

Item # 9

**Superintendent Report
February 26, 2025**

To: Board of Trustees, Grande Yellowhead Public School Division
From: Dr. Dennis Parsons, Interim Superintendent of Schools/CEO
Subject: Superintendent Report - January/February 2025

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 previous report, knowing the importance of building effective relationships, I have continued to give priority to this SLQS competency.

Last month, I spoke of building effective relationships through our direct and indirect interactions with individuals, groups, and our greater education community. I reported on how I had utilized part of our central office leadership meetings, over these past few months, to dialogue with staff regarding our Central Office and changes we might like to see in the spirit of service to our education community and the general public. I reported these discussions revolved around:

- parking spaces marked private,
- no designated spaces for visitor parking,
- all doors are locked,
- lack of a receptionist to greet visitors or the public,
- limited clerical support for senior staff

These internal discussions have now run their course. There is an expressed desire to move forward with the implementation of the various identified changes. A report with recommendations will be brought forward to the board for your consideration. Hopefully, this report can be made ready for our upcoming meeting this month.

In a similar manner, there have been ongoing direct efforts to build effective relationships with members of our staff, parents, and with our greater education community. Since the last report to this Board in January, the staff and I have engaged in multiple ways to maintain and build effective relationships. One area that has demanded considerable time is preparing for a possible CUPE strike. As we all know, GYPSD has been trying to reach a new collective agreement with our CUPE support staff for quite some time. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to arrive at a settlement. Since my last report, our CUPE local rejected the mediator's recommended settlement package, and we have gone through a 14-day cooling-off period. We are scheduled to return to the bargaining table on



February 28. While we greatly value our support staff, and respect their collective bargaining rights, students have a

right to an education, and we have an obligation to serve them. In preparation for a possible CUPE withdrawal of services, we have convened several central leadership team meetings and several contingency plan meetings with principals across GYPSD. No one wants a strike, but in the event of a strike, we will do our best to continue serving our students.

On Monday, February 3rd, 2025 my Director of Facilities, Mr. Brian Orge, and I traveled to Grande Cache to meet with staff members from the MD of Greenview.



The meeting, organized through my office, was scheduled in order to meet with representatives from the MD of Greenview to review and discuss issues pertinent to Summitview School. The main issue being our current bus off-loading and on-loading stop, located on Hoppe Ave, in Grande Cache. The municipality, for various reasons, had been requesting we relocate off-loading and on-loading for Summitview School to another area around the school.

The meeting was attended by the CAO of Greenview and 6 members of his senior team. Following introductions, we walked the site, discussing various alternative arrangements. We then took the meeting inside the school and had an extended discussion touching on various issues and possible future developments that potentially will have a positive impact on Grande Cache and on our schools. Despite the cold weather (-35), it was a good day and we came away with possibilities to discuss and follow up on. During the meeting, they also expressed interest in finalizing our joint use agreement.

With respect to building and maintaining relationships, we have tried to be as transparent as possible regarding the Power School Data Breach that occurred on December 28, 2025. The PowerSchool incident involved unauthorized exfiltration of personal information from certain PowerSchool Student Information System (SIS) environments through one of their community-focused customer support portals, PowerSource. Since the data breach occurred, GYPSD staff and in particular our Director of Technology (Lyle Lee) have made every effort to keep

our education community and the public informed. Please see our GYPSD website for more detailed information on this unfortunate situation.

Since our last board meeting, staff and I have worked to operationalize a new process with respect to **school attendance areas**. School attendance areas are utilized in school divisions to manage space and resources in order to provide quality learning opportunities for all students. Within GYPSD, schools have a defined Attendance Area Boundary, and students residing inside this boundary will attend that school, which is their designated school. They will attend this school unless there are specific and unique educational needs that cannot be met at their designated school.

