

Welcome Spring!

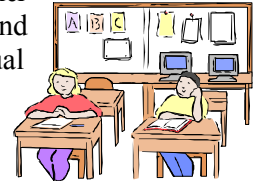
Black Gold Pipeline



Volume 11, Number 1,
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CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF EDUCATION

It's hard to believe it is the end of March already and there are only about 3 months before another school year is finished. Over the past several months, Board members enjoyed the school visits and had a hands-on experience of the many activities that occur during a school day. The individual efforts of school staff contribute to making your school a great place for students to learn.



With the support of the Black Gold Regional Division, the 2008 Alberta Winter Games was a success. Thank you to the staff who volunteered, and I trust it was a memorable experience.

After more than thirty years, the temporary portables at Ecole Corinthia Park School have finally been replaced. The patience of staff, students and parents, and the ongoing rallying to government, finally made this project a reality. The work done by our maintenance department in connecting the link to the steel modular units was first class. In addition, we finally have word from Alberta Education regarding Thorsby Elementary School. The constant reminder from the Board to the government and the MLA will soon get this project underway.



Our Board Planning Session occurs in May, with the main focus on the budget. Other topics to be addressed will include enrolment, technology, and our education and capital plans.

We will be saying goodbye to our Secretary-Treasurer, Orville Borys, who has decided to retire on June 13th. Every happiness is wished to him in all his future endeavours. His service will be missed, but we have an excellent manager, Ruth Andres, to carry out the role and responsibilities of Secretary-Treasurer. As well, the solid core of staff will maintain the first rate educational environment that Black Gold has to offer.

Everyone is so busy these days, and before you know it, spring break will be here, so on behalf of the Board of Education – enjoy!

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

SUPERINTENDENT

Winter is over and spring has arrived, and many historic events have transpired since the beginning of the school year.

On February 1, 2008, President of the ATA, Frank Bruseker, and (former) Minister of Education, Ron Liepert, jointly announced the achievement of the pension agreement between the Teachers' Association and the Government of Alberta. This marks the completion of new/revised collective agreements in 62 bargaining units across Alberta and is truly a historic agreement. The Government also indicated the continuation of school administrators as Association members.

On February 8, 2008, the Minister of Education also approved the transfer of responsibility for dealing with concerns regarding teacher competence from the Government of Alberta to the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Good news for Thorsby. The Government has approved the funding for a replacement school for Thorsby Elementary.

The Government also reaffirmed its commitment to "Class Size Initiative" and they will continue to monitor class size averages and provide funding for the Initiative, which is now in its fourth year.

The Winter Games were a huge success in Leduc and area. Those who volunteered did a wonderful job and deserve a well-earned “THANK YOU”! The 2,400 student athletes had an amazing experience which they will remember as a highlight of their lives.

A committee was formed to review the current grade configurations for BGRS in the City of Leduc. The mandate of the committee is to explore what the future BGRS Leduc grade configurations might be, and to make a recommendation to the Board of Education. The meetings have been very productive and a recommendation should be forthcoming in the near future.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of our Black Gold staff for the outstanding work you do everyday. I have heard so many positive comments as the trustees and I visit all our schools. You have created caring and focused learning environments for the students of Black Gold Regional Schools.

Norman Yanitski, Superintendent of Schools, 955-6026 — norman.yanitski@blackgold.ca



DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

After finally catching our breath following last year’s Programming Standards Review and this year’s Severe Disabilities Profile Funding Realignment (SDPFR), things are getting closer to normal in the special needs area. Stellar efforts by staff have largely prevented disruption to student programming during these monitoring activities.

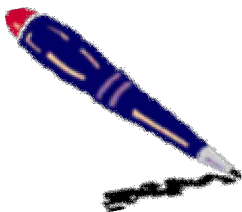


Unfortunately, we do not yet have confirmation that funding will be made available to maintain supports for the 50 additional students with severe disability who were identified by way of the SDPFR. In response, we have been active at all levels to ensure that none of our 281 students with severe disability is left behind. On receiving a formal written request from the BGRS Board Chair, our MLA Elect has committed to have this matter addressed by the new Minister of Education. We remain hopeful that this will occur so that further mobilization of parents and/or staff is not required in order to protect the well-being of our most vulnerable children and adolescents.

