



Algoma District School Board

Director's Bulletin – 2008 09 17

**To: Principals, Managers, Staff,
Union and Federation Presidents**

At Algoma District School Board's first Regular Meeting for the 2008-2009 School Year, held on Tuesday, September 16th, a number of items were reviewed by Trustees and Senior Administration.

1. SYSTEM STRATEGIC PLAN AND SYSTEM GOALS

Director of Education Mario Turco reviewed the Board's Strategic Plan and System Goals for the year. ADSB will continue to move forward on key priorities:

- Raising the bar on student achievement
- Closing the gap on student achievement
- Increasing the retention rate for all students
- Maintaining public confidence in our system

"Each year our Board sets goals and provides supports intended to continue addressing these key priorities. As a result, we have been experiencing much success in improving student learning," Director Turco said. *"This year we have set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) goals to move us forward on our key priorities, to reach every student."*

Copies of the Strategic Plan and system goals were distributed to all Trustees and may be viewed on the ADSB website at www.adsb.on.ca.

2. OPENING WEEK ENROLMENT IS ENCOURAGING

Superintendent of Education Asima Vezina reviewed opening week enrolment and indicated that numbers looked encouraging for the 2008/2009 school year.

The proposed organization of students Grades 1 to 8 sees an enrolment of 5,357 students, an increase of 21 students from projected numbers of 5,336 in April 2008.

Most encouraging are the Junior and Senior Kindergarten enrolment numbers. There are a total of 1,153 students enrolled in JK and SK for this school year, an increase of 187 students from the projected enrolment of 966 as contained in the April, 2008 Director's Report. This is an increase of 167 JK students and an increase of 20 SK students from the projection in April 2008.

With this increase in enrolment at the JK/SK level, the Administration has added 9 classes across the Board.

In ADSB secondary schools, opening enrolment showed an increase of 33 students at the secondary level.

2. OPENING WEEK ENROLMENT IS ENCOURAGING – Cont'd

ADSB administration is in the process of reviewing class organization with school principals to ensure that class sizes are consistent with Ministry of Education and Board expectations with respect to class size.

3. EQAO RESULTS SHARED WITH TRUSTEES – “HERE WE GROW AGAIN”

Algoma District School Board (ADSB) Superintendents of Education Joseph Maurice and Lucia Reece shared the results of Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing with trustees at the first Regular Board meeting of the school year, held on September 16, 2008.

Elementary Reading, Writing and Mathematics Results Continue to Improve

ADSB has again demonstrated improved student achievement, with notable increases at the Grade 6 level. **Grade 6** results for ADSB improved 10% in Reading, 10% in Writing, and 7% in Math. This compares to Provincial results which showed improvements of 2% in Reading, 6% in Writing and 2% in Math. **Grade 3** results, while scoring slightly less in writing, are showing consistency over the 3-year trend. This year showed a decrease of 2% in Reading, 7% in Writing and 6% in Math compared to the Provincial results which showed decreases of 1% in Reading, an increase of 2% in Writing and a decrease of 1% in Math.

Noting that this is the Board's greatest increase in Grade 6 results, Superintendent Reece acknowledged the Board's commitment to school-based professional learning communities, improved use of assessment data, teacher in-service and the commitment of staff as contributing factors to the growth.

Two of our schools are being recognized as Schools On the Move, acknowledging these school's improvement in student learning and staff commitment to networking, sharing best practices and using research and professional know-how to benefit kids. Greenwood and Parkland Public Schools are both “Schools on the Move”. Pinewood Public School has been identified by EQAO as one example of a School Success Story recognizing the school's success in raising EQAO scores consistently over the years.

Superintendent Reece also acknowledged that there are a number of schools whose individual success stories should be noted across the district.

Grade 9 Applied Level Mathematics Students Exceed the Provincial Average

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics results released by EQAO, for testing administered during the 2007-2008 school year, show that ADSB students continue to deliver strong outcomes. 96% of applied level students and over 99% of academic level students passed the assessment.

Significant improvement was demonstrated by applied level students who exceeded the provincial average by 7%. The percentage of ADSB applied level students achieving at or above the provincial standard was 41%, compared to the provincial average of 34%. Among academic students, 68% achieved at or above the provincial standard, compared to the provincial average of 75%.

EQAO tests provide a snapshot of student achievement. The results have become a source of information that assists school and board improvement planning efforts. They provide a reference to achievement in relation to a provincial standard.

4. SELECTION OF ARCHITECTS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

Proposals from two local architectural firms have been accepted by the Trustees of the Algoma District School Board (ADSB) for the design of and overseeing of construction for two new schools in Sault Ste. Marie (SSM) and an addition to Hornepayne Public School in order to create a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 school.

The fee proposal from MGP Architects Engineer Inc/ZAS Architects has been accepted for the design of the new Secondary School. The fee proposals from David Ellis Architect Inc/Teeple Architect Inc. have been accepted for the design of the new Elementary School and for the design of the new addition to the Hornepayne Public School.

Upon completion of the Pupil/School Accommodation Review process, the ADSB had approved that Francis H. Clergue Public School and Rosedale Public School be closed and consolidated into one new elementary French Immersion school AND that Bawating Collegiate & Vocational School and Sir James Dunn Collegiate and Vocational School be closed and consolidated into one new secondary school.

A selection committee was established in order to recommend an architectural firm for the design of the new schools in Sault Ste. Marie. The committee was made up of a cross-section of ADSB administrative council, staff and trustees and they reviewed the shortlist and interviewed all of the firms.

The architects were given two opportunities to meet with the committee. During the first meeting they introduced their firm and provided examples of their past projects. During the second meeting, the presentations were more specific regarding the type of building they envisioned and the process they would undertake to design the building as well as the fee structure they would propose.