Form 305-01: Boundary Exemption

In order for the Board to manage space, personnel, and resources, each school has a designated attendance area - as described in [Administrative Procedure 305](#). In most circumstances, unless there are unique or special requirements, students will attend their designated school.

The request to attend a school of choice must be educational in nature and/or specific to the student's unique learning requirements. Where a parent believes there are unique or specific circumstances that require their child to attend a non-designated school, FORM 305-01 is required.

Important: Requests received **after** June 15th will **not be considered until school offices open in August.**

Prior to requesting enrollment at a school of choice, please read the following:

1. School of choice enrollment requests are approved on a **student-by-student** basis and are not considered to apply to siblings in, or relatives of, families.
2. The student's approval at the school of choice is granted for the one school year only, and they are required to **re-apply each year**.
3. The following **examples** do not constitute educational reasons for an enrollment at a school of choice:
 - availability of day care;
 - parent's desire to not have a child walk;
 - interest in attending a school with friends or teammates;
 - parent/guardian preference

Please provide **full details** in the required areas below. Incomplete forms will be disregarded.

Please do not use this form if you are seeking enrollment in these programs:

- Montessori Program at Westhaven Elementary - contact principal
- Indigenous Language and Culture Program at Crescent Valley - contact principal

Email *

STUDENT NAME: (list surname first) *

██████████ _____

GRADE: *

██████████ _____

STUDENT PRIMARY ADDRESS (full address) *

██ _____

DESIGNATED ATTENDANCE AREA SCHOOL *

██████████ _____

SCHOOL OF CHOICE SCHOOL *

██████████ _____

PARENT NAME (list surname first) *

██████████ _____

PHONE NUMBER(S) *

██████████ _____

EDUCATIONAL REASON FOR REQUESTING TO ATTEND A SCHOOL OF CHOICE *

[Redacted text area]

We certify the information in this application to attend a school of choice is complete and correct. *

- Agreed
- Cancel Application

Thank you. Your request to attend a school of choice has been received by the Office of the Superintendent. The principal of your designated attendance area school will be contacting you within three business days to arrange a meeting time to discuss your child's unique and specific learning needs. **If this request is made after June 25, families will not receive a reply until the third week of August as schools are closed for the summer.** Please be sure to bring any supporting documents to the meeting.

This form was created inside of Grande Yellowhead Public School Division.

Leadership Quality Standard 2 - Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning

Living out this competency can mean different things depending on one's context. However, from my perspective, it means engaging in career-long professional learning, being critically reflective, and acting on research-informed opportunities for enhancing leadership, teaching, and learning. Modeling these beliefs through conversations and through actions conveys to others our commitment to professional learning.

I am pleased to report that, with the work of Assistant Superintendent Aschenmeire, the GYPSD Aspiring Leaders initiative has resumed. The cohort reconvened on January 30th to continue building out their understanding of leadership and how their leadership can positively impact student learning. The next meeting is scheduled for later this month or, depending on circumstances, early March. The goal is to nurture and prepare current teachers for future leadership roles within schools or districts. This type of program helps provide teachers with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to transition from the classroom into leadership positions.

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 with 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 focus 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 have built traveling in an agreed upon direction. Thus, we must be clear on our vision,

know our course, and be steadfast in 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 terms of leading learning, over the past weeks since our last meeting, a number of additional steps have been taken that will help with leading learning in our division and with keeping our focus on continuous improvement. One such step had me continue meetings with members of my senior team to review their work assignments, look at our structure, review work goals along with what staff might need in terms of support, and see how our current staff assignments align with system needs and our learning goals. These meetings are not completed, the discussions are moving forward. While they may be somewhat difficult at times, they have also been enlightening. I hope to report further on these continuing discussions in subsequent meetings with the Board of Trustees.

In my report last month, I spoke about our focus on learning and highlighted how our principals presented their School Continuous Growth Plans (SCIP) to our Board of trustees. This month I would like to highlight how every year, Alberta Education surveys students, their parents, and all teachers in every public school through the [Alberta Education Assurance Survey](#). The feedback tells the school team what is working well and where there is room for improvement.