Ken Boschman, Deputy Superintendent, 955-6035 – ken.boschman@blackgold.ca

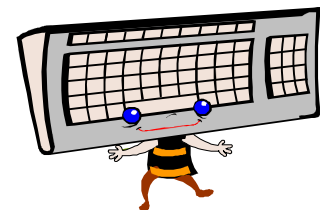
ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT

Welcome to Spring! It’s great to be able to enjoy all that sunshine and the melting snow – finally! Spring Break is just around the corner and I’m sure you are all eagerly anticipating a well-deserved holiday.



We are still having an incredibly busy year in our department. So far this year we’ve written 175 teaching contracts, in response to new and temporary postings. We continue to place support staff ads and it continues to be a challenge to find qualified candidates for specialized positions. The substitute secretaries have now responded to over 4,500 requests for a substitute teacher.

As you are probably aware, we are also working toward implementing an electronic substitute booking system and we hope to have that operational for the 08-09 school year. As we learn more and move toward finalizing the implementation process, I’ll be providing an update on any new procedures.



Enjoy the up-coming holiday!

Stuart Evans, Associate Superintendent, 955-6032 – stuart.evans@blackgold.ca

SECRETARY-TREASURER

This will be my last opportunity to convey a message to you in the Pipeline as Secretary-Treasurer for Black Gold, and in doing so, I want to thank the many people who made my career in local government a rewarding one.

When I officially close this chapter of my career on June 13th, I do so with a sense of fulfillment knowing the Division is in a solid financial position and that our operation is one which is recognized at the provincial level.

As I reflect on the many adventures and misadventures of the 34 plus years since I started at the County of Leduc #25, then to Leduc School District #297 and now Black Gold Regional Division #18, the common element that contributed to it being a rewarding experience is the people. To my assistants, the members of the executive and management teams, trustees, administrators, teachers, system support staff and bus contractors, **THANK YOU**. We are all members of the team that contributed to the positive reputation of our Division. Black Gold is positioned to continue to provide leadership in education and I wish you all the best.



Long ago when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft. Today, it's called golf. Now it is time for me to practice old witchcraft.

Orville Borys, Secretary Treasurer, 955-6030 – orville.borys@blackgold.ca

BENEFITS AND PAYROLL

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 employee guide for your HSA to ensure you are taking full advantage of the HSA and know how to effectively recoup your health expenses.



For eligible expenses consult the Canada Revenue Agency website at www.cra.gc.ca and search under “Medical Expenses”.

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

For a full time employee, use 10% of the full amount of the premium for EHC, Dental and Vision. For part time employees deduct 90% x your FTE from the full amount of the premium and use the remainder for your premium.

Please read your Health Spending Account Statement carefully. There are important messages on the bottom that will tell you when your credits expire. Please read your Health Spending Account Employee Guide or go online at www.asebp.ab.ca for more details.

The following information/tips from ASEBP may help you maximize the benefits from the Health Spending Account.

There's a better way to manage your Health Spending Account!

The next time you have an expense you'd like reimbursed from your HSA, visit the ASEBP website and take advantage of our 24/7 online expense submission service. Simply login to My ASEBP where you can

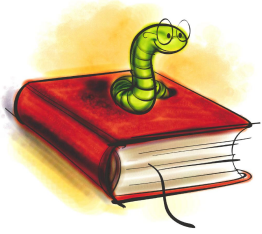
- Submit your HSA expenses as you get them
- View all the HSA expenses you submit
- Find out how much is in your HSA
- Get instant confirmation ASEBP received your HSA expense
- Learn when your next HSA reimbursement will happen
- And more!

Haven't registered yet?

Registering on the ASEBP website is easy and gives you instant access to HSA expense submission online. Just go to the ASEBP website (www.asebp.ab.ca) and click the **Register Now!** Link on the front page. Follow the easy steps and you'll receive your temporary password in the mail with directions for completing your registration.

If you have any questions, on managing your Health Spending Account, call ASEBP @ 431-4786.

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



CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Aaah, spring. A time when middle aged people in Central Office think about . . . curriculum! This year, a number of people have taken on significant curriculum roles within our Division and their work is greatly appreciated. Please join me in thanking:

- ✓ Ron Zukowski for his work with the new Biology 20, Chemistry 20, Physics 20, and Science 30 programs;
- ✓ Kevin Hancock for his work with the new Social Studies 8 and 10 programs;
- ✓ Angie Crosdale for her work with the new Social Studies 5 program;
- ✓ Carrie Erdmann for her work on the optional implementation of the new Mathematics K, 1, 4, and 7;
- ✓ Brenda Nelson for her work on First Nations, Metis and Inuit services, and
- ✓ Chris Peacocke for his work on the new French as a Second Language program at grades 7, 8, and 9, Immersion, and other Second Languages.

