

Message from the Chair

Report of the Prairie South Board of Education with respect to educational developments for the period September 1, 2008, to August 31, 2009

The 2008-09 school year was full of change and activity in Prairie South. With many of the organizational details arising from amalgamation behind us, the Board was able to fine-tune its focus and follow through on several initiatives it identified as vital to moving forward.

Strategic Plan

One of the first of those initiatives – and one that helped to clarify the direction the Board would take with respect to other items – was updating and fundamentally redeveloping our Strategic Plan. Our first plan had been established as we approached amalgamation, and it was designed to address operational issues such as re-culturing, policy development and building a common understanding of the division's resources and needs. It was time for a new, forward-looking plan.

The updated plan formalized the three goals the Board had identified for its school review considerations two years earlier:

- a quality learning program,
- effective and efficient use of division resources, and
- a viable and sustainable school division.

The goals are inter-related and most activities fall under more than one of the goal areas. The planning model on the page opposite illustrates the relationship between not only the three goals, but also between the division's key member groups: staff, students, parents, communities and the Board itself. As well, the model makes it clear that students are at the center – the heart – of everything we do.

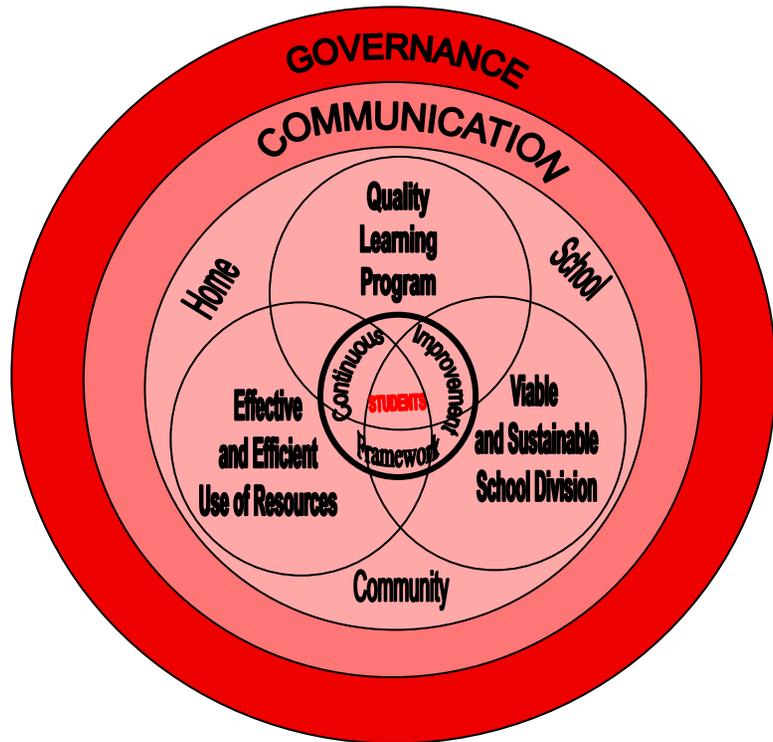
Cover and throughout: Student Learning Outcomes – posted as "I Can" statements – are becoming a common sight in Prairie South classrooms.

Prairie South School Division No. 210

Annual Report to Electors
September 1, 2008 - August 31, 2009

Learning Excellence





Quality Learning Program

Early in the school year, on the advice of our curriculum and learning team, the Board amended its student assessment policy to include students in what was formerly known as the parent-teacher conference. Students are now invited to be a part of the twice-yearly conferences. Many schools have embraced the change and are using a model where the students actually lead the conference, allowing them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Other schools are moving in that same direction.

In October, the Board commissioned a review of the alternative school-year calendar – or four-day school week, as it's more commonly known – that six of our schools are using (Glentworth, Gravelbourg Elementary and High School, Kincaid Central, Lafleche Central and Mankota). The province requires regular reviews as part of its ongoing monitoring. Based on results that showed little difference between Prairie South schools using the alternative calendar and those using the traditional calendar, as well as strong parent and community support for the system, we submitted a successful proposal to the Ministry to extend the arrangement to the 2010-11 school year.

