

**Item # 9**

**Superintendent Report  
March 26, 2025**

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

Subsequent to discussions with the Board of Trustees at our February meeting, I spoke with staff about the implementation of the various identified changes. Once we get further into Spring, and the weather warms, we will remove the word private from all parking spaces at our central office. The new parking design will be based on an open parking concept with five spaces designated for visitor parking. Furthermore, with our attention now turning to staffing, we will act to staff a receptionist position and staff a needed clerical support position. The clerical support position will be utilized to support senior staff while they are out supporting schools. Once the receptionist is in place, we will commence having all internal doors unlocked to coincide with the start of the work day. Through these changes, we hope to make our central office a more welcoming place and free up staff to spend much more time in schools in support of learning and our staff.

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 my last report to this Board in February, the staff and I have engaged in multiple ways to maintain and build effective relationships.

One area that demanded an inordinate amount of time was 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. This forced the central office and schools to prepare contingency plans to be utilized in the event of a strike. This was incredibly time-consuming. However, in preparation for a possible CUPE withdrawal of services, we convened several central leadership team meetings and several contingency plan meetings with principals and staff across GYPSD. No one wants a strike, all staff are valuable in service to our students and their

learning. However, in the event of a strike, we will do our best to continue serving our students in their classrooms.

Since my last report, our CUPE local rejected our latest offer and conducted a strike vote, which received 82% approval from the membership. This rejection vote happened on the same day we were bargaining and presented a package offering a 26.7% compounded increase to Education Assistants and between 15.4% to 21.1% compounded increases for other encumbered classifications.

Recently, across this province, CUPE locals and various school boards have negotiated settlement packages. Many CUPE employees have or are in the process of returning to work. We have asked to return to the bargaining table on April 8 - 10. We are most hopeful that we will be able to arrive at a settlement with our CUPE Local 1357 and thus keep our valuable CUPE employees in our schools, and engaged in the important work of learning.

On February 27, through the work of our staff, especially Nikki Gilks, Director of Communications, and Brian Orge Director of Facilities, GYPSD held a meeting with various community organizations and agencies in preparation for 2025 wildfire planning in our region. The main focus of the meeting was to bring together community stakeholders in the interest of future collaboration in the event of a crisis/emergency in our region.



We were pleased with the number of organizations in attendance and with those who reached out, but unfortunately could not attend. The meeting provided space and time for the various organizations and agencies to get to know each other and plan how we can better work together, The day also featured Caroline Charbonneau, Alberta Wildfire Information Officer for the Edson Forest Area, who provided information on the 2025 wildfire season's anticipated risks and the planning that is underway. By all accounts the day was a great success and focused attention on how together we can help keep our community safe.

With respect to building and maintaining relationships, we have also tried to be as transparent as possible regarding the Power School Data Breach that occurred on December 28, 2024. 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.

Currently, we are working with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to help further investigate this unfortunate situation. We are providing the Commissioner's Office with all requested information and will assist their investigation in any way we can. This is an evolving situation, we will do our best to keep the Board of Trustees and staff fully informed.

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.

As of the writing of this report, we have had a total of 29 applications utilizing [Form 305-01](#)

Of these 29 applications, the following represents the numbers received for each school:

- Fulham - 4
- Niton - 1
- Westhaven - 16
- Mary Bergeron - 0
- Crescent Valley - 7
- Mountain View - 1

We will continue with our work to carry out the Board's will with respect to school attendance areas. (See attachment for more details.)

## **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 Aschenmeier, 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 was scheduled for late February or early March but had to be postponed due to the overarching possibility of a support staff strike and workload concerns. Through our Aspiring Leaders Program, we hope 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.

On March 7th, 2025 the district held a divisional PD day where, in the spirit of



professional learning, staff had opportunities to engage in multiple professional development opportunities. Some of the available PD on that day included but was not limited to: Generative AI for Educators, Google Tools for In-Person Learning, Outcome Based Assessment, Alberta Education Vretta Resources, etc.

