

Item # 9

**Administration Report
November 20, 2024**

To: Board of Trustees, Grande Yellowhead Public School Division
From: Dr. Dennis Parsons, Superintendent of Schools/CEO
Subject: **Superintendent Report - October/November 2024**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Trustees receive the Superintendent's Report as information.

REPORT

Governance Connection:

As per **Board Policy 12**, *Role of the Superintendent*, and the *Education Act*, the superintendent of schools is the chief executive officer of the board and chief education officer of the school authority.

Background:

The superintendent provides the board with information, advice, and support required for the fulfillment of its governance role, and reports to the Minister on all matters required of the superintendent as identified in Policy 12, legislation, and the competencies outlined in the *Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS)*. *Quality superintendent leadership occurs when the superintendent's ongoing analysis of the context, and the superintendent's decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality school leadership, quality teaching, and optimum learning for all students in the school authority.*

Key Information:

Since arriving in the division on September 15, 2024, and since assuming the position of Superintendent of Schools/CEO on October 1st, 2024 I have engaged with staff members in numerous engagements and activities on behalf of GYPSD. In an effort to bring some semblance of order to my diverse GYPSD activities and work engagements, I will report on my work through the competencies as stipulated within the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standards (SLQS).

Leadership Quality Standard 1 - Building Effective Relationships

As stated in my first superintendent report to the Board, knowing the importance of building effective relationships, we have continued to give **priority to meeting**

students and staff in the schools and in our central office area. For example, on Thursday, October 24, 2024 (the day after our last Board meeting) we began the day with a central office team-building activity organized by Nikki. Later that same morning I traveled to Fulham School to meet with Principal Marshall and one of her staff members for a “seek to understand” meeting. Subsequently, I held a virtual meeting with Principal Jillian Hammer to better understand and clarify challenges she and her staff were encountering at Sheldon Coates school, and later that same day I held a meeting at our central office to look deeper into our GYPSD budget processes. The next day, October 25, I participated in a virtual meeting with Principal Zadderey over a developing concern at Grand Trunk High School.



The following week, October 28 to November 1, saw another round of diverse meetings. From meetings with HR on Monday, to budget meetings involving various staff members on Tuesday, and also on Tuesday, chairing our central office leadership team meeting designed to share work highlights while in the process building team through arriving at common understandings and shared purpose. On Wednesday, October 30, I was honored to meet with our superintendent youth delegates and their teacher advisors at Harry Collinge High School in Hinton. It was invigorating to connect with the students, listen to their ideas, and see how we can best support them in the work they hope to undertake. It is also noteworthy that Mr. Callaghan came to this superintendent youth council meeting and held his first stakeholder engagement session with the assembled youth delegates in building out the desired superintendent profile.



Following the session with our youth delegates, I was able to meet with Principal Scobie on matters pertinent to him and his school. The next day, Thursday, I went to Jasper to specifically meet with Principal Bouchard and subsequently with Principal Crozier seeking to understand how they, their staff, and their students were doing. Following these Jasper discussions, I was better able to capture in a letter to Kindy Joseph, Assistant Deputy Minister, concerns expressed by both principals. On Friday, I was back at the central office, seeking to understand through meetings with senior staff on busing in Grande Cache and with HR regarding issues related to GYPSD processes.

The week of November 4th to November 8, 2024, brought fewer engagements but the engagements were still significant. On Monday, the central office team and I participated in a virtual meeting with school leaders to debrief our GYPSD October Board meeting and to hold a Q&A regarding operational issues. From my perspective, the opportunity to dialogue was valuable and gave insight into a better understanding of various issues and concerns. On Tuesday, November 5 I traveled with several staff members to Calgary to participate in the provincial CASS Leadership conference. This was an opportunity to participate in PD, network with other CASS members, and to dialogue on issues of common concern.

