



Pulse

of Palliser Regional Schools

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Volume 2, Issue 6 • March 2010



Whew, what a hectic start to March! As this newsletter was being prepared, the senior admin team and trustees were travelling from one end of the division to the other, hearing from school staff and

the families we serve about what they'd most like to see us stop, start and continue.

These public budget consultations were an excellent way for trustees and administrators to hear a variety of ideas and concerns from every corner our our division.

The last of these meetings is March 8th at John Davidson School in Coaldale, and we will make the results public through the Palliser website in coming weeks.

This is the second year the board has

reached out to communities for input and we will continue to make this effort again.

We all have something to learn from each other and these meetings are a good way for us to touch base and re-energize for the coming year.

This issue of the Pulse speaks to the value of a common vision and the power of teamwork, whether at the hockey arena, in our central office or in our schools.

With a shared vision and common goals, members of a team can focus on achievement with the confidence of knowing they're all pulling in the right direction.

Spring is in the air, a new season full of new opportunities. Together, we'll make the most of whatever challenges and opportunities that come our way.

Kevin Gietz,
Superintendent of Schools

Coaldale Cup up for grabs March 25

What better way to celebrate the first year of the hockey program at R.I. Baker Middle School in Coaldale than with a friendly on-ice competition pitting Grade 7-8 students against teachers and Palliser administrators?



Grade 7 and 8 students from R.I. Baker Middle School gather around Coach Bruce Bell during one of their two weekly on-ice hockey classes.

Hockey fans will be treated to this battle for the "Coaldale Cup" at the Coaldale Sportsplex, 10:15-10:45 a.m., Thursday, March 25.

The game wraps up the R.I. Baker's first season of the hockey program which has seen 26 Grade 7-8 students learning or finessing hockey skills during one-hour sessions twice a week. With the ice about to be taken out of the arena just down the street from the school, the students are facing a return to regular physical education and

health classes that are held Tuesdays and Thursdays when they had been skating, says Principal Cynthia Fritzler.

The hockey program is taught by teacher Jeff Smith and Coach Bruce Bell, a former National Hockey League player.

For students and the teacher, the program is a dream come true.

For Smith, a long-time goalie who's been skating since he was three ("I learned to walk on skates!"), teaching hockey, Social Studies and Drama is the perfect mix. He sees the benefits for students as well, who not only develop hockey skills, but who return from the rink energized and ready to learn.

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HATS OFF TO PAYROLL PAIR

The fast work of a pair of Central Office staff have earned them an Unsung Hero nomination from a school principal.



Niki and Vivian Quon are this month's Heroes for their mammoth effort to get retroactive pay into the hands of Palliser staff.

Niki, who has been part of Palliser's team since September 2009, recalculated and manually adjusted as necessary the pay and benefits to 645 teachers and substitute teachers across Palliser in the two weeks between the arbitrated settlement and the next payday.

Vivian, who worked with the County of Lethbridge board of ed since 1990 and with Palliser since its inception, oversaw getting the retroactive pay to some 500 non-certificated staff.

Kate Andrews Principal Danny Roberts, who nominated the pair, said he attended an Alberta Teachers' Association conference at the end of February where it struck him just how quickly Palliser's team reacted to the retro pay increase.

"I found out that some school boards have indicated that it may take them several months to include retroactive pay due to the recent arbitration award," he said. "I'd like to thank Palliser for the efforts that were made to promptly attend to getting the retroactive pay included on the February paychecks. It sends a good message to staff, and is one that is much appreciated."

As this month's Unsung Heroes, Niki and Vivian each received a Palliser travel mug and gift certificate to Moxie's. Congratulations!

To nominate a Palliser Unsung Hero, email pulse@pallisersd.ab.ca with the name of your nominee and why they deserve recognition.

Sharing school goals success

A team of Palliser administrators has been invited to present at the 15th National Congress on Rural Education in Saskatoon March 28-30.