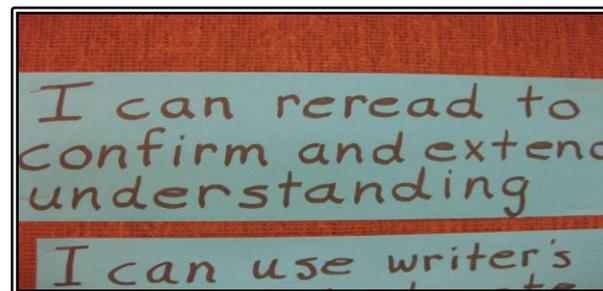
In December, as staff began to draft the 2009-10 school year calendars, the Board increased the number of student days by one to 185. We know that instruction time is an important factor in student achievement, so while we recognize that teachers and other staff need time to plan and consult with each other, we believe in-class time is important and want to protect as much of that time as possible.

Effective and Efficient Use of Division Resources

With the majority of the division's schools more than 50 years old – and several that are much, much older – facilities maintenance and planning is a critical task. Given that the Ministry has ultimate control over which projects are approved for shared funding, trustees viewed the development of a long-range facilities plan as one of the division's highest priorities.

We began the first phase of the project by looking at communities with more than one school: Assiniboia, Gravelbourg and Moose Jaw. The process used was a new one for most trustees – and for the public. Two rounds of Open Houses were held in each of the affected communities and, in an effort to share information and solicit feedback rather than set up a debate-style forum, the events featured panels of information and invited participants to provide written feedback. While many people took the time to provide feedback and help us weigh the issues, we are looking at changing how we engage the public in the second phase of the project. The Board realizes that when all was said and done, it wasn't the best way to engage the public in an effective and lasting relationship.

The Board also approved the construction of a new Transportation shop in Moose Jaw. The existing shop at the Thatcher Drive location had reached its maximum capacity and was not big enough to service the largest buses. We're confident the new location – west of 9th Ave. NW and north of Bedford Road in Moose Jaw – will provide better working conditions for our mechanics, as well as safer, easier access for drivers.



Viable and Sustainable School Division

As anyone who is familiar with our division and the priorities of the Board, will know, provincial funding has been a critical factor since we amalgamated as Prairie South. Each year, provincial funding declined, seemingly based on a falling enrolment. However, some divisions across the province – both rural and urban – were also losing students, yet not losing grant money.

Our Board made funding advocacy a high priority. We invited local MLAs to a Board meeting and shared with them information on how the funding model was failing our division – and more importantly, our students. We shared the same information with the Minister of Education, with our staff, with our SCCs and with the public. It's hard to look at the facts we presented and not see the flaw in the formula, and the Minister assured us he had heard us – and other Boards like us who carried a similar message.

In March 2009, the province announced sweeping changes to how education was funded. They eliminated the enrolment-based grant system that had so negatively affected our students, and provided interim funding based on the previous year's budget, plus cost-of-living increases. They also took away school boards' ability to set a local mill rate, instituting provincial rates instead. While some boards were opposed to the changes, our Board was cautiously supportive. We knew the old system was broken, and we hoped the change would provide an opportunity to ensure a new system was more responsive to the needs of all divisions, and all students – whether rural or urban. We will continue to proactively share information and insights with the Ministry, ensuring we have a voice in how education funding will be distributed in the future.

School of Opportunity

In May, the Minister of Education declared Chaplin School a "School of Opportunity" for Kindergarten to Grade 8, following a request from that community for School of Opportunity status to prevent its closure in August 2009, as per a May 2007 Board decision. The decision meant that students from Grades 9 to 12 would have to attend school elsewhere, while younger students could stay in Chaplin for at least three years, while the community had an opportunity to demonstrate that its plans for growth would bear fruit – and students.

In the end, the decision seemed to surprise almost everyone, and satisfy no-one: the school remained open, requiring staffing, maintenance and utility costs; the community lost its high school; families were separated. For its part, the Ministry has indicated that it feels the community has a better chance of reaching the minimum

enrolment for a K-8 school (51) than a K-12 school (88), thereby giving it a better chance of success. Time will tell.

