



Summary of Board Meeting #18 Tuesday, October 14, 2003

- A. **O Canada** – O Canada was sung by Kate Chegwin Music Teacher Shannon Haggerty who was accompanied on the piano by Grace Lee, a grade 8 student.
- B. **Roll Call:** (6:00 p.m.) – Trustees Bonko and Odynski were absent.
- C. **Communications from the Board Chairman**
1. The chairman advised that the Provincial Executive Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association has proclaimed October 13 to 18 as Substitute Teacher Appreciation Week throughout Alberta. The board appreciates the contributions substitute teachers make in providing continuity to the learning experiences of district students. Schools are encouraged, during this week especially and throughout the year, to recognize the valuable work substitute teachers are doing on behalf of our students.
 2. The chairman advised that, in the official report that was presented to parliament October 6th by the Commissioner of Official Languages, the EPS French Language Renewal Project was highlighted. The report identifies that the Office of the Commissioner is participating as a member of the advisory board and that the Commissioner intends to award a certificate of merit to each student who passes the language skills test administered by the Public Service Commission of Canada.
- The report states: *This project is truly remarkable because it is the first time that young Canadian students are taking language tests that are recognized when applying for designated bilingual positions within the Federal Public Service. The truly great thing is that this "first" is happening in Edmonton not Ottawa or Moncton.*
- D. **Communications from the Superintendent of Schools** – None.
- E. **Minutes:**
1. **Board Meeting #17 – September 30, 2003** - Approved as printed.
- F. **Focus on Student Achievement**
2. **Kate Chegwin's Instructional Focus: Higher Order Thinking Skills**

Received for information.

G. Reports:

3. Report #16 of the Conference Committee (From the Meeting Held October 7, 2003)

Approved recommendations re:

- Report from the board evaluation subcommittee (see APPENDIX I)
- Teacher certificated resignations and retirements

4. Motion Re Obesity in School-Age Children

Approved recommendation.

5. Allendale School Closure Process

Received for information.

6. Alberta Initiative for School Improvement Update

Received for information.

7. Alexander Rutherford Scholarships

Received for information.

8. Fourth Quarterly Report: June 1, 2003 to August 31, 2003

a) Received for information.

b) Trustee Woodrow requested that information be provided on how much money is in “holdback” for this year.

9. Response to Trustee Request for Information

Received for information.

H. Committee and Board Representative Reports

• **Community Relations Activities**

1. Trustee Martin advised that he had attended Beacon Heights School’s 50th Anniversary on October 9, 2003. Mrs. Goldring, MLA Yankowsy and Councillor Janice Melnychuk were also in attendance.

2. Trustee Hansen advised that he had represented the board at the United Way Breakfast.

3. Trustee Fleming advised that he had attended a Citizenship Ceremony at City Hall.

I. **Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives** – None.

J. **Trustee and Board Requests for Information** – None.

K. **Notices of Motion**

Trustee Woodrow served notice of the following motion:

That the following be added to the trustee electoral ward boundary criteria: *ensure that each ward includes within its boundaries at least one elementary, junior high and senior high school.*

L. **Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, October 28, 2003 – 7:30 p.m. - Board**

M. **Duration of Meeting: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Trustee Gibeault provided the following verbal report with respect to the board's 2002-2003 self-evaluation:

I would like to report from the Board Evaluation Committee on the results of this year's board evaluation. The board conducts an annual board self-evaluation in addition to reviewing other district monitoring information and achievement results.

The board conducts a board self-evaluation for a number of reasons:

- *To facilitate communication and teamwork among board members.*
- *To enable the board to model its policy of system-wide evaluation (i.e., to hold itself to a standard as it holds others to a standard).*
- *To assist the board in clarifying its direction to more effectively plan, and provide for, the learning opportunities for children in the system.*

In the context of the goals it established for itself at the beginning of its term of office, the board considers the degree to which it has been effective in fulfilling its mandated role and responsibilities and the district's priorities.

The 2002-2003 school year presented both challenges and opportunities. We began the year on the tail of the arbitrated teachers wage settlement and the announcement of an Alberta Commission on Learning. We launched an extensive consultation process with education stakeholders who shared their view and provided input to the district's submission to the Learning Commission. More than 650 individuals participated. This marked the beginning of a concerted effort to engage the community in support of public education and to highlight the need for increased funding in our schools.

In reviewing the board's self-evaluation, the board takes pride in its efforts to engage the community. The board collectively and individually took steps to keep the community informed of the district's initiatives and challenges through media conferences, and meetings with MLA's, school councils and parent advocates.

The board has always had an open and accountable budget review process. In the context of the budget process, we gave notice to our school communities that the district was facing a deficit and that our schools need increased funding. Our strategy gained broad publicity and staff support. There was tremendous support provided by parent and community advocates for increased funding. We appreciate their efforts very much. Our greatest disappointment is that increased funding was not forthcoming but we remain hopeful for the future.

And, while we created a higher profile for education and put education on the front burner, it did not come without its own price. The district was faced with an external review and audit. The district viewed this new challenge as an opportunity to improve some practices and affirm the value of others. We remain committed to decentralized decision-making but believe that with school based budgeting comes responsibility. One of the predominant themes in the board's self-evaluation was the need to demonstrate due diligence in the monitoring of expenditures of public funds. Not only must there be monitoring and accountability, but as well, the results must be communicated in such a way that they are easily understood by our public.

Another significant theme from the board's evaluation is that in spite of a series of significant challenges, we maintained our focus on student achievement and the value of public education. We did not allow ourselves to be split apart in the face of criticism from government, the public or the media.

Three years ago, the Board of Trustees reaffirmed its priority around achievement. We wanted to improve our student achievement results and our high school completion rates. It is very heartening for the board to see that our efforts and those of our staff are beginning to show positive results. Over the past two years, the five-year completion rate as measured by Alberta Learning has increased each year at a rate significantly better than the provincial rate. HLAT results show an increase in the percentage of students reading and writing at grade level in the primary grades, particularly for students reading above grade level. Over 85% of students at grades 1 to 9 are reading at or above grade level and 87% are writing at or above grade level.

And, our provincial achievement results are showing similar stellar improvement. More of our students achieved the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 2003 than in 2002 on Provincial Achievement tests. For nearly all subjects, a greater percentage of district students met the acceptable standard and standard of excellence than was true for the province in 2003. More of our students are completing high school – we have seen a 5.6 per cent gain in our completion rate for students who would have entered Grade 10 in 1997-98. The district saw an increase in the percentage of students successfully completing core courses in Grade 10, 11 and 12. This hopefully will result in further increases in our high school completion rate. Completing high school is essential if our students are to enjoy a high quality of life, become productive citizens and make a meaningful contribution to their communities.

Although we recognize that this year will present challenges for our district in terms of reduced staffing levels and limited resources, we will continue to do our best to minimize the impact these reductions will have on student learning. We remain committed to delivering an outstanding education to our students. And, we remain committed to keeping our community engaged as active partners in public education.

We look forward to the challenges and opportunities presented by the recent release of the report from the Learning Commission and the promise of increased funding for education.