I would also like to thank Jen Southcombe for taking on the very complex assignment related to On-Line instruction and Elsi Evans for her unique combination of compassion and firmness in working with Home-Based students.

Next year, we will see new curriculum in Biology 30, Chemistry 30, Physics 30, Social Studies 6, 9, and 11, Mathematics K, 1, 4, and 7 (mandatory), and Mathematics 2, 5, and 8 (optional).



Although we have not received official word, there is reason to be optimistic that a \$550,000 grant proposal prepared by our High School Principals for CTS support may be funded. We will know on March 31st. If accepted, it means more CTS choices in rural schools, more high level course completions in larger schools, more students participating in SKILLS Canada competitions, and improved integration of CTS courses with the world of work (RAP).



For those who were involved in developing an Awards/Recognition section on each school website, please take a bow. There are excellent pages that may be accessed by parents and students. Our Board appreciates the time it has taken to gather the information and then place it into a pleasing format.

Also, this year, Alberta Education audited our Storefront (Outreach) School. The final report was very positive. Alberta Education was especially impressed with recent changes that focused energies on those at the greatest risk of not completing and the consequent result of course completions leading to graduation. The final report contains a great deal of praise for the excellent work by all the staff at Storefront.

Finally, a huge thank you to everyone involved in the Leduc Grade Configuration Review Committee. The situation in Leduc is complex with a number of competing agendas. Our discussion was spirited and committee members were very reflective. The substantial amount of work done outside of the meetings by all involved helped the meetings proceed smoothly and made the task of chairing a very enjoyable experience. While dealing with the situation in Leduc will require attention for a number of years, we have presented a significant first step to the Board.

Neil Fenske, Director, Curriculum and Instruction, 955-6028 – neil.fenske@blackgold.ca

A thought for the week: The problem with the gene pool is there is no lifeguard.

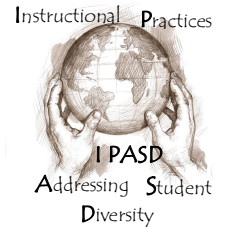


Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) and Professional Development

AISI



Our two AISI projects, Growing, Reflecting & Assessing Together and Instructional Practices Addressing Student Diversity are progressing well thanks to all the effort teachers are making in implementing these strategies. Kim Epp and Keith Pask did an excellent job of showcasing our GR&AT project to an enthusiastic group at the AISI Annual Conference in February.



You can find samples of student friendly outcomes, units, checklists, exemplars, research articles, etc. (many developed by teachers in our division) on our webpages at: <http://www.blackgold.ab.ca/Resources/AISI/IPASD/index.htm> and <http://www.blackgold.ab.ca/Resources/AISI/Great/index.htm>.

If you have materials you've developed and are willing to share, please send them to one of the Division Lead Teachers, Tia Martini, Keith Pask, Kim Epp, or myself for posting online. We are receiving encouraging feedback from teachers across our Division and the province who have found the materials you have sent in for posting very helpful.



Division PD Days

Thanks to all those staff members who step forward to host or facilitate inservices on our Division Professional Development days. Without you, we would not have a program. If you are willing to offer a workshop or host a working session (ie. developing social units, writing common exams, etc.) please contact me. When you see a gap in our programming, please consider hosting a working session yourself.

We are now planning our PD program for next year and would greatly appreciate your input on our PD survey at: <http://www.blackgold.ab.ca/Resources/PD/>

Our April 25 Division PD day includes sessions on:

- Social Studies (Grades 6, 7, 9, and 11)
- Mathematics (Divisions 1, 2, & 3)
- Early Literacy in French Immersion
- High School Film Study
- Working with FNMI students
- Using SMART Boards
- Step Out Safely – a program to prevent bullying
- Grading, Give 'em What They Deserve with Dale Armstrong (A repeat of the Nov 26 session)

Please see our program online for a complete listing. Registration closes April 11.

Here's hoping everyone has an excellent Spring Break!

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