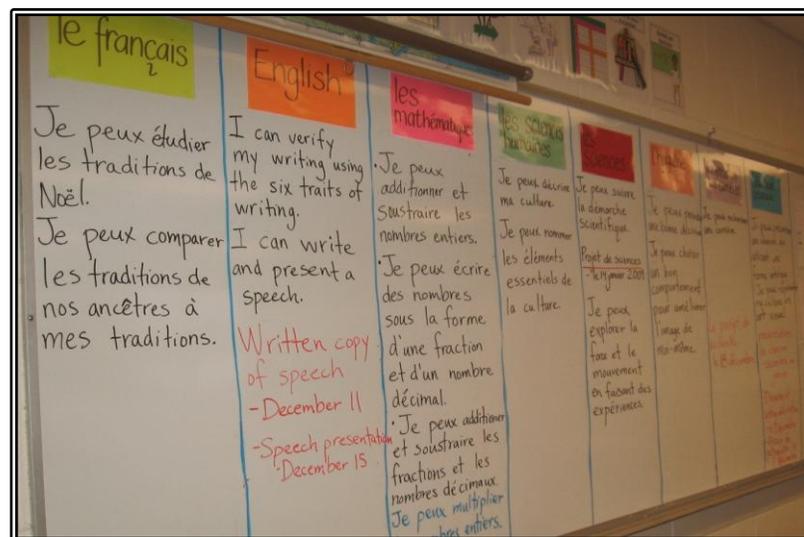
Farewells and Future Thoughts

Early in 2009, trustee Ray Boughen resigned from the Board, following his election as a Member of Parliament for Palliser. We also missed the presence of trustee Marion Piché, who was unable to join us in the latter part of the school year due to health complications.*

In the coming year, we will continue to advocate for adequate education funding, supports for students and schools and equity for students. We will continue to improve our communication – sharing information and listening for feedback. And we will continue to hold true to our vision of *Learning Excellence* for all.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Gleim
Chair, Board of Education

** Subsequent to year-end, trustees Lance Bean, Neil Buckler, Claude Duke and Marion Piché chose not to run in the October 2009 election, while trustee Wilf Lethbridge was defeated. We thank all of the former trustees for their years of dedicated service to the students of Prairie South.*





Message from the Director

Report of the Director of Education concerning the progress of education in the period September 1, 2008, to August 31, 2009

In just a few short years, Prairie South School Division has earned a well-deserved reputation for leadership and excellence. From our beginning in January 2006, our vision of *Learning Excellence* has been a powerful motivator, inspiring staff, students and communities across the division to step up to the challenge and explore what excellence means in their area.

Classrooms Have Changed

One of the places this is most visible is in our classrooms. If you've visited a classroom recently, chatted with a student or checked out a school or school division web site, you've likely discovered that most schools today are quite different than they were 50, 25 or even just 10 years ago.

Technology, of course, has brought about many of the most noticeable changes. Our schools are connected, via the internet, to a network of information that is nearly unfathomable in its breadth and depth. Our students have access to people, places and perspectives that would have taken yesterday's traveller or scholar a lifetime to explore or research. In Prairie South, we encourage and enable our students to use the technology to its full advantage, while teaching and modelling how to be good digital citizens. We have Grade 1 students who are blogging – and receiving feedback to validate their efforts from peers, parents and in some cases, readers around the globe. Our classrooms are connecting – virtually – to experts, authors, 'partner' classrooms across the world and even the International Space Station!

Beyond this connection to the world wide web, the tools that technology offers are helping to engage students in their own learning in a way that was simply not possible in the 20th century. Interactive whiteboards can put layers of learning to work, encouraging students to explore content more deeply. Hand-held video recorders – and even the video cameras in most cell phones – combine with easy-to-