The survey asks students in grades 4, 7, and 10, and their parents, about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in school. Questions cover a variety of topics such as welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments, learning engagement, and parental involvement. The survey is anonymous and voluntary. Feedback is crucial to the school’s School Continuous Improvement Plans. The annual survey identifies areas each school is doing well in and areas they need to improve in comparison to the rest of the province, Division, and past years.

Parents will get a single-use Random Access Code in the mail and students will complete the survey in their school from February 18 to March 21, 2025. The same questions are asked each year by the province to measure how each school is performing over time.

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.”

In my short tenure with GYPSD, I have witnessed that structures are in place to support building out this competency within our staff and within our division. To this point, I provided several examples in a previous report illustrating how we are living out this competency within GYPSD. Additionally, we can look to our PATs, DIP, and local measures to see areas of improvement for our First Nation, Metis, and Inuit students. While we are making progress, much work remains to be done to ensure all students acquire the requisite skills needed to achieve their goals and become contributing members of their communities.

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 previous reports, I have placed priority on getting to know our division. With a greater understanding of our strengths and challenges, I have shared examples of how I have strategically allocated resources in the interest of all students and in alignment with our school authority’s goals and priorities. In this report, I will once again provide several examples of our ongoing work in this area.

Previously, I spoke of work pertaining to Operations and Resources in our Finance area. Over the past weeks, this work has continued with our Secretary/Treasurer, Jun Lin, and members of his staff working with our Human Resources Assistant Superintendent, Meghan Auriat, to identify and capture needed work in the finance area. Subsequently, we advertised positions to increase our capacity to respond to these identified work demands. This work is still ongoing, but in time it should lead to a stronger and deeper finance department.

As we move through February we begin to focus more and more on staffing needs for the upcoming school year. Already we have had several principals attend, with our HR staff, Recruitment Fairs at various locations in Alberta. On the other end of the staff continuum, we have received retirement notices from some of our current staff. Needless to say, this is a busy time for our HR staff as they work to address this year’s issues while also planning for next year. To help

with this process, I have also started having conversations with principals with respect to next year. These discussions are in their early stages and they will play out over the coming weeks and months.

As mentioned above, we have a new process involving Form 305-01. From an operations perspective, implementation is taking time. Time for the principals involved to work through the process, and time for my office to work through the appeals process. To date, I am working my way through two appeals. At each stage of the process, the conversations are heartfelt, passionate, and sometimes difficult. Change is never easy. However, these are early days.

Leadership Quality Standard 7 - Supporting Effective Governance

In previous reports to the Board, I have detailed my work and the work of senior staff in support of effective board governance. I have spoken of policy work, working with the corporate board through the Committee of the Whole (COTW), and through our Public Board Meetings (PBM). I have also detailed how governance work sometimes involves supporting Chair Karpluk and the corporate board in provincial governance structures and gatherings like ASBA and PSBAA where there is an opportunity to interact with the Minister and his staff in the hope of enriching the learning experience for students in GYPSD.



Since our last meeting, the work of supporting effective governance has continued. This week has been busy with a Policy Committee meeting, a meeting to further discuss community concerns, a Committee of the Whole meeting, and a public board meeting.

On another front, we have school Board elections upcoming next fall. Our Secretary-Treasurer, Jun Lin, is our Chief Returning Officer and is working with staff and a contractor to ensure we are ready.

With respect to new legislation, we continue to follow developments with Bill 27. The Alberta government brought forward Bill 27, the Education Amendment Act, 2024. The legislation embodied significant changes in schools, including parental notification for pronoun use, opt-in requirements for instruction on human sexuality, gender identity, and approval from the Ministry of Education for third-party materials. This is legislation that will continue to require vigilance and considerable work to implement across GYPSD and our province.