Following our fall break and Remembrance Day, the week of November 12 brought more opportunities to build effective relationships through the work undertaken on behalf of GYPSD. On Tuesday, the senior leadership team and I held our central leadership team meeting where we explored multiple issues. This was followed by a meeting held with Principal Marshall on seeking deeper understanding around Fulham School and the challenges being experienced there. On November 13, 2024, Dr. Harding and I along with other staff members assisted Assistant Superintendent Aschenmeier with her Principal Assessment PL all-day session at our central office. The meetings offered new insights on current assessment challenges across GYPSD. Also, on this day, we completed with Mr. Callaghan two more stakeholder engagement sessions on building out the preferred superintendent candidate profile characteristics. On Thursday, Assistant Superintendent Aschenmeier and I were scheduled to have a meeting with Yellowhead County Councillor, David Russell seeking to understand where we might share common interests and concerns. He unfortunately had to cancel, but the meeting is being rescheduled. Later that same day, with Assistant Superintendent Aschenmeier, I once again attended a Fulham school council meeting seeking to understand their ongoing school-focused discussions.

The various meetings and school tours detailed above made possible a clearer understanding of our strengths and a deeper understanding of our challenges. More importantly, the many school visits and numerous meetings afforded opportunities to meet and speak with our staff and further enabled the all-important steps needed in the process of building effective relationships.

Leadership Quality Standard 2 - Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning

Living out this competency through the office of superintendent means engaging in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection, identifying and acting on research-informed opportunities for enhancing leadership, teaching, and learning.

While recently arriving in GYPSD I have already had conversations with division staff members regarding their professional learning journey and have approved

their research initiatives within our school division. I have seized opportunities to speak with students to encourage and to model commitment to professional learning. One example of this was the opportunity to meet with our superintendent youth delegates and their teacher advisors at Harry Collinge High School in Hinton. It was a golden opportunity to speak with students about their learning goals, to applaud them for putting themselves forward, and to discuss how we can best support them in their learning journey.

Likewise, educators must endeavor to stay current. Therefore, On Tuesday, November 5, several staff members and I traveled to Calgary to participate in the

provincial CASS Leadership conference. This was an opportunity to participate in PD, network with other CASS members, and to dialogue on educational issues of common concern. Following the conference, it was possible to share aspects of the professional learning engagement in Calgary through interactions with members of my senior leadership team. In a similar manner, on November 13, several staff members and I assisted Assistant Superintendent



Aschenmeier with her Principal Assessment Professional Learning session at our central office. This full day session offered new insights and new tools to work with teachers on current assessment challenges across GYPSD, and just as important the day offered a fantastic opportunity to model professional learning. Learning with the potential to impact student achievement on curricular outcomes.

Leadership Quality Standard 3 - Visionary Leadership

Under the competency of Visionary Leadership, a superintendent is expected to, *“engage with the school community in implementing a vision of a preferred future for student success based on common values and beliefs.”*

In my short time with GYPSD, I have spent the majority of my time engaged, as detailed above, meeting people with the goal of seeking to understand the work they do and their vision for student success. In the process, I have used the opportunity to promote across our division a shared understanding of and support for our GYPSD goals, priorities, and strategic initiatives. While there is a desired state, as articulated in the GYPSD Education Plan, we also know, based on our AERR, that work is needed to realize the level of student success we want for our students. To this end, I have given time and space to focusing on “learning is the

work,” on our processes that support learning, on building trust, empowering staff, and on building common understandings across our leadership team. In reality, a strong and vibrant school division is not many different boats going in multiple directions, but rather coming to know and understand we are in a boat we built traveling in an agreed upon direction. Thus, we must be clear on our vision, know our course, and be fastidious in our commitment to committing our time, energy, and resources to achieving it.

Leadership Quality Standard 4 - Leading Learning

Under this competency, *“A superintendent establishes and sustains a learning culture in the school community that promotes ongoing critical reflection on practices, shared responsibilities for student success and continuous improvement.”*

In this, my second report to the Board, I will reiterate with respect to leading learning my belief that the ongoing school visits/tours, the leadership team meetings, the many conversations with staff/students, and the review of processes in support of learning have been geared towards understanding our division, inclusive of our strengths and challenges. With understanding comes an increased ability to support our staff and to help build capacity in our administrators and staff for the purpose of fulfilling their educational roles. One major aspect of our shared learning responsibility, and my responsibility in terms of leading learning, is to ensure that all instruction in our school authority addresses learning outcomes as outlined in Alberta's Program of Studies. To facilitate this work, I have focused on working to promote collegial relations, collaboration, critical thinking, and to make room for innovation in our school community.

