to our students.

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





Business Services Benefit and Payroll Information

Employee Self Service (ESS)

We are currently in the process of rolling out Employee Self Service (ESS). This is the web-based application that allows staff access to payroll vouchers, name, address and benefit information. It also has the functionality of tracking other items that pertain to employment such as sick days and personal leave days. You will be notified when we implement further components of this software. We will be sending out invitations weekly to ensure that all new staff have access to this program. Once you have successfully logged in, please verify name and address, phone numbers and benefit information.



We will be re-inviting employees who have not yet logged into ESS later this week, once we have migrated to a new server. If you have logged in and forgotten either your username or password, please follow the instructions when you click on "forgot username/password?"

This is also the platform we will be using for the substitute booking system. We are still in the Beta testing phase for teachers and substitute teachers, but will keep you informed when we are ready to move forward.

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



The opening weeks of the 2009-10 school year have seen the Student Services Department very busy with student placement, staff allocation, program support and providing inservice for staff. In the Student Services area, some 32 teachers and over 120 educational assistants have been allocated and are now working in support of students with special learning needs. I have had the opportunity to visit most schools and to observe the exceptional professional and compassionate service being provided to our students, many of whom have complex learning needs.

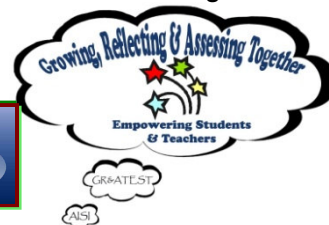
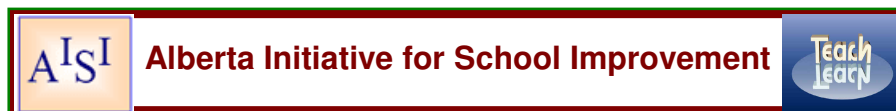
In the spirit of continuous improvement of service delivery and in keeping with the Setting the Direction initiative, Student Services is dedicating 'days of service' to schools with an emphasis on program support to enhance student learning. We have developed a Student Services wiki to help expedite the referral process for schools, to provide easier access to resources necessary for staff to develop IPPs, and to help link staff with community based resources. Our Student Services team is also working collaboratively with the Technology Department and the AISI team on personalizing learning for students by identifying areas of strength and need, and the resources and supports needed to meet them. Three of our Division program sites are currently piloting a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) project which involves use of assistive technology, where applicable, to enhance student learning and increase personal independence.

We are eagerly awaiting more information on Phase 4 of the Setting the Direction initiative: Planning and Implementation, and I want to remain optimistic that it will mean that the educational system is equipped, resourced, and ready to support and respond to the needs of our students.

The Student Services Department will continue to support your efforts in every way possible (program support, assessment, crisis intervention, threat-risk assessment, agency collaboration, inservicing etc.) to address the needs of the children and students we serve.

Have a great 2009-10 school year everyone!

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



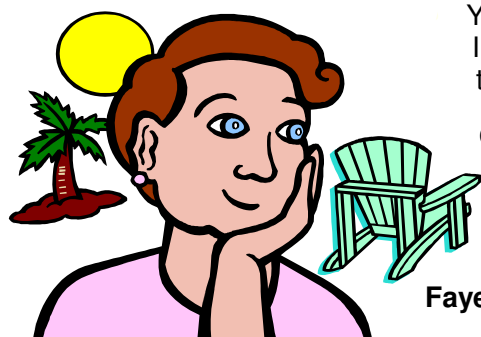
I am very excited about our new Cycle 4 AISI projects (GREATEST and CLASSE) since they build so well from what we learned and practiced in our previous AISI projects. Understanding and being comfortable with the strategies of Differentiation of Instruction and Assessment AS Learning are crucial to our implementation of constructivist strategies and growth mindset for deeper thinking which is the focus of the GREATEST project. The CLASSE project also requires skills from Differentiation of Instruction (flexible grouping and collaborative learning, for example) and from Assessment AS Learning (metacognitive awareness and self-assessment, for example) in order to increase the amount of conversational French among students.

In reviewing our GREAT project from Cycle 3, we found an overall improvement on Professional Achievement Tests and Diploma scores in those schools and an impressive improvement on parent, student, and teacher surveys. In our IPASD project, we are still facing challenges in the area of student attendance and course completion. An improvement of student engagement which is expected with the implementation of the strategies from the GREATEST project is expected to help in these areas.