5. FAMILIES IN THE ALGOMA DISTRICT TO BENEFIT FROM NEW ADSB PARENTING AND FAMILY LITERACY CENTRES

This spring, the McGuinty government invested \$350,000 to open four new Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs) in Sault Ste. Marie.

Only twelve out of seventy-two Ontario school boards received the funding for these centres and the Algoma District School Board (ADSB) is one of them. A total of 34 new centres will open across Ontario and the ADSB is opening four of them.

The centres are designed to help children up to six years of age build essential numeracy, literacy and social skills. Parents or caregivers attend the centres with their children and are fully involved in every activity from music and story time to reading and learning through play. The centres are free to attend and families do not have to pre-register.

The PFLCs are housed in four of our elementary schools: **Etienne Brule, Pinewood, River View** and **Northern Heights Public Schools**. ADSB Administrator Laurie Bouliane oversees the four centres, each of which has their own on-site Parent Worker. The programs run Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 12:30pm including a snack time for all children, parents and guardians.

5. FAMILIES IN THE ALGOMA DISTRICT TO BENEFIT FROM NEW ADSB PARENTING AND FAMILY LITERACY CENTRES – Cont'd

Bouliane is excited about the opportunity the centres provide. ***“We’re doing lots of outreach to ensure we reach moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, anyone who spends time with pre-school children. Our centres offer a nurturing, interactive environment as well as a social venue for caregivers who can gain experience with developing early literacy and numeracy skills.”***

Research shows that early childhood education helps to improve student achievement and prepare children for school. The centres also help ease the transition to kindergarten by:

- Familiarizing children and families with school routines.
- Giving children and families the chance to spend time with other families.
- Linking families with appropriate community resources for special needs, health, referrals, housing, legal aid and other related services as may be needed.

At the PLFC, parents and guardians along with their children can expect to:

- take part in fun activities that include reading and counting, music and story time.
- play in the art, sand and water areas with toys and puzzles.
- enjoy snack time with healthy food choices.
- take time to read together (books in different languages are available from the book-lending library).

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres serve families with very young children from infant to age six. When paired with trained staff, both children and parents benefit, as does the wider community. The centres help to increase parents' knowledge, involvement and comfort level with schools. They help children transition more easily to kindergarten by allowing Parent Workers and kindergarten teachers to work together. The centres also help to provide optimal child development through positive parent-child interaction.

6. ADSB MOVES FORWARD ON EXPANDING WIDE AREA NETWORK

Earlier this year, ADSB selected Ontera and PUC Telecom as its partners in a project that increased bandwidth to schools throughout our district. Greater bandwidth means greater access and more online opportunities for ADSB secondary and elementary school students. The expanded bandwidth also means being able to facilitate e-learning. It will allow more teachers to access educational videoconferencing and is also a benefit to improve the technical efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Ontera and PUC Telecom, both Northern Ontario-based telecommunications service providers, have provided the infrastructure and the fibre optic system that will allow our students and staff to access a world of tools and opportunities, while still enjoying their Northern lifestyle.

At this stage, the majority of the installation of fibre optic cable is complete and Ontera and PUC Telecom are working to bring the balance of schools up to contract bandwidths in the near future. A detailed report was provided to trustees at the Board meeting.

Schools throughout the geographic area served by the Algoma District School Board will benefit from these telecommunication improvements.

7. ADSB MOVES FORWARD WITH ENHANCED TECHNOLOGY PLAN

In June 2008, the Board was introduced to an Enhanced Technology Plan which ADSB program team members had been working on in conjunction with the Board's Information Technology (IT) Department. The intent has been to implement hundreds of laptop computers and LCD Projectors into classrooms throughout the district over the next few years.

The plan spells out that for this school year (2008/09), 150 elementary classrooms will be equipped with 1 laptop and 1 LCD; and 150 secondary classrooms will be equipped with 1 laptop and 1 LCD Projector. It is planned that these numbers would be duplicated for the year 2009/10 (150 elementary classrooms and 150 secondary classrooms to be equipped with 1 laptop and 1 LCD Projector).

To date, the Board issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for 300 laptops and received ten responses and issued a RFP for 360 desktops and received five responses. Our IT staff evaluated the proposals based on technical solutions, quality of product, ability to meet ADSB service expectations, price, past performance of vendor and manufacturer, references, delivery schedule, distribution plan and additional value add-ons from vendors.

At Tuesday night's Board meeting, Trustees voted to move forward with the laptop and desktop leases. IBM Thinkpad laptops will come from Microage Computer Centre. The desktop computers (Dell computers) are from Algoma Business Computers.

A more strategic use of technology for instructional purposes has numerous benefits for both teachers and students. It provides an exciting and motivating learning environment that enhances student engagement. It can meet the needs of multiple learning styles and as such, improves overall student success. It provides creative learning opportunities and develops proficiency, again for both teacher and student, in the use of technology.

8. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITING FIRM

The Algoma District School Board (ADSB) Finance Audit Committee, with staff input, reviewed the process that has been underway in securing an independent public accounting firm to provide financial statement audit services for the ADSB.

At the Regular Board meeting, September 16, 2008, ADSB trustees approved the appointment of BDO Dunwoody LLP as auditor for the Algoma District School Board for the next five years commencing with the year ended August 31, 2008, with the possibility of a further renewal term of up to three years based on Board approval.

The process included a Request for Proposals (RFP) which was developed by ADSB staff after reviewing the matter with the Board of Trustees. A staff committee of the Board reviewed the submissions and completed an assessment. Pre-established criteria used in the assessment consisted of proposed audit team attributes, audit firm attributes, firm experience, references and fees. Results of the staff review were shared with the Finance Audit Committee members in July, 2008. BDO Dunwoody LLP was selected by the committee, in accordance with the results of the review.