



Prairie South School Division No. 210

Annual Report to Electors
January 1 - August 31, 2006



Gord Stewart
Chair, Board of Education

Policy Governance

Collective Responsibility

Message from the Chair

Report of the Prairie South Board of Education, with respect to educational developments for the period January 1 to August 31, 2006

On January 1, 2006, the Prairie South School Division was established by Minister's Order, and as a result of a provincial restructuring of school divisions.

The division brought together seven previous divisions, each of which came with distinct policies, priorities and practices. Despite their differences, the legacy divisions (Borderland, Golden Plains, Moose Jaw Public, Red Coat Trail, Thunder Creek and parts of Davidson and Herbert) shared a common goal: student success.

Focusing on that common goal, the 10 members of the Prairie South Board of Education worked together to create and adopt a unified and unifying vision and mission for the division, along with a set of guiding principles (see page 4). In striving to embody its vision of *Learning Excellence* in those early months, the Board placed a high priority on creating a common culture among its students, staff and communities, as well as at the Board table.

That common culture – a new culture for all of us – required several shifts in both actions and approaches.

At the Board table, an important shift was the move to a policy governance model that supported a more strategic approach to Board matters. Policy governance implied clearly defined and separated roles and responsibilities for the Board and its Director of Education.

That essentially meant that we, as a Board, set policy and direction, and delegated the implementation of the resulting strategic plan and the day-to-day management of the division to the Director of Education. The Director likewise delegated responsibility for selected areas to senior administration and school-based administrators (principals and vice-principals).

This was a significant shift from previous governance models that tended to be more operational, with Boards of Education involved – to a greater or lesser degree – in a hands-on capacity, in the daily business of the division.

Another shift required broadening our thinking, our considerations and our collective “mind” to include many more students spread over a much-larger geographic area. As individuals, we represented diverse and divergent electorates and brought a variety of experiences, beliefs and motivations to

Initiatives

the table. Working together as a group, we can tap into that collective experience to set policy that reflects the needs of all students fairly and equitably, remembering that *equitable* does not always mean *same*.

The larger division compelled trustees to find an appropriate balance between their collective responsibility to the wider student population and their obligation to carry forward the voices of their local electors.

It was definitely a period of coming together and new beginnings – for all of us.

The creation of a new school division and culture was an active process, involving a great deal of important foundational work. Some of our major accomplishments in these first eight months included:

- Initiation of a program review at all schools in the division (excluding Hutterite Colony schools), to determine current and future needs, as well as baseline satisfaction levels;
- Initiation of a review of all facilities in the division (excluding Hutterite Colony and Associate schools) to determine their condition and identify needed repairs and upgrading;
- Approval of the acquisition of sophisticated demographic software to aid the division in identifying and understanding future enrolment trends;
- Establishment of open attendance boundaries, with transportation provided as per defined boundaries (catchment areas);
- Acquisition and use of the Student Information Record System (SIRS) to enable the efficient electronic gathering and reporting of student information;
- Development and implementation of policies regarding instructional staff levels and retirement incentives to respond to enrolment declines.

The Board soon recognized that one of its greatest challenges would be declining student enrolment and identifying how to respond to the decline effectively and appropriately. With provincial funding linked directly to the number of students in a division and a rate of decline higher than that seen anywhere else in the province, we knew we had a challenge ahead of us.

To complicate things further, the new Board not only took over operations in the middle of a school year, it did so in the midst of a dispute between rural municipalities and the provincial government over the collection of education tax on rural property. The dispute was alleviated when the province implemented a property tax rebate program, but the issue of taxation remains a sore spot for many.

Looking forward

The inaugural eight-month period has been one of development and adjustment for the Prairie South Board of Education, the division, its schools, its students, its staff, its families and its communities. As a Board, we worked to create a sound base for the decisions we had ahead, and looked forward with cautious optimism to our first full school year.

Respectfully submitted,

Gordon Stewart,
Chair, Board of Education
Prairie South School Division

Mission

Our Mission

Nurturing Communities of Learners

Vision

Our Vision

Learning Excellence

Guiding Principles

Our Guiding Principles and Shared Values

Learning: We value learning in all we do.

Accountability: We value the effective and efficient use of resources.

Respectful, caring communities: We value communities that support learning through a caring, respectful and inclusive environment.

Unity: We value unity of purpose through a culture that recognizes diversity and equity.

Excellence: We value excellence based upon high expectations for all, directed toward student success.

Communication: We value transparent and effective communication achieved through networking and teamwork.





Brenda Edwards
Director of Education

From seven to one

Our students, our focus

Message from the Director

Report of the Director of Education, concerning the progress of education in the period January 1 to August 31, 2006

When we launched Prairie South School Division in January 2006 it was the beginning of a whole-hearted, ongoing drive to build a common culture based on shared values and consistent with the vision and mission of the newly amalgamated school division.

We jumped into the middle of a school year, temporarily melding the different legacy systems and operating protocols. We started with seven board offices, seven local teacher agreements, seven separate union contracts ... seven of everything.

