

March 12, 2014

District Office 2790 Tims Street, Abbotsford BC V2T 4M7 Tel 604.859.4891 sd34.bc.ca



A Canadian Experience

It is quite an undertaking to organize over 4,200 adolescents to go to a hockey game – from the pre-trip planning in the classroom, to transportation, seeing them through the game at the AESC and getting them back to school safely – takes a lot of our system energy. As I visited the Heat Middle School Day Game last week, I could not help but reflect on how important such life experiences are for our students. As I watched the middle school students go crazy over our local hockey team, I wondered just how many of them had experienced an event like this before, and how many of them would never have experienced it if it had not been for the willingness of our staff to support the event.

We all know that hockey is not for everyone, but we also know that the opportunity to engage in this part of our culture is an important thing. Not everybody loves hockey. (Having been born in Jamaica, I am still trying to figure the game out!) Whether you like it or not, the game has helped to shape our country, something that we would like our students to understand and appreciate.

There are entire segments of our student population who for a variety of reasons, will never be able to attend a



professional hockey game. Many will not be able to afford it. Years from now, many of these children will remember this day, the fun that they had with friends, and will have a deeper appreciation of what it means to be Canadian. I would like to extend a big thank you to all our staff who helped to make this happen.

~ Kevin

From the Curriculum Department

As we move forward with our efforts to empower quality teaching and learning within our district, this year's Shared Learning Day took place at two campuses. Learning was abuzz at both the Abbotsford Secondary site and the W.J. Mouat site. In total, over 70 workshops were offered during our Shared Learning day and over 1,000 participants attended. Once again, it was a great opportunity for all district staff to engage in meaningful learning and networking.

The Abby Campus started with keynote Dr. Stuart Shanker, a leading expert on innovative thinking and implementation of self-regulation

strategies in the classroom. Dr. Shanker presented to 700 parents at the Parent Shared Learning Evening the previous night. Parents were very receptive to his tips and strategies to reduce stressors in children's very busy lives. Dr. Shanker's keynote address to district staff was also very well received. They appreciated his candid dialogue and the strategies and information he shared that reaffirmed how being calm and alert leads to self-regulation and improved learning.

Breakaway sessions were offered for all district staff. Presenters included both district staff and outside presenters. The Abby Campus also held two great open houses at lunch which included the Wellness Fair and the Expo-Zone. The Wellness Fair saw increased attendance this year. It provided a wealth of information and services regarding health and wellness in the workplace. Attendees were happy to obtain health screening services as well as educational resources to assist them. The Expo-Zone, located in room A104 at Abby Senior, was abuzz with



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Superintendent's Update

a group of grade 6 students from Abby Middle. Attendees who visited this open house were able to see what inquiry in action looks like and were able to see what types of activities will occur at the Explo-Zone once it is officially launched in the Fall of 2014.

The Shared Learning Mouat site of Technology K-12 and Middle School Best Practices was also a success. The District StaRT department, Reimer and Mouat combined their efforts to host approximately 280 attendees at this site. The keynote speakers including Mat Burke, Shelley Wilcox (Learning with Technology) and Myron Dueck (Assessment & Innovation) offered targeted sessions to both the Tech K-12 and Middle groups. Highlights included district staff sharing what is working in their classrooms in both the technology and middle school worlds as well as district helping teachers leading sessions on the transformative use of technology. It was fantastic to see the passion in our instructors' eyes, sharing their expertise.

As always, the true highlight at both sites came from the numerous Abbotsford staff who shared their own expertise and practices with their colleagues. Shared Learning Day remains a hallmark of the excellence in our district-wide learning community. Such a successful day would never occur without the countless staff and student volunteers, site administrators, committee organizers, district helping teachers, presenters, custodial staff and community partners. A huge thank you goes out to everyone involved.

~ Julie Rousseau, Director of Instruction

Blessings in a Backpack

In just a few short days, students and staff around the district will be heading into two wonderful weeks of spring break; a treasured time of a well-earned rest, relaxation, time with families and friends and in some cases travel to destinations near and far.

But for a handful of our students, the next two weeks bring time of uncertainty. Gone are the routines of school that provide the stability in life and the chance to feel what normal might be like for just a few hours each day. For these students, the warmth and welcome provided by our schools' breakfast programs or the lunch discretely provided at mid-day ensures that for that day, learning will be just a little easier because hunger is not getting in the way.

But now through the generous support of community organizations and dedicated teams of volunteers, at least food – and the warmth and caring that was used to pack that food into a simple backpack – is available to 140 of those students this Friday and every Friday since the program's inception last fall.

It was a simple question of an Abbotsford teacher to a community member that asked if there is not something that can be done to help hungry kids on the weekend that has led to one of the most significant marshaling of community resources and volunteers that I have ever seen in my educational career. At nine elementary schools, all over our district, and growing to more

each month, principals are quietly and discreetly providing the opportunity to the 'neediest of the needy' children in their schools to take advantage of the Blessings in a Backpack program. Upon receipt of a parent permission form, each student receives a backpack filled with enough food for three meals a day for the weekend. Every so often a wee treat is included-just because.



