

Prairie South School Division No. 210

Annual Report to Electors
September 1, 2007 - August 31, 2008

Learning Excellence



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Dedication

*This year's annual report is dedicated to excellence,
and to a man who embodied excellence:
Dr. George Falk, Superintendent of Student Support Services,
who left us in June 2008.
His vision and spirit live on.*

Cover – There's more than one reason to wear pink!
*Top: Students from Coronach School form a ribbon of pink
supporting breast cancer awareness. Bottom: Peacock Collegiate
students wear pink to take a stand against bullying.*



Message from the Chair

Report of the Prairie South Board of Education with respect to educational developments for the period September 1, 2007, to August 31, 2008

In the 2007-2008 school year, Prairie South School Division continued to bring its vision of *Learning Excellence* to life. Through a commitment to shared values that include continued learning, accountability, caring and respectful environments, unity through diversity and equity, excellence in all we do and transparent communication, the Board of Education worked together to build on its strengths and identify creative approaches to overcoming its challenges.

Strengths

Our major strength is our people. As one of the largest employers in the Moose Jaw and south-central region of Saskatchewan, Prairie South is fortunate to be able to attract and retain the highest quality educators, administrators and support staff. The culture of excellence that flows from our vision comes to life at every level of the organization.

Our geography – while bringing many challenges – is also a source of strength, in that it provides us with the dual perspectives of rural and urban school communities. I believe this has been one of the most significant learning experiences for our Board as our city-based trustees learn more about education in rural areas and vice versa. The ability to mold a strong yet flexible system is enhanced by the variety of perspectives found across the division.

Challenges

We have challenges, as well. Declining enrolment across the division continues to test our ability to deliver quality

education opportunities in an efficient manner, particularly at some of our smallest schools. For this reason, and based on criteria established the previous year, the Board placed Eyebrow School under review for consideration of grade discontinuance or closure. In the end, the Board decided against making changes because of specific student needs at that school, along with changes to school closure legislation being considered by the provincial government.

Maintenance, upgrading and utilization of our 40 schools is another challenge that our Board takes very seriously. Capital expenditures on school facilities are shared between the province and school division. The province has been underfunding such expenditures for years, resulting in an estimated \$1 billion backlog in necessary facility upgrades province-wide. What that means at the division level is that repairs and upgrades are often put off until they reach the critical stage on the provincial priority list.

We don't believe this is an appropriate or efficient way of managing the division's resources, nor is it fair to expect staff and students to work and learn in such environments. The Board hopes to give its facility requests additional credibility and authority by establishing a long-range facilities plan and has submitted a request to help fund the development of such a plan.

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submitting a request to help fund the development of such a plan.

This year, we expanded our advocacy efforts. We submitted a resolution to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association's annual meeting calling for the government to ensure funding is distributed equitably. We joined with Chinook School Division to advocate for improved funding for rural divisions. Still, our grant continued to drop and we were once again forced to turn to local ratepayers to ensure our continued ability to deliver quality educational opportunities to our students. This has put us in the unenviable position of having the highest mill rate in the province.



We will continue to advocate on behalf of our students in this area and in others. Our students are the reason we do what we do. It is our duty and our privilege to set the stage for success; to ensure our students are ready to compete in today's global environment; to inspire a desire for *Learning Excellence* in generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Gordon Stewart
Chair, Board of Education



Engaging project: *Students at Riverview Collegiate work on a canoe as part of a project designed to engage high school students in Practical and Applied Arts.*