By Aug. 31, 2006, the end of this reporting period, through collaboration, consultation and a great deal of hard work, we were well on our way to becoming a single, united division. We had laid the foundation for moving forward together to achieve *Learning Excellence*.

As a Central Administrative Council, the superintendents and I spent time becoming familiar with each of our division's schools and their respective staffs. We continued to make students our priority and schools our focus. We worked with school-based administrators to identify needs and to establish norms and protocols. It was time spent becoming a team – and time we all considered to be well-spent.

I want to recognize the efforts of our staff during these first eight months – we asked a lot of them in terms of time, commitment and professionalism. They contributed above and beyond expectations to ensure the division continued to meet the needs of students in the midst of significant change and transition.

Education

One of the most significant changes in how we look at education in the division has been the introduction of the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) process by Saskatchewan Learning. The focus of the CIF is to improve student outcomes by means of a process where divisions plan for and evaluate system improvement, while ensuring that improvement is aligned with provincial priorities for education renewal: higher literacy and achievement; equitable opportunities; smooth transitions; and system accountability and governance.

Continuous improvement

A draft form of the division's first-ever CIF outlined ambitious goals in each of the priority areas. It will be critical to begin to assess our results in these areas in the coming years, as we are able to finalize and implement this important plan. It will be similarly important to work with schools and school community councils to ensure school-level improvement plans are aligned with the division direction and directed at supporting student learning and achievement.

Program review

In February, we contracted with the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU) to review the programs and services offered in each of Prairie South's schools (except the Hutterite Colony schools). The objectives of the study included identifying and comparing programs; determining existing satisfaction levels and perceptions; and identifying future needs and areas of program emphasis.

The SELU review gave us an objective, research-based view of the delivery of education services across the division, and at the school level. It identified areas of perceived strength, as well as areas where we may need to make changes. All of the information has been and will continue to be valuable in ensuring we meet the needs of students, the expectations of parents and communities and the curricular requirements of Saskatchewan Learning.

Special Education review

Another important review we undertook in our first months was designed to identify current needs and practices relative to Special Education across the school division to inform future planning in the Student Support Services area. The results identified division personnel as a key strength in this area.

"Principals, student support teachers, classroom teachers, and school division professional support personnel made reference to the commitment, dedication, knowledge, expertise, mutual support, respect, flexibility, creativity, care, and team work among personnel at all levels within the division."

*(Student Support Services Review,
Revised July 2006)*

This was gratifying and inspiring feedback. We know how important it is to have a team of great people working together to develop and nurture student learning. The review identified several other themes and provided examples of effective practice and a summary of issues for each. Like the program review, the data has been and will continue to be important as we move forward in the area of Special Education.

We met often with our school-based administrators – principals and vice-principals – to develop school families and professional

learning communities. School-based staff maintained their focus on the students, keeping the organizational changes and disruption out of the classroom. Their professionalism was notable.

Operations

Logistics of restructuring

The first eight months of operations were incredibly busy ones on the business side of the organization. The logistics involved in consolidating buildings, administration, contracts, procedures and more were tremendous, and all of it had to be done at the same time as we carried on normal business and planned for future initiatives.

We consolidated division administration into three offices and a school. We centralized records from the legacy divisions and implemented new records management practices. We contracted with an architect for a facility review to determine the condition of schools in our division, including necessary repairs and upgrading that would bring them up to a Board-identified standard.

We negotiated a tentative Local Implementation Negotiating Committee (LINC) agreement with our teachers in June 2006, which was taken forward for ratification that Fall. (Note: it was ratified in the subsequent financial reporting year.)

We implemented new, automated accounting, payroll and purchasing systems to consolidate financial transactions across the system.

Student information and demographics

We implemented an electronic student information records and reporting system that will improve our ability to gather, analyze and report data. We also acquired student demographics software that helps identify trends and predict future enrolment. These systems will help us better respond to both individual student needs and to larger student population trends.

These projects give you an idea of the major changes our business operations managed during the whirlwind eight-month period. These changes laid important foundations for the years to come and will allow us to better meet the needs of Prairie South students well into the future.

Together into the future

Future

In almost everything we did this past year, there was an air of coming together, an understood theme of planning for a unified future. I respect and admire the willingness of everyone involved in the process – Board, senior administration, staff and communities – to work together for the benefit of our common priority: the students.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Edwards
 Director of Education
 Prairie South School Division

**Financial Summary
 January 1 to August 31, 2006**

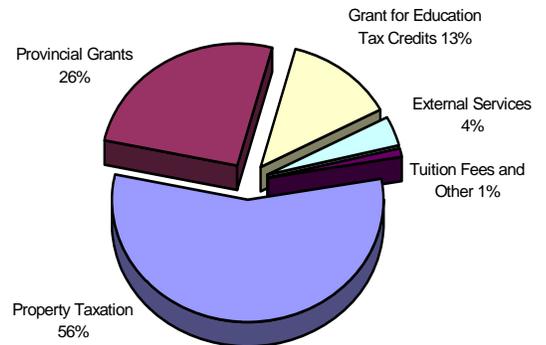
REVENUE	2006
Property Taxation	\$ 26,245,874
Provincial Grants	12,278,352
Grant for Education Tax Credits	6,018,332
External Services	1,893,289
Tuition Fees and Other Revenue	462,234
Complementary Services	235,755
Total Revenue	\$ 47,133,836

