

Grasslands Public Schools Highlights for 2006

The provincial reporting cycle mandated by Alberta Learning requires the publication of an Annual Educational Results Report (AERR) by November 30 of each year. A full copy of this report, along with Budget Reports, and Planning documents may be accessed from the Grasslands Public Schools Website shown below, or by contacting Grasslands Public Schools. Our AERR can be found on our website at www.grasslands.ab.ca (select documents, district, and finally reports and plans).

Some of the Highlights from 2006 are:

- > Due to the increasing number of ineligible transported students within the City of Brooks, an ad hoc committee was struck to review this matter and make recommendations to the Board. The recommendations included the implementation of increased walking distances before students qualified for bus transportation.
- > A comprehensive review of the fiscal framework for Grasslands Schools allocations took place. (Outcome 3.4 Three Year Education Plan 2005/06 – 2007/08).
- > School Facility Capital Projects planning took place with the commencement of seven additional relocatables / minor renovations at Griffin Park to accommodate the Francophone Students effective 2006/07 school year. Architects were selected for the previously approved Bassano / Duchess major modernization / new construction projects with the preliminary input and concept design completed.
- > Colony School Educational Service Agreements were reviewed, revised and renewed with all seven colonies operating in Grasslands. The Grasslands Board continues to have a positive working relationship with the colony elders.
- > An Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Program was adopted. Planning for the implementation of the program continued with the hiring of a part time Occupational Health and Safety implementation coordinator.
- > Three key Division Goals were established- these include 1) Continuing to develop consistent, proactive, character development programs, 2) Increasing Student Academic Achievement, and 3) Supporting a PLC culture and implementing effective Division-wide collaboration and sharing strategies.
- > The Division developed an electronic IPP program for use in Grasslands Public Schools. Inservicing for administrators and teachers was completed and the program is slated for implementation in September 2006.
- > Assessment for learning was the focus for the January 2006 Division-wide professional development day.
- > A new Mental Health Initiative, which is a three year pilot project beginning in September of 2006, was developed in conjunction with Grasslands Public Schools, the Alberta Mental Health Board, Palliser Health, AADAC, and Alberta Education. This project focuses on children from birth to the age of twelve and their families in three schools in the city of Brooks.
- > Speech Services were turned over to Palliser Health Authority for the 2005-06 school year. Several changes and modifications to the program delivery have been made.
- > Six Alberta Initiative for School Improvement projects completed a successful third and final year of a three year cycle in 2006. These projects are:

-Middle School Mathematics (Grade 7-9) (All Schools)
-Literacy, Leadership, and Learning through the Arts (All Schools)

-Educational Communities and At-risk Students	(Griffin Park, Central, Eastbrook, & Sunrise Schools)
-Comprehensive Portfolio System to Enhance a Career Development Program	(Brooks Composite High School)
-Improving Literacy (Grades 3-9)	(Duchess School)
-Focused Reading Comprehension	(Bassano School)

> During the second half of the 2005-06 school year, two AISI projects were developed for cycle three by a widely represented *AISI Structure Committee*. These two projects will form the basis of the Grasslands cycle three AISI initiative beginning in September 2006. The projects developed by the committee and subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees for submission to the School Improvement Branch (SIB) are:

- 1) ***Focus on Learning, Achievement, and Citizenship***, a Division-wide project inclusive of all schools to support the work of schools' Professional Learning Teams (PLC's), and implement systematic sharing across the Division through regular grade group/subject area meetings. The project will focus on the KEY QUESTIONS of 1) What do we want students to learn, 2) What are we going to do to ensure that they learn it, 3) How will we know they have learned, and 4) What will we do when they haven't learned? The project employs a powerful bottom-up --- top down framework, and a distributed leadership design to guide the project and keep it aligned with the provincial accountability pillar, the three key Division priorities, and school three year plans.
- 2) ***Improving Student Safety and Citizenship***, a project developed around the School Resource Officer (SRO) concept at Brooks Composite High School, Brooks Junior High School, and Sunrise School.

The Grasslands Public Schools 2006 AISI Project Final Reports (APFR'S) for the six completed projects, and the proposals for the two new projects may be viewed on Grasslands Web-site at www.grasslands.ab.ca by selecting AISI from the menu on the left hand side, then select AISI Reports.

