

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

*A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board*

*December 2008*

## **Facilities Update**

Parents and students of Frank Roberts Junior High were notified by their school this week of the plan to return to their school on Monday, January 5. While the wet weather over the past few weeks has caused a delay in the roof replacement project, we are optimistic that the school will reopen on schedule on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

At St. George's Elementary, a building contractor is on-site reinstating walls and replacing windows. St. George's Elementary remains on schedule to reopen in January 2009.

Building extensions at Amalgamated Academy, Holy Family Elementary, and Roncalli Elementary are behind schedule. It is anticipated that Roncalli will be completed in early January, Amalgamated by late February and Holy Family by Easter.

The public tenders for the design/build of the new elementary school for Torbay, and the first of two elementary schools for Paradise, closes January 16, 2009. The site work for the new Torbay school is currently in progress.

As part of the St. John's Fire Department's inspection program for schools, some recommendations were made to upgrade the older section of St. Teresa's Elementary. This work will involve installing new gyproc, and replacing some doors and hardware. A life-safety study for St. Teresa's Elementary has also been commissioned.

Hazardous material assessments have been commissioned for all schools which have not had this assessment previously completed. The Department of Education is funding this initiative.

## **Safe and Secure Schools**

To help support the development of our District policy on Lockdowns, a District-wide principals' session on Secure Schools/Lockdowns took place at the Holiday Inn on October 28. Keynote speaker for

the day was Mr. Dan Wiseman, a retired Safe Schools and Community Agency Liaison for Ottawa Carleton District School Board.

Agenda items included presentations by the RNC and RCMP, as well as sessions on Counselling and District Response, and Crisis Communications. The final policy has been vetted through the Programs committee.

## **Automated Notification: SchoolConnects**

The District purchased a license for all schools to use *SchoolConnects* technology, a web-based automated telephone messaging system that will enhance home-school communications.

*SchoolConnects* will be used to notify parents of school-related news such as student absences and parent-teacher conferences or even to conduct surveys. *SchoolConnects* also has the capability to deliver a 30-second message to all parents in any given school within minutes. This feature will greatly enhance communication to parents and guardians during midday school closures or emergencies. Radio announcements and Status Central will continue to be used to make public announcements.

Some schools have been using this technology for several years; however, most of our schools have just received training. Administrators have been sending out test messages to parents to trouble-shoot issues. Testing will be ongoing throughout the remainder of the school year with full implementation by all schools in September 2009.

## **Teacher Allocation Meetings**

Our HR staff recently attended a Teacher Allocation meeting sponsored by the Department of Education. The purpose of this meeting was to seek feedback from the District on the proposed teacher allocation model. Follow-up meetings are expected as the Department refines the new model for the 2009-2010 school year.

### **Leadership Development Program**

This year we have 60 teachers enrolled in our Leadership Development Program. This is an important program for district succession planning and it is intended for those who wish to learn more about opportunities for leadership positions in the District. Participants come from all four regions and each participant has the support of their administration in this area of personal and professional development.

### **French Immersion Administrators' Institute**

On November 17, Eastern School District hosted a one-day institute for administrators who work in French immersion schools. There were 51 participants including administrators from all levels as well as senior education officers, program specialists and student support services personnel from all four Anglophone districts, as well as Department of Education personnel.

Feedback from the session was very positive. Participants remarked that it was the first opportunity that French Immersion administrators had to meet to discuss relevant topics. Common concerns included recruitment of qualified French Immersion teachers, availability of resources and supporting students with challenges in an inclusive French immersion program.

### **Nutrition Policy Update**

In 2006, the Provincial School Food Guidelines (SFG) were launched. The District also implemented a Nutrition Policy that incorporated a two-year transition period to allow for the adaptation of school menus to include healthier options, training of cafeteria staff, and the installation of new cafeteria equipment for healthier cooking methods.

As of September 2008, we have been moving towards full implementation of the Nutrition Policy. This means that all food and beverages served must fit with the SFG. School health promotion liaison consultants and regional nutritionists are assisting school staff and caterers with this process. In the absence of a food service provider, we are working with individual schools to find creative solutions to work within these guidelines.

A brochure for parents and caregivers outlining the new school food guidelines was distributed to every student in the province in December.

### **Cultural Connections Funding**

For the past two years, the Eastern School District, in conjunction with the Department of Education, has been providing cost-shared funding to schools to purchase equipment that supports educational programming for Fine Arts through the Cultural Connections Strategy. To this end, this year we are providing all schools with a grant of up to \$5,000 for the purchase of capital equipment needs. Programs staff will be reviewing applications from schools.

### **Eastern Active Schools Update**

The Active Schools St. John's Pilot Project is a program designed to provide students with 20 minutes of daily activity while promoting a culture of healthy active living throughout the school community.

There are currently 24 schools participating in this program. The positive response from participating schools has been spreading and enthusiasm has been building. Forty one additional schools have requested to become part of the Eastern Active Schools Program for 2008-09. We are currently awaiting a positive response from the Provincial Government to our recent funding request to continue expansion of this excellent program to at least 16 additional schools in the District this year.

### **Negotiations**

Negotiations continue with the NAPE support staff. Meetings are scheduled for mid December for both support staff and student assistants.

Negotiations were ongoing with the NLTA during November and meetings are scheduled for early December.

### **Essential Services**

Hearings have commenced at the Labour Relations Board seeking an essential services agreement for Student Assistants in the event of a labour disruption. These hearings will continue in January 2009, at which time, all five school boards will make presentations to the Labour Relations Board outlining their respective rationale and the need for essential workers for our special needs children.

### **Support Staff – Recruitment Highlights**

Internal recruitment has been extremely busy during the month of November. Approximately fifty internal positions have been posted and filled by internal applicants, creating much movement within the system.

### **Intensive Core French (ICF) Working Group**

An ICF Working Group has been created to examine the delivery of the ICF program in an endeavour to meet the requests of all interested students as well as implementation of the program. The group will develop an ICF delivery model that addresses the varying challenges in schools with respect to program demand and personnel.

### **Applause**

Congratulations to the over 250 junior high students, and their teachers, who participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Intermediate Skills Canada Challenge. This exciting event included competitions in Web Page Design, Graphic Design, TV Video Production, Prepared Speech, Information Technology, Computer Animation, Job Interview, Job Skill Demonstration and Lego League Robotics.

Congratulations to the following schools on their overall placement:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Amalgamated Academy
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Brother Rice Junior High
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Frank Roberts Junior High



Congratulations to Larkhall Elementary, Balbo Elementary and St. Michael's High. These schools were recognized by the environmental protection group, Ocean Net, for their efforts in protecting our marine environment. These three schools have been active in beach clean-ups for the past number of years and each school has various ongoing environmental initiatives underway.