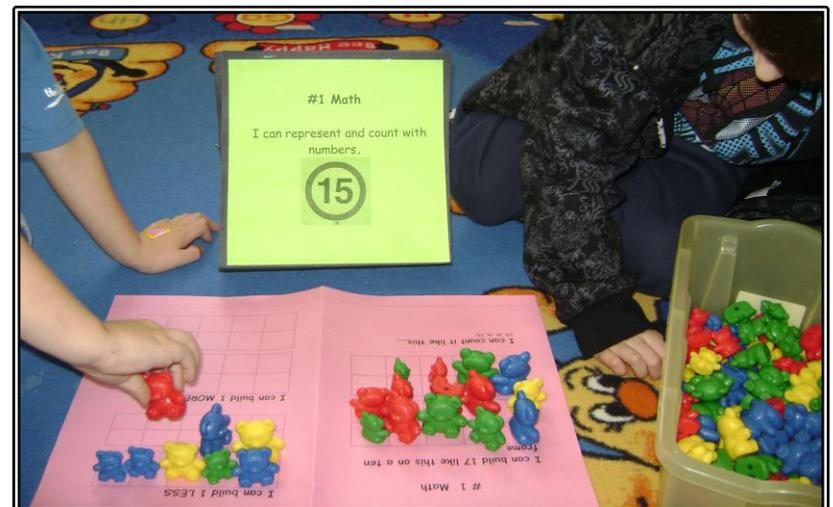
use software to give students and teachers simple ways to record and share learning and lessons. Hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) units used to find 'geocaches' bring a new twist to the old-fashioned scavenger hunt – along with a new way to understand what latitude and longitude mean and how they are used to navigate.

Using What We Know About Learning

Another difference between today's classrooms and those that many parents and grandparents would remember is one that is perhaps less visible, but no less critical. It is the greater level of knowledge and awareness our staff now have about the many diverse ways that students learn, and the ways to meet the needs of those diverse learners.

Math manipulatives, such as blocks, beads, coins, spinners and rulers, help to make math understandable for kinesthetic learners, while also making concepts more concrete – and learning more engaging – for other students. Breaking down writing instruction into the 'six plus one traits' give students and teachers a common language to talk about the characteristics of good writing. Identifying student learning outcomes, and posting them in class as a visible reminder for all, helps students understand what they're learning and why, and gives them measurable ways to assess their own learning and progress toward standards, rather than in comparison to other students.

Prekindergarten programs, including one French Immersion program, are in place at seven schools across the division for three- and four-year-olds, some of whom need additional help to develop skills they'll



need to learn successfully in school. Our Extended Transitions program identifies older students who have not successfully transitioned into the workplace or further education following high school, and provides supports for them to follow through on a career action plan. Speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, bicycle restoration programs, equine therapy and student and family counselling all provide specific benefits to students who've been identified with specific learning needs – and help those students to achieve their potential.

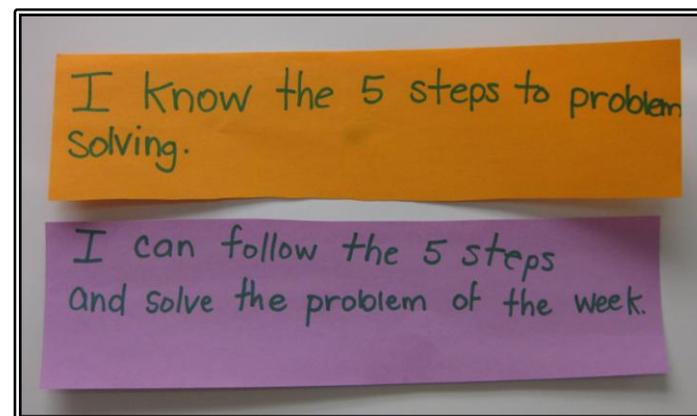
Amidst the sea change that's taking place in our classrooms, there are also things that we've held onto firmly. Partnerships with businesses, government agencies, non-profit organizations and others continue to extend student – and staff – learning beyond classroom and school walls. "Classrooms on Ice", a partnership with the Moose Jaw Wildlife Federation, introduces students not only to ice-fishing on Buffalo Pound Lake, but also to fish biology and the ecology of their habitat. High school Practical and Applied Arts students produce screwjacks and metal carts for local industries, providing real-world experience for the students and a useful service to the industry partner. Donations from partners help to provide swimming lessons and student conference packages; and for their part, students continue to visit with seniors in their communities and help to prepare fundraising information packages.

We continue to celebrate the academic, athletic and artistic achievements of our students, and to urge and encourage them to reach ever higher in setting their goals. We remain committed to preparing our students to meet the future – even though the future that we're preparing them for continues to change, and many of the jobs they'll hold very likely don't even exist right now. We continue to hold true to our vision of *Learning Excellence*, and all of the possibilities that creates.