EXPENDITURES	2006
Instruction	\$ 31,884,884
Plant	6,242,926
Transportation	3,766,561
External Services	1,823,266
Governance	1,206,502
Administration	923,377
Complementary Services	479,041
Tuition and Related Fees	339,412
Interest and Bank Charges	132,211
Long Term Debt Repayment	114,773

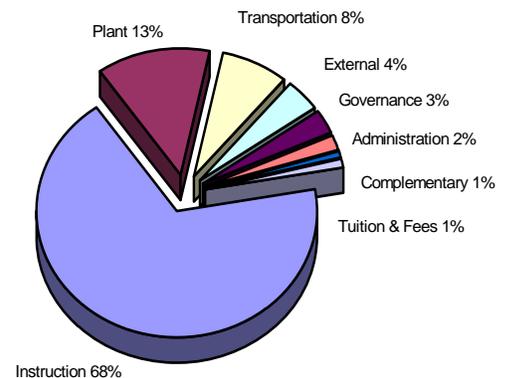
Total Expenditures **\$ 46,912,953**

Surplus for the Period **\$ 220,883**

Revenue 2006



Expenditures 2006



Operating Highlights

The first budget and operating period for the Prairie South School Division was for the eight-month period Jan. 1 to Aug. 31, 2006.

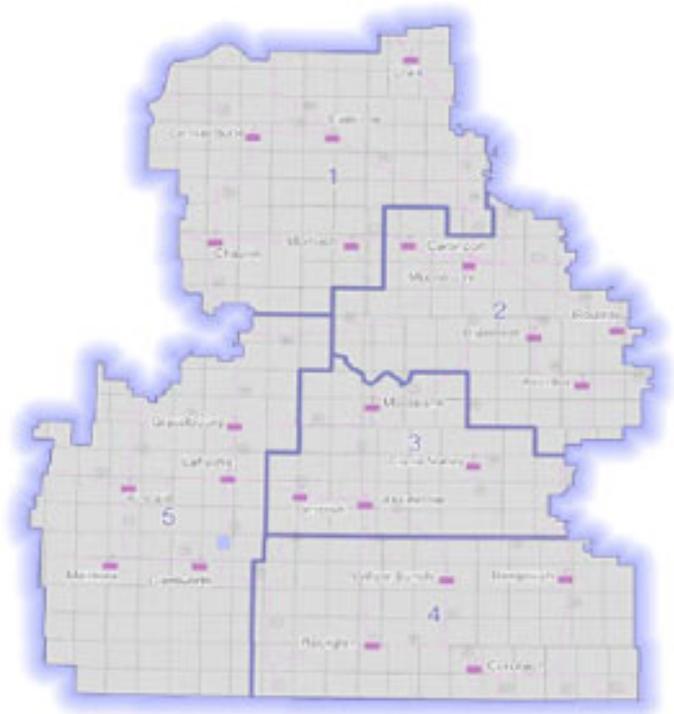
Highlights of the first eight months of operation are as follows:

- *Total revenue:* \$47.1 million (56% property taxes; 39% provincial grant and education tax credit; 5% other revenue)
- *Total expenditures:* \$46.9 million (\$44.9 million operating; \$2.0 million capital and long-term debt repayment)
- *Surplus:* \$220,883
- *Total municipalities* (towns, villages and rural municipalities): 84
- *Mill rate:* 21.3
- *Total schools:* 45 (including 2 associate schools and 5 Hutterian colony schools)
- *Total students 2005/06, pre-K to Gr. 12:* 7,861 (7,618 full-time equivalents)
- *Total school-based teachers 2005/06:* 557 full-time equivalents
- *Pupil to teacher ratio 2005/06:* 13.7
- *Total staff 2005/06:* 1,037 full-time equivalent teachers, school support staff, bus drivers, caretakers, maintenance, specialized supports and central office personnel
- *Total bus routes 2005/06:* 150

Equity through technology

- More than 800 new computer systems deployed
- Engineered/deployed:
 - new financial/HR system
 - new staff and new student e-mail systems
 - new Help Desk system (written in-house)
 - new Student Information System (MIG/SIRS)
 - new network infrastructure across the division
 - two Video Conferencing systems (9th Avenue and Assiniboia Comprehensive High School)
- Built 62 new servers
- Migrated three division offices, as well as 13 schools, into the new domain/e-mail systems
- Worked with curriculum consultant to develop IT Steering Committee to provide input, feedback and direction
- Developed numerous “best-practice-based” policies/procedures (security, tape/disk backup, etc.)

Board Information



Subdivision 1: Ron Gleim

Subdivision 2: Lance Bean

Subdivision 3: Wilf Lethbridge

Subdivision 4: Neil Buckler

Subdivision 5: Marion Piché

Subdivision 6: (Elected at large within Moose Jaw)

Ray Boughen

Claude Duke

Joan McMaster

Gord Stewart

Lew Young

