

## WISHING A VERY HAPPY SUMMER TO ALL STAFF

The end of the school year is always a mixture of emotions as it marks the completion of formal teaching and learning, along with saying farewell to students and colleagues over the summer months. Usually, I love this time in our school calendar – the dry, hot June days, bird song, and the scent of lilac on stormy evenings. However, this year dry days went on forever and our division endured two months of wildfires followed by floods. This situation was a true test of perseverance and courage, which each of you demonstrated as you navigated through these unimaginable challenges. Grande Yellowhead Public School Division (GYPSD) may be small, but it is also mighty. Our teachers, led by outstanding principals and effectively supported by administrative assistants, teaching assistants, central office, support, and facilities staff, offer our students world-class public education. As a school division, we continue to demonstrate improvements in our results, which is due to the exemplary, innovative, and creative practices of all of our staff. Throughout this year, I have had, on many occasions, the opportunity to walk in every school, where I was proud to observe the amazing instructional practices taking place. As such, I would like to make a toast to the following teams for contributing to the success of our division.

1. **Central Services** – The central team exists to serve our schools. Each central team member works diligently behind the scenes to ensure finances are in place, facilities are maintained, clean, and functional, and updates to curriculum and professional development are delivered. These team members carry out their work without any fanfare and little recognition. However, they are always ready to extend a helping hand to our schools, parents, and stakeholders.
2. **School Leaders** – Our principals and assistant principals are exceptional instructional leaders who lead their schools by demonstrating visionary leadership. Our leaders prioritize a continuing commitment to student learning, as well as building leadership, teaching, and support staff capacity. In addition, our leaders engage positively with parents and the community sharing all of the great things that are happening in our schools. Our principals make the crucial decisions that ensure our schools deliver the highest quality of education in classrooms complemented by the delivery of extra-curricular activities. Our students are engaged learners not only in curriculum, but also languages, athletics, and the arts.
3. **Teachers** – Teaching is an art and a craft, and on a daily basis I pay witness to my amazing colleagues in the division's classrooms. The impact each teacher makes on a student is unique. Some learning is instantly demonstratable, while other aspects of learning are subtle and settle in over a lifetime. Daily, our students learn to read, write, make, and apply mathematical problem-solving as well as thinking with a critical lens. GYPSD teachers care deeply for their students and for that, I am most grateful.
4. **Support Staff** - School systems cannot excel without high-performing, collaborative relationships. GYPSD support staff provides those relationships through their quality service to students, teachers, and the community. The school administrative assistants are the first to greet students, parents, and the community as they enter our schools. In addition, they are highly skilled in providing administrative support to principals and staff with aspects such as budget and school operations. Effective teaching assistants provide support to teachers and students and facilities staff ensure our schools are in good working order, all of which demonstrates a daily commitment to our students and their families.
5. **Student Support Services** – Our division is blessed to have individuals who provide specialized supports for our students and schools. The Family School Liaison Counsellors, division psychologist, BEST co-ordinator, BEST coaches, speech-language practitioners, and occupational therapists utilize their expertise so that our students can flourish. In addition, the safety of our schools and students occurs through VTRA protocols that bring support groups together in the best interest of students.
6. **Bus Drivers** – GYPSD bus drivers are the first to greet students as their day begins and the last individuals to say farewell at the end of the school day. Our bus drivers are highly trained and their primary responsibility is to transport every child safely to and from school. Regardless of the weather, the drivers carry out their duties in an exemplary fashion. Our drivers are always amazing, but a special acknowledgment must go to our GYPSD and contract drivers for their unbelievable heroism in helping evacuate people during the wildfires. These evacuations took place during the day and late into the night ensuring people got to safety. It should also be noted that both the Transportation and Facilities Teams were integral in providing the seamless coordination of all matters related to the evacuations.
7. **Parents** – Parents are the primary advocate for their children and when parents and teachers work together, on the same team, collaborating and communicating effectively, our students benefit substantially. Many parents go above and beyond in their support of teaching and learning, so special thanks go to those parents who participated on the school councils, coached school teams, and volunteered for school activities. This commitment is deeply appreciated, as you served not only your own children but all students in our school communities. Thank you for allowing us the honour of educating your children.
8. **Board of Trustees** - The trustees allow both myself and senior administration to carry out our assignments through their incredible support. They are to be commended for their governance, and advocacy. As a team, they petition government leaders to support public school education and voice the need for a funding framework that supports education in rural Alberta. The Board works together and is committed to engaging stakeholders such as parents, chamber members, and town councils as partners in education. They are deeply committed to public education and are to be commended for their service to your communities. The Board has added a fourth priority addressing student and staff system health and wellness. I look forward to operationalizing this exciting priority in the coming months.
9. **Retirements** - We are saying goodbye to some valued colleagues. Retirees, thank you for creating an incredible legacy. You have made a significant impact on the lives of so many students during your career and I wish you the best of luck in your new endeavors.

Warmest Regards, Carolyn