However, it is the marshaling of the financial and human resources to ensure that those backpacks are filled each week that is truly an incredible measure of the quality of this community. Led and managed by the Abbotsford Rotary Club and supported by the Abbotsford Foodbank, three teams of

volunteers 'adopt' schools and do all of the shopping, packing and delivering of backpacks every week. Local grocery stores provide heavily discounted sources of food and 30 community partners and anonymous donors provide the financial resources to cover the annual cost of \$525 per backpack. What is so incredibly amazing is that this great work happens every week. Every week, these quiet heroes make a difference in the lives of our students and their families; differences captured in the profound testimonials of parents, teachers and the students themselves. For these 140 students, heading home Friday afternoon is just a little lighter...even when they are carrying a second backpack laden with food; a little lighter because they are heading into the weekend and into spring break with the knowledge that in their community there are people who care – and isn't that a powerful thing to learn at school!

~ Mary-Anne Smirle, Assistant Superintendent.

(Editor's Note: For those school district employees who would like to support this program, donations can be made through the Abbotsford FoodBank. Write "Blessings in Backpack" on the memo line of your check.)

Facilities Department Updates

Transportation Department: Ron Gregoire and his staff (office, garage and bus drivers) successfully and safely transported 4,200 middle school students to and from schools to attend the Abbotsford Heat game at the Abbotsford Entertainment and Sports Centre. A lot of planning went into pulling this off.

Energy Management & Sustainability: Julianne Barr, Kelly Plastow and Archie Stogianos are continuing to work with Regional Recycling and Schools on a beverage container recycling program. School Green Teams continue to be active with green and energy initiatives. We are almost finished hooking up city water meters to energy dashboards at Abby Middle and Abby Senior. Students will now be able to see their school's water consumption. Finally, we are going to get \$85,000 from Fortis BC for boilers and hot water tanks replacement.

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Superintendent's Update

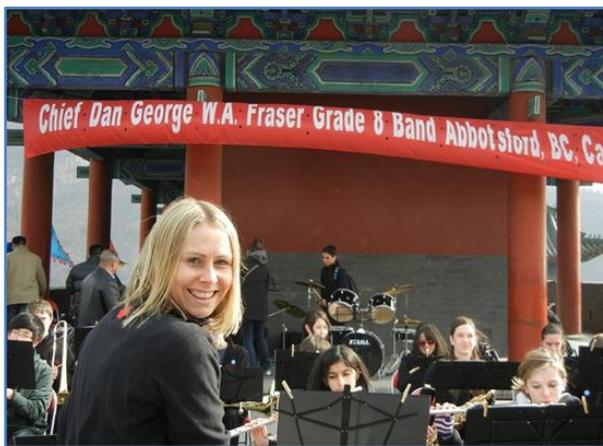
Maintenance: Management staff is busy planning its summer AFG projects.

Custodial Department: The crews are planning some major school cleaning over spring break to get a jump on summer cleaning.

~ Tom Louie, Director of Facilities

Difference Makers

Pam Farley, Teacher (WA Fraser Middle)



Pam with students during the joint WA Fraser and Chief Dan George Middles band trip to China together. Yes, they played on the Great Wall of China!

Pam has been teaching in the Abbotsford School District for 18 years. She began as a music/band teacher at Abby Jr., then to Abby Sr., Upper Sumas and Barrowtown. She moved to Chief Dan George when it opened as a middle school and developed their band/ Explorations program. Nine years ago, she moved to W.A. Fraser when it opened as a middle school and was on the front lines of developing an excellent band program, as well as a music/drama Explorations program. All 680 students in grades 6 – 8 benefit from her music/ drama program. In addition, in her 9 years at Fraser, she has directed/co-directed five musicals. with classroom teacher Sarah Dussin. These school-wide productions develop the talents of many students on stage, backstage and painting props. Pam has the ability to inspire students, and is an ideal middle school educator: combining high expectations and building warm and caring relationships with students. Actually, the students love her sense of humour and energy!

Teaching band and jazz band is Ms. Farley's passion. She loves seeing the progress of students from the very beginning squeaks and squawks of grade 6 band to taking them to the level of performance to travel and perform in places like Edmonton, Seattle, New York, China, Disneyland and San Diego. In September, we close the office doors so as not to hear the sounds coming from the instruments and are amazed every Christmas concert when musical notes emanate from those same instruments, producing the harmonious sound of Christmas carols.

Pam has been involved in the Abbotsford Music Educators Association for 18 years, promoting music in schools and affirming the value of music education. Pam puts into action the research of the over-whelming positive connection between music and the brain, and how cognitive scores improve for students involved in music education. We have been so fortunate at Fraser to have Pam as a part of our community, promoting excellence in music, and a sense of belonging for all students, especially for those for whom adolescence can be a difficult time.

Reminders

- Wednesday & Thursday, March 12 + 13: 1-hour early dismissal days
- Wednesday, March 12, 6pm: IB Diploma Programme info evening @ Library conference room, Abby Senior.
- March 17 – 28: Spring Break
- March 31: Schools re-open
- Tuesday, April 8, 7pm: Board of Education Regular public meeting, at School Board Office.
- Wednesday, April 9: Skills BC Provincial Competitions, Tradex.

❖ Next Superintendent's Update: April 9 ❖