- > Provision was also made for two Division-wide professional development days (September 2, 2005 and January 27, 2006). Internationally know educator, **Michele Borba** was the keynote Speaker on September 2, and all teachers attended an Alberta Assessment Consortium workshop on January 27, 2006.
- > A Grasslands action research proposal for applications of video-conferencing in supporting student services was accepted as a phase 2 project by Alberta Education in 2004-05 and additional funding of \$150,000 was received to support this. Support staff made great strides in using videoconferencing to enhance student support services at Grasslands Public Schools during the 2005/06 school year. Specifically, speech consulting services were offered to rural school support staff effectively and in a manner that saved both time and resources, while at the same time maintaining service.
- > Videoconferencing was also used to enhance educational opportunities for both staff and students in a number of venues, which without this technology, would have been impossible to attend. For example, on one occasion, grade 6 students were able to videoconference with "The Center of the Universe," a Physics research institution on Vancouver Island. They were able to ask "real questions from real world practitioners in the field." On another occasion, teachers were able to take part in professional development offered from the University of Texas from a world renowned researcher during one of their lunch hours.
- > Teachers at Grasslands Public Schools have also made progress in meeting the pedagogical objectives and outcomes surrounding the cross curricular integration of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as a core educational subject, as mandated by Alberta Education. There has been widespread deployment of projectors into the classrooms which has led to greater integration of learning objects from school based Content Delivery Devices (CDD's). Lessons are often taught using these learning objects as visual scaffolding to enhance the use of information and communications technologies across the curriculum. Furthermore, many of our classrooms employ such advanced technologies as the smart bards to further enhance the use of technology in the classroom.

- > The Division continued to be an active member in the operation of the “*South Eastern Alberta Partnership for Youth Career Development*”. This organization is a partnership involving four School Divisions, Medicine Hat College, Alberta Tech. Prep., Careers- the Next Generation (CNG), and numerous Businesses, Associations and Agencies. Funding for this organization comes from the major partners, including the School Divisions, and from donations. The partnership provides youth in the region with opportunities to become involved in career related experiences through Tech. Prep., Registered Apprenticeship Program, Co-op Apprenticeship Program, Health Services Summer Internship, and other related programs. A new, high profile Petroleum Field Operator’s (PFO) program which was launched in 2004-05 in partnership with Encana, SAIT, CNG, and Alberta Education continued in 2005-06. In 2004-05 planning began to develop a S.E. Regional “Skills Canada” competition. The first Annual Competition was held in April 2006.
- > The “Better Together Schools Project” was one of only three Drug and Alcohol Education projects in Alberta to receive funding from ASBA for the 2005-06 school year.

Student Achievement- Highlights of PAT results for 2005-06

- The participation rate of Grasslands students exceeded that of the province as a whole on all grade 3 and grade 6 exams.
- The rate of achieving the standard of excellence by Grasslands students exceeded that of the province as a whole on both grade 3 exams.
- The rate of achieving the acceptable standard by Grasslands students exceeded that of the province as a whole on all grade 3 and grade 6 exams.
- Grasslands students exceeded the provincial average mark on grade 3 and grade 6 Language Arts and grade 3 Math, and were quite close to the provincial average on all other exams (Math 6- (-0.9%), Science 6- (-0.8%), Social Studies 6- (-2.6%), L.A. 9- (-2.1%), Math 9- (-2.4%), Science 9- (-3.7%), and Social Studies 9- (-3.6%).
- The excellence rate of Grasslands students was higher than the previous year on both grade 3 subjects.

Student Achievement- Highlights of Diploma Exam results for 2005-06

- Participation rates of Grasslands students went up in each of the more academic Diploma Exam subjects compared to last year in relation to the province. (ELA 30-1 (+ 2.8 %), SS 30 (+ 7.1 %), Math 30 Pure (+ 4.2 %), Biology 30 (+ 0.6 %), Chemistry 30 (+ 1.4 %), Physics 30 (+4.6 %)).
- The participation rate of Grasslands students exceeded that of the province as a whole in ELA 30-1, ELA 30-2, SS 30, Math 30 Applied, and Biology 30.
- The overall rate of excellence was lower than either of the previous two years, however the rate at which Grasslands students managed to qualify for Rutherford Scholarships was noticeably higher.
- The overall rate of meeting the acceptable standard was slightly lower than last year (-0.9%), as was the province as a whole.
- Grasslands students exceeded the provincial acceptable standard in ELA 30-2, Math 30 Applied, and Physics 30.