In terms of leading and supporting learning, I will reiterate part of the central office team message I shared in my first report:

In speaking to “learning is the work,” Fullan spoke of the consistency-innovation continuum and how it applies to all jobs. He argued, how organizations address their core goals with relentless consistency while getting better and better at what they do (innovation) is the key to organizational success. Therefore, I want to recognize the value, and importance of the work you each do. Collectively, our focus must be on processes that respond to the learning needs of students and on improving classroom instruction.

On behalf of the central leadership team, and in the season of change and gratitude, we recognize our role and responsibility to serve and support you. As partners, our collective purpose is to establish optimal environments for the success and achievement

of all students. In service to this purpose, we are committed to the spirit of collaboration, teamwork, and innovation.

Leadership Quality Standard 5 - Ensuring First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education for All Students.

Under this competency, a superintendent, *“establishes the structures and provides the resources necessary for the school community to acquire and apply foundational knowledge about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit for the benefit of all students.”*



While I did not establish the structures within GYPSD, in my short tenure I have witnessed that structures are in place to support building out this competency within our division. To this point, I provided several examples in my previous report illustrative of how we are living out this competency within GYPSD. Additionally, the system's willingness and excitement felt in spotlighting President Jessie Smeal and her Hinton students performing indigenous music at the last public Board meeting was simply beautiful. We all took great pride in what

unfolded in front of us and I think it bodes well for our willingness to do the work that still needs to be done.

Leadership Quality Standard 6 - School Authority Operations and Resources

Under this competency, *“a superintendent directs school authority operations and strategically allocates resources in the interest of all students and in alignment with the school authority’s goals and priorities.”*

As stated in my previous report, I have placed priority on getting to know our people and our division. With an increased understanding of our strengths and our challenges, I have started to strategically allocate resources in the interest of all students and in alignment with our school authority’s goals and priorities. The steps taken have manifested in several different ways. For example, in our Jasper schools,



due to the impacts of the fire, it has involved budgetary adjustments in order to live up to our promise of staffing both schools based on projected enrollments and not on actual student count. In another instance, I have taken steps to ensure equity in resource distribution and equity in educational opportunities. Currently, this has translated into budgetary adjustments, additional staffing, and reconfiguration in staffing assignments for one or more schools. Of course, the work detailed in my previous report around Fulham school continues. Additionally, just recently Facilities Director, Mr. Brian Orge, and our facilities team worked completely through Fall break to repair and replace a waterline break at Fulham School.

Leadership in the area of School Authority operations and Resources is obviously ongoing. To this end, I have a great team to help with the work. Over the weeks and months ahead, we will work to fully ensure that GYPSD operations and our resources are aligned and working in the best interest of GYPSD students and staff.

Leadership Quality Standard 7 - Supporting Effective Governance

In my previous report to the Board, I detailed my initial work and the work of senior staff in support of effective board governance. My report spoke of policy work, working with the corporate board through Committee of the Whole (COTW), and through our Public Board Meetings (PBM). It also detailed how governance work involved supporting Chair Karpluk and the corporate board in provincial governance structures and gatherings like ASBA and PSBAA where there is opportunity to interact with the Minister and his staff.

Since that last meeting, the work of supporting effective governance has continued. For example, on the financial side of supporting governance, staff have been working with external auditors to undertake our GYPSD 2023 - 2024 financial audit. Hopefully, the audited report will be presented at our November PBM.

On another front, staff have been investigating the possible governance implications of Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024/Bill 20. In this regard, we have sought a legal opinion. Similarly, we have school Board elections upcoming next Fall, and staff are already doing the groundwork and preparing the needed motions for consideration by our GYPSD Board of Trustees. Some, or all of these motions, will be debated at our November board meeting. Additionally, on November 15, the work of supporting effective governance resulted in



traveling to Edmonton for a series of back-to-back provincial meetings with PSBC (Nov 15 & 16) and ASBA (Nov. 17, 18, & 19).

In summary, it is easy to see the work of supporting effective governance involves simultaneously working on many fronts by many dedicated staff. The meetings and interactions are crucial to supporting effective governance. I want to thank the Board and my staff for their support. Without their support, this type of groundwork in support of effective governance would not be possible.