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creation of school administrators. It wasn't imposed by Central Office staff. The administrators have created a meaningful process that recognizes what is unique in each school, and ownership by staff is key to the process's success.

Under the old system, goals changed every year. The new system recognizes that some goals may never be fully realized, requiring new strategies every year.

The school goals process for next year begins this spring. By May, most school staffs will be working on assessing how successful their strategies were and what their goals for next year should be.

Those goals need to be submitted to Central Office by Oct. 30, prompting a school visit by senior admin staff in the fall to discuss those goals.

Those visits help, Van Egmond says, by bringing fresh eyes and objectivity to the goals document.

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Games were golden for colony kids



The 24 children at the Wild Rose Colony near Vulcan didn't get to watch the non-stop TV coverage of the Olympic Games. Some had never even heard of the Olympics before, but that didn't stop them from enjoying their own version of the competition and cheering for the Canadian athletes.

Teacher Maureen Muzyka says she used the Games as an opportunity to teach her students from preschool to Grade 8 sportsmanship, other countries and the thrill of competition.

She says the event was new to many of her students. She divided the students into teams from six countries, had them learn about the nations they represented. Then the kids had a chance to compete against one another (and their teacher and learning assistants) in events such as human curling (a student on a scooter served as the rock), bobsled (another scooter activity) and cross-country skiing (four students on two-by-four skis).

Each day she provided an update on the medal count.

"They got a sense that the world was competing just for sportsmanship sake," she says. "The winners got a gold medal and a good feeling. . . They were proud to be Canadian."

Muzyka says the lessons in sportsmanship and team spirit are quite important in the isolation of the colony setting.

Best of all, the kids had a blast, holding their own medal ceremonies after each day's competition.

"It went better than I'd hoped," she says. "The kids really got involved in it."

While the Hutterian culture makes this classroom unique, there's one thing that doesn't change. "Kids are kids,"

Maureen Muzyka, teacher at the Wild Rose Hutterite Colony, helped her students celebrate the Olympic Games in their own way.

Coaldale Cup

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"These are your kinesthetic learners," he says. "They come back from hockey just jazzed and ready for school."

Through hockey the students are engaging in physical activity and learning the value of hard work and participation.

The students say this program shoots and scores in their books.

Alex Hlas-Ross, a Grade 8 student and member of a Coaldale Bantam team, is a new student at R.I. Baker. The hockey program is something he wouldn't have had at his old school in Manitoba.

He says he's noticed real improvement in his skating thanks

to Coach Bell's instruction.

Jordan Doram, one of three girls in the program, a Grade 8 student and member of a Lethbridge Bantam AAA team, the program has been a great opportunity to learn technique from a former pro.

Both students say they already devote roughly 10 hours a week to hockey between games and practices, and the two more hours they get at school are a great bonus.

"It gets you awake and energized," Jordan says.

The students work on skills and are divided into two teams for scrimmages where they can put their skills to the test.

Students shouldn't be intimidated if they've never played hockey before, says Alex.

"You don't get graded on your skill level; you get graded on how hard you try," Jordan says.

Tricia Hilgersom, whose son Ty is in the program, says she was skeptical at first about the hockey program, but having watched the class nearly every week, she's become a big fan of the program and its coach.

"We'll definitely do it again next year," she says. "Ty loved it . . . Hockey is his life. It's his whole world."

She says the incorporation of hockey into the school day has benefited Ty's other school work.

"If he knows he's skating before he has a math test, that helps," she says. "I don't know why but it does."

She's noticed his hockey skills

have improved, and being on the ice with kids of all different skill levels has also proven beneficial because the students are learning from each other.

This merger of sports and school is a great fit in this hockey town, says Fritzler.

Coaldale students can continue their hockey education at the high school level, as both Jordan and Alex say they will. Kate Andrews High School offers five-credit Sports Performance courses at the 15, 25 and 35 levels. Students spend time both on-ice and in a classroom setting doing dryland training and learning nutrition, sports psychology. The program benefits from significant community involvement from Coaldale Minor Hockey and others.