High School Completion, Dropouts, Returns, Scholarships, Transition beyond Grade 12

The most recent High School Completion Rates information released by Alberta Learning indicates that **70.3 %** of Grasslands students who entered Grade 10 in September 2002 had completed a diploma three years later (as compared to 70.4 % in all of Alberta). The dropout and returning rates for Grasslands students in 2004-05 were 5.2% and 24.6 % respectively (as compared to 4.9 % and 21.4 % in all of Alberta). During the same year, 26.3 % of Grasslands grade 12 students were eligible for some part of the Rutherford scholarship (as compared to 35.3 % in all of Alberta). 34.9 % of Grasslands students made the transition from high school to post-secondary schools in Alberta (as compared to 37.0 % in all of Alberta). Full details on exam results, completion rates, dropouts, transition to post secondary schools, and scholarships, over time, may be found in the annual report.

Results from Surveys

During the early part of 2006, Alberta Education conducted the “Accountability Pillar” Surveys. Grade 4, 7, and 10 students, along with their parents, and teachers were surveyed. Some of the highlights of the AP Surveys for Grasslands Public Schools included the following:

- 72.9 % of Grasslands teachers, parents, and students expressed satisfaction with the accessibility, effectiveness and efficiency of programs and services for students in their community (compared to 68.5 % provincially).
- 79.7 % of Grasslands teachers reported that in the past 3-5 years the professional development and in-servicing received from the school authority has been focused, systematic and contributed significantly to their ongoing professional growth (compared to 78.2 % provincially).
- 81.0 % of Grasslands teachers, parents, and students indicated that their school and schools in their jurisdiction have improved or stayed the same in the last three years (compared to 76.8 % provincially).
- 78.4 % of Grasslands teachers and parents expressed satisfaction with parental involvement in decisions about their child’s education (compared to 77.9 % provincially).
- 61.3 % of Grasslands parents and 76.3% of Grasslands teachers expressed satisfaction that high school graduates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for lifelong learning (compared to 57.9 % and 74.2% provincially).
- 78.5 % of Grasslands teachers and parents agreed that students are taught attitudes and behaviours that will make them successful at work when they finish school (compared to 77.0 % provincially).
- 75.3 % of Grasslands teachers, parents, and students expressed satisfaction that students model the characteristics of active citizenship (compared to 76.8 % provincially).
- 83.7 % of Grasslands teachers, parents, and students agreed that students are safe at school and are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others and are treated fairly in school (compared to 84.4 % provincially).
- 79.0 % of Grasslands teachers, parents, and students expressed satisfaction with the opportunity for students to receive a broad program of studies including fine arts, career, technology, and health and physical education (compared to 78.1 % provincially).
- 87.4 % of Grasslands teachers, parents, and students expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of basic education (compared to 87.7 % provincially).

Financial Summary

The Grasslands’ Regional Division 2005/2006 Audited Financial Statement shows a surplus of **\$ 780,989**.

The School Board Expenditure Report Summary 2005/2006 Financial Statement briefly outlines expenditures by program. Inquiries regarding site-based expenditures may be directed to the individual schools.

Additional information on the financial operation of the school jurisdiction or copies of the audited financial statement are available on the website or at the Grasslands’ Regional Board Office.

Some Upcoming Challenges for Grasslands Public Schools

1. Cultural Diversity

The division is undergoing significant change with respect to the diversity of cultures and first languages spoken in the homes of many of our students. Currently, schools have identified many different languages and dialects along with four or five distinct religious affiliations. More than fifty languages were recorded as being spoken in Brooks, according to the 2000 civic census and it is now believed that there are more than 100 languages being spoken. Such variety is both healthy and problematic requiring sensitivity and creativity in adjusting instruction and school practices.

2. Achievement

Improving levels of achievement to reach district and community expectations is proving to be a challenge in certain grades and certain subject areas.

3. Facilities

Completing major modernizations at Duchess and Bassano with minimal disruptions to teaching and learning, as well as addressing impending space shortages in some Brooks schools, will require significant cooperation, coordination, patience and planning by staff, students, and parents.

4. Succession Planning

With several vacancies in central office administration and support staff in the offing, an appropriate staffing plan and an effective recruitment strategy is an immediate need.

5. School Based Staffing

Attracting, training, and retaining quality staff to operate our schools and our maintenance and transportation systems will be an ongoing task.

6. Rural Education

Access to a variety of programs, specialized teaching, and long term viability of secondary schools will continue to test the flexibility and creativity of the district and individual communities.

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