

Northern Gateway Public Schools

opening the gateway to a lifetime of learning

Board Highlights

From January 28 meeting

For Immediate Release

Field Trip

· At their regular Board meeting on January 28th, 2014 the Board of Trustees approved in full Hilltop High School's international field trip; Tour of Italy, scheduled from April 15th to April 26th, 2014.

Learning Services Report

Roger Lacey, Director of Learning Services reported on the following:

Student Learning Assessments (SLAs):

The vision of Inspiring Education is to support students in becoming engaged thinkers and ethical citizens. As part of this vision, Alberta Education is changing provincial programs of study to focus on developing student competencies. This includes enabling students to know when, where and how to apply certain knowledge to different scenarios, as well as demonstrate skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and communication.

As provincial programs of study change to emphasize student competencies, provincial standardized tests must also change. The new Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) will provide students, teachers, and parents with information at the beginning of the school year to plan for learning. Collecting and receiving the information at this point in the school year, rather than at the end, will serve as useful reference for everyone and enable collaboration between parents and teachers to support student learning during the year. The information from the SLAs will be used to generate a report that details each student's strengths and areas requiring improvement relative to provincial standards.

Grade 3 students will be the first to write the new assessments, with pilots starting in September 2014. Full implementation for Grade 3 is expected by September 2015. Pilots for Grades 6 and 9 are scheduled to begin in 2015 and 2016.

Tell Them From Me Survey/Accountability Pillar Survey

Parent Survey:

· Accountability Pillar Surveys are completed in paper format and were mailed to parents of students in grades 4, 7 and 10. Please take the time to complete the survey, as your input is valuable.

Transportation Report

Rhett Czaban, Director of Transportation reported the following:

Bus Art:

· The poster being displayed in buses for the month of January is from a Grade 5 student at Grasmere School. The theme is: "Lead by Example, Stay Safe and Sit Forward".

Service Cancellations:

· Buses were cancelled 5 times in December, 2013 and 3 times in January, 2014 due to mechanical reasons, no bus driver available or for extremely bad weather/road conditions. Please see the News Release attached on "To run or not to run? School bus transportation and winter weather".

The next Board meeting will take place Tuesday, February 11th, 2014, commencing at 10:00 a.m. with the regular Board Meeting at the Division Office in Whitecourt. Members of the public are welcome to attend the regular Board meeting. For more information, please call (780) 778-2800 or toll free at 1-800-262-8674.

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News Release

Wednesday, January 29, 2014

To run or not to run?

School bus transportation and winter weather

The winter season is upon us and with it many are wondering about school bus transportation. Are the buses running today? Should the buses be running today? Why aren't the buses running today? Why are the buses running in Onoway when they are cancelled in Valleyview? I can't believe the school buses are running today!

The decision to run or cancel school bus transportation due to weather concerns or road conditions is made by the Director of Transportation in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools. It is not a decision that is made lightly. There are a number of factors the Transportation Department considers when making the call. In addition to travelling and scouting the roads himself, Director of Transportation Rhett Czaban has a number of local contacts in all Northern Gateway communities with whom he is in contact with in the early morning hours. He is also in contact with NGPS school bus drivers who may already be on the road.

Environment Canada, 511 and satellite cameras located up and down the Highway 43 corridor are consulted throughout the day.

The initial determination is made between 6:00am and 6:30am and is communicated in the following ways:

- www.ngrd.ab.ca
- www.facebook.com/northerngatewaypublicschools
- www.twitter.com/ngrdschools (follow @ngrdschools)
- local radio stations
- phone calls to parents by bus drivers

If you do not see a cancellation message on the website, facebook and twitter, buses are running.

Administrative Procedure 131 (bit.ly/AP131) refers to -40 degree Celsius, including wind chill, as one determination factor. This point is based on area data, not specific site information. While individual homes may have thermometers indicating a temperature below the specified -40 degrees Celsius, the data that is collected for each area is the evidence that is used to support the decision made by the Transportation Department.

The Director of Transportation utilizes his best judgement, based on the combination of temperature, visibility, and road conditions, when making his decision about running buses. The primary consideration in the event of severe weather conditions is whether it is safe to be transporting children.

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The expanse of the Division (375km along Highway 43) means that running buses is not an all or nothing response as conditions can vary greatly from school area to school area. NGPS is committed to be reasonable, responsible and attentive to the information that is available throughout the day in all areas.

Parents are reminded that children need to be dressed warmly for the weather this time of year. During inclement weather, the final decision to send a child to the bus stop or to school rests with the parents, even though buses may be operational.

The decision to run or not to run school buses is always a topic of discussion on those days where weather conditions are less than desirable. Ultimately, if a parent feels that their child's safety is at risk on those inclement weather days where school buses are operating, they have the right to keep the children at home. It is also important to note that a decision to cancel buses does not mean that the school is closed. Regardless of bus service cancellation, Northern Gateway schools remain open on inclement weather days.

Questions and/or feedback may be directed to the Director of Transportation, Mr. Rhett Czaban at 780-524-8331, toll-free at 1-888-785-3396 or by email to rhett.czaban@ngrd.ab.ca.