

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

January 29, 2018 Meeting

For Immediate Release

Special Guest: Shane Getson, UCP candidate for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland

Shane Getson, United Conservative Party candidate for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, met with trustees and administration at the beginning of the regular board meeting to learn more about Northern Gateway Public School Division. Trustees and Superintendent Kevin Andrea shared division needs and challenges with Mr. Getson:

- a dated provincial funding framework model that doesn't adequately support the needs of rural school divisions,
- a growing need for in-school mental health supports and funding,
- inequitable access to specialized services for rural students, i.e. speech language pathologists, occupational therapists
- inequitable access to courses and programming for rural students, i.e. Math 31, Physics classes, Languages, classes only being able to be offered on a cyclical basis (not necessarily every semester)

Third Mental Health Capacity Building Project approved for NGPS

Funded by Alberta Health Services, and coordinated by Northern Gateway Public Schools (NGPS), the Mental Health Capacity Building in Schools initiative uses schools as hubs to provide promotion, prevention and early intervention services across the mental health continuum through collaborative networks with schools, communities and health providers.

NGPS is one of 18 school divisions in the province to be awarded a contract and funding this year. NGPS Superintendent Kevin Andrea shared with the Board the Division's excitement at being able to offer these supports in the Oneway school communities in the near future, "the work these teams do with students of all ages to promote positive mental health is invaluable and makes a difference for NGPS learners, staff and students, every day."

NGPS has two Mental Health Capacity Building teams already, operating the CHAMP Team (Choosing Healthy Attitudes through Modeling Pals) in Fox Creek and the TEAM for Success in Whitcourt. The yet to be named Oneway team will be the third mental health support team in the division.

New provincially mandated training requirements will impact school bus operations

The Alberta Government has made changes to training requirements for Class 1 and Class 2 drivers, including school bus drivers. Effective March 1, 2019, all Class 1 or Class 2 drivers must take new Mandatory Entry Level Training (MELT) for Commercial Drivers.

The MELT program is comprised of standardized safety and operation training at the cost of an additional 53.5 hours of training required by every new bus driver. NGPS Transportation Director, Rhett Czaban, shared that in addition to the financial costs, a potential shortage of bus drivers is anticipated by school divisions and bus contractors across rural Alberta this spring when the licensing comes into effect. Rural school divisions and bus contractors already struggle with driver attraction and retention and are looking at ways to mitigate the potential impact to the system.

Draft School Year Calendars Approved for Circulation

The Board accepted draft school year calendars for 2019-20 and 2020-21 as presented and approved the drafts for public circulation and feedback. The draft calendars have been posted on the division website at ngps.ca and circulated amongst staff and parents for feedback. Feedback will be accepted by email to learn@ngps.ca from now until March 12, 2019.

Student delegate joins Alberta Student Voice conversation

Dylan Gilmour, a student at Fox Creek School, is joining Education Minister Eggen's Student Voice videoconferences to share his rural student perspective and hear the voices of other students throughout the province. Student Voice Alberta works to bring the student voice to education policy-making tables through elected student representation from every school division in Alberta.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on February 12, 2019 at the Division Office in Whitcourt commencing at 5:00 p.m. Members of the public are welcome to attend. For more information, please call 780-778-2800 or 1-800-262-8674.