The staff did a great job in organizing and delivering needs-based professional development. I want to publicly thank them for their work and dedication. On March 10th, 2025, the Technology Department gave the

same PD regarding Generative AI for Educators to the entire Central Office staff at our monthly staff meeting.

### **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 in my previous reports, engaging 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 a group of schools going in multiple directions, but rather a group of schools with a shared vision collectively working together on behalf of students. Thus, we must be clear on our vision, know our course, and be steadfast in committing our time, energy, and resources to achieving our goals.

#### **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, a number of steps have been taken that will help with



leading learning in our division and with keeping our focus on continuous improvement. One such step, while it was slowed down by the real possibility of a CUPE support staff strike, 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 will continue to move forward. While they are 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 this report, I want to again highlight how every year, Alberta Education surveys students, their parents, and all teachers in public schools 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.

Since my last board report, there have been a variety of meetings in support of leading learning. The meetings have been with my central office team, principals, Assistant Principals, Human Resources with respect to staffing, individual members of my senior team with respect to the work they are responsible for, meetings about individual students, meetings involving individual teachers, and individual principals, etc. While the meetings have been diverse and varied in their degree of associated challenges, they have all been around the work of learning. We can never lose sight of the fact that "learning is the work."

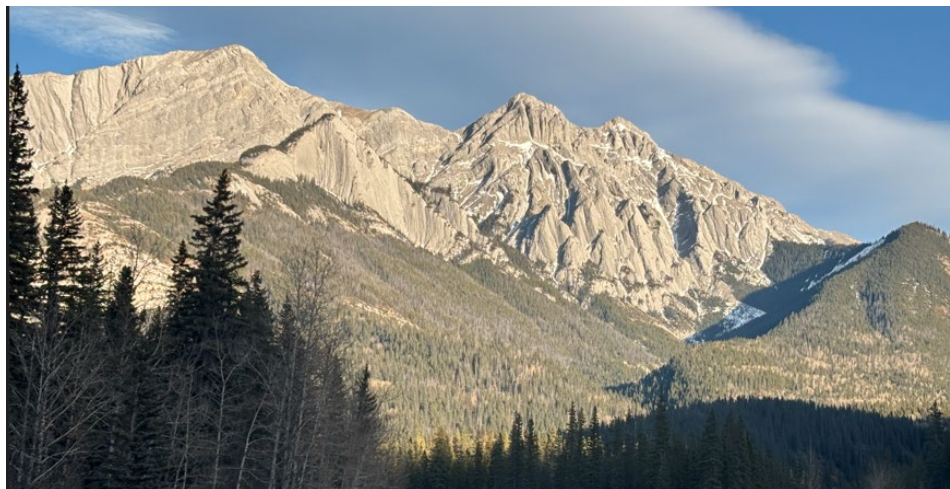
### **Leadership Quality Standard 5 - Ensuring First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education for All Students.**

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.

Recently, the Board Chair and I received some very exciting news indicative of progress under this competency! While I cannot announce this news today, it is most welcome and reflects well on GYPSD and the work underway in our division. There will be an announcement at a later date.

### **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.

I shared details, in my previous report, regarding work pertaining to Operations and Resources in our Finance area. This work is still ongoing. 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 have advertised 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. At the writing of this report, I am working my way through a few more appeals. At each stage of the process, the conversations are heartfelt, passionate, and sometimes difficult. Change is never easy.

### **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. The Board of Trustees and I attended the 2025 Alberta Rural Education Symposium, an enriching three-day event that took place from March 2nd to March 4th in Edmonton. Under the guiding theme of "**Ensuring Equitable Outcomes for Rural Students,**" the symposium aimed to explore the critical facets of governance and leadership within the context of rural education.

Additionally, this month was busy preparing for a Finance Committee Meeting, a Policy Committee meeting, a Committee of the Whole meeting, and a public board meeting.

Finally, we have school Board elections 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.