Our commitment to excellence begins with students, but it extends far beyond the classroom walls into every area of our operations. Our transportation team works diligently to refine routes, reduce ride times and transport our students safely and efficiently. Our IT team works hand-in-hand with our curriculum team to ensure the tools and technology are in place to support student learning across the division. Our business team ensures each of our valuable resources – human, financial and capital – are managed efficiently and in such a manner as to ensure the viability and success of the division. Our curriculum and student support teams translate the 'big ideas' and best practices in their areas of specialty into programs and practices that work for Prairie South students.

As Director of Education, I am thrilled to celebrate the achievements of our staff and students, as well as the effort behind those achievements. It's my privilege to work with an exceptional team of people whose commitment to student learning and meeting student needs is so clearly demonstrated in all that they do. I'm incredibly proud when I see how far we've come, and I'm excited by the promise I see in our future.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Edwards
Director of Education



Foundational Statements

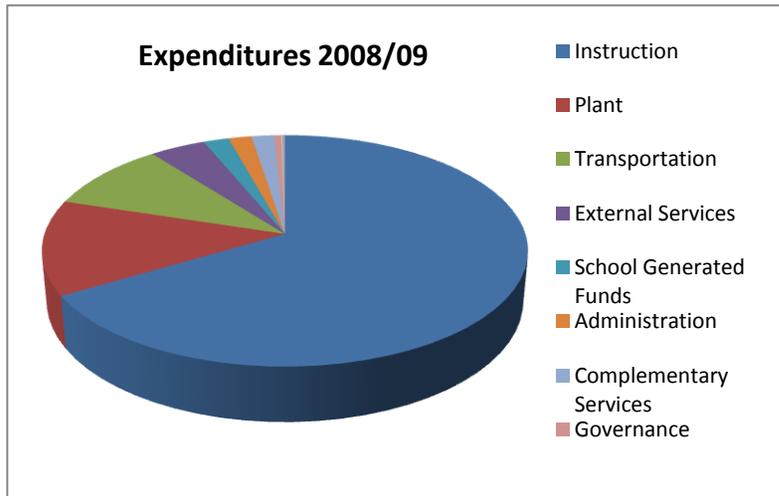
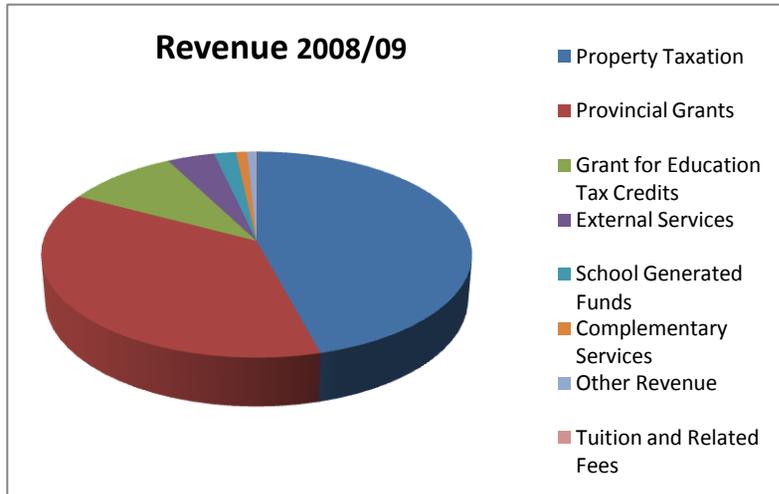
Our Mission Nurturing Communities of Learners

Our Vision Learning Excellence

Our Guiding Principles

- *Learning*
- *Accountability*
- *Respectful, caring communities*
- *Unity*
- *Excellence*
- *Communication*

Financial Highlights



Operating Highlights

Total revenue \$81.6 million (46% property taxes; 46.5% provincial grant and education tax credit; 7.5% other revenue)

Total expenditures \$77.7 million (67% instruction; 13% plant; 9.5% transportation; 10.5% other)

Surplus \$3,908,177

Total municipalities (cities, towns, villages and rural municipalities) 83

Total schools 40 (including two associate schools and five Hutterian colony schools)

Total students 6,772.5 full-time equivalents, Prek to Gr. 12 (Prek and Kindergarten students are counted at 50% to reflect the level of program offered at this age)

Total teaching staff: 504.1 full-time equivalents

Pupil-to-teacher ratio: 14.2

Total non-teaching staff: 480 FTE, including bus drivers

Total rural and city school bus routes: 135