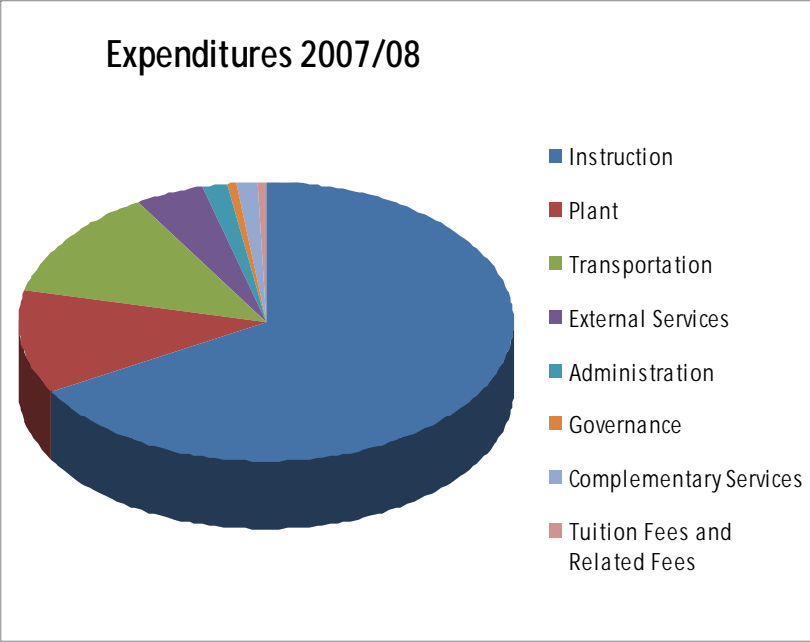
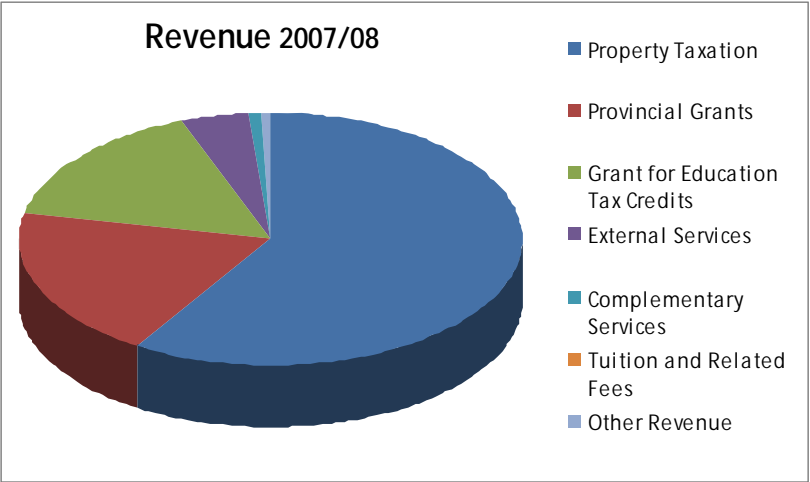
- equitable opportunities for all students;
- smooth transitions into and through the system; and
- strong system-wide accountability and governance.

The Blueprint is used primarily by our instructional staff, as a tool to improve student achievement and teaching practice. It provides a method of organizing criteria and associated indicators that supplies important feedback in a continuous improvement cycle geared toward improving student outcomes. Beyond that, though, it allows everyone in the division to see how they fit into the larger picture and how their work ultimately supports student learning.

Commitment to Excellence

One of the division's guiding principles is a shared commitment to *excellence*: we value excellence based upon high expectations for all directed toward student success. This is more than just a statement on the walls in our office. It's the way we work – and the *why* – every day.

Financial Highlights



Measuring Student Learning

What did you learn in school today?

For years, parents have used this phrase to draw children into conversations about their schoolwork and what they were learning. And for years, it has routinely failed to elicit much of a response.

So how do parents know what their children are learning? And how do schools know that students are learning effectively the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's ever-changing world? Taking it one step further – how can school divisions demonstrate their accountability in terms of meeting student needs?

Assessment for Learning

In addition to a variety of classroom measures, students in Prairie South participate in the provincial **Assessment for Learning (AFL)** program, which measures student achievement according to a set of learning outcomes derived from the provincial curriculum. The AFL program focuses on present student achievement and continuous improvement. It's a snapshot of student learning at a particular moment. The goal is to raise the level of learning and achievement for all students in the province.

Assessments are typically done every two years in a particular subject. In April 2008, Grade 5, 8 and 11 students in the division participated in the Writing AFL. The year before, students took part in the Mathematics and Reading assessment. The AFL program also includes student assessment of Science and Personal and Social Skills.

Tests are scored provincially, and the data is used locally by school division leaders as well as school-based teams of educators, working in informal groups called professional learning communities (PLCs), to:

- assess student progress against curricular objectives;
- identify strengths and weaknesses;
- improve programs and instruction;
- support a culture of continuous improvement; and
- strengthen the ability of school divisions to report on student learning.

For detailed information, please see our web site, prairiesouth.ca.

Board of Directors