We are also trying a new strategy for implementation in the CLASSE project and some of the schools in the GREATEST project with the use of Instructional Coaches. Kim Epp, Steve Trueman, and Terra Kaliszuk (GREATEST project) and Simone Lapointe (CLASSE project) are out working with teachers in the schools using the coaching model and also in the schools using the Lead Teacher model. They are continuously adding information and supporting teachers using the TeachersConnect site. You can contact them there, directly via email, or through your school lead teacher.

Division Professional Development (PD) Days

With our new format for Division PD Days this year, all full-time teaching staff are expected to attend all the PD days, both In-school (September 18th, April 16th) and November 23rd – ATA Institute, January 29th, Division PD Day, and March 5th, Division PD day. The optional day off that you were able to choose before is now a school closure day for all students and staff on May 21st. PD day programs and registration are posted on our website at: <http://www.blackgold.ab.ca/Resources/PD/>.



You will also find listings of other PD opportunities (Non-Violent Crisis Intervention - NVCI, Grant MacEwan Educational Assistants conference) on that page.

On a personal note, as I am retiring in February 2010, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your enthusiasm and support. I truly appreciate all you do to make learning the best it can be for all of your students. I am proud to have worked with so many dedicated educators. All the best.

Faye Gertz, AISI/PD Coordinator, 780-955-4528 – faye.gertz@blackgold.ca

Operations and Maintenance



It's hard to believe that two months of the current school year has come and gone. With the passing of these two months we have seen major progress at the replacement elementary school site in Thorsby. The contractor started stripping soil on August 26th and as of the 5th of November nearly all of the masonry and structural steel had been completed. The concrete floor has even been poured in the gymnasium. We have the fantastic fall weather and the project management of Pentagon Structures Ltd. to thank for this project being

on schedule. If we are able to maintain this project's schedule, and we feel we can, the Thorsby Elementary School staff and students will be starting the 2010/2011 school year in a brand new facility.

Operations and Maintenance – Continued

The second undertaking this past summer was the mechanical modernization at Willow Park School. The existing heating system had reached its 'best before' due date and was in need of attention. This project saw two new boilers complete with pumps installed as the main source of heat for the ventilation system. There was also a new ventilation and heating system installed in the gymnasium. At the same time, code issues were dealt with along with relocating the main office and identifying the main entrance. A big improvement!



We at Operations and Maintenance look forward to the balance of the school year and will strive to do the best that we can to keep our facilities comfortable and safe.

Dan Borys, Operations and Maintenance Manager, 780-955-6068 – dan.borys@blackgold.ca

Technology



PowerSchool (which will be replacing SASI)

Training has been arranged with Pearson for our initial four schools: Caledonia Park, Calmar Elementary, Robina Baker and Beau Meadow in early December.

Those involved in training will be: Secretarial Staff (full and part-time secretarial staff); Principal; Assistant Principal (or Counsellor).

The final half-day of training is targeted towards teaching staff and the use of PowerTeacher & PowerTeacher Gradebook. Three teachers from each school will attend this training. These staff members will then be responsible for mentoring and training the other teachers in the school.

Corinne and Jordan will train subsequent schools and we hope to be able to condense some of that training, which will begin some time after Christmas, again in groups of 3 - 5 schools at a time.

SysAid: New Tech Request System

As the new classroom computers are installed we will be moving to a replacement for our ancient, homegrown and no longer supportable, Tech Request program. SysAid is web-based and easy to use. There will be a shortcut to it on the new computers <http://helpdesk.blackgold.ca/Login.jsp>. We will maintain both systems until Christmas when we will move exclusively to SysAid. The program will allow us to better support the desktop remotely. We will also be able to 'asset tag' computer equipment for inventory and support purposes. The number will be on the desktop screen on computers. Each piece of equipment will also be bar-coded with the asset tag number.

As the classroom computers are installed, your computer tech will explain and demonstrate the new program to you.

Netbook Projects



Having piloted netbooks in a number of our schools and building on what we have learned through that and through Covenant Christian's one-to-one laptop project, we are preparing to begin a netbook project in each school. Principals, in consultation with the Ed Tech Admin Leads (ETAL's), are determining which three or four teachers will be involved. For a project like this, professional development and subsequent support are essential. Susan or Ray will spend a week in each school working with those teachers involved. ETAL's will also spend time in each school working with

the school administrator in charge of the program. We are looking at two schools per week receiving netbooks. Each teacher and administrator will be expected to share their experiences by blogging within our project blogs. We expect to begin these projects just before or after Christmas,



depending on delivery of the netbooks and carts.

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