



## **Renfrew County District School Board**

### **Director's Report - August 31, 2009**

#### **Renfrew County Schools Ready to Receive Students**

Our Plant Department has been working extremely hard over the summer to ensure major capital projects were started and completed in time for the start of the school year. Of the 6.8 million dollars approved for capital projects, 60% have been completed with a total cost of 3.8 million dollars. Some of the major projects to be featured include:

- Walter Zadow PS in Arnprior - new heating and ventilation systems, new gym floor, and upgrades to lighting, plumbing, and electrical systems;
- Queen Elizabeth PS in Renfrew - installation of new energy efficient windows and roof, modifications to classroom space and installation of a new state-of-the-art wireless computer laptop system;
- in Renfrew, our Adult Education Centre will be moving to a new renovated location just behind Renfrew Collegiate Institute;
- several other schools received new windows, making us more energy efficient and, in turn, providing more resources in our classrooms for our students.

While our goal has always been to provide safe, clean, warm, and dry learning environments, we were able to add a little sparkle to our schools this summer.

#### **Ministry Funding to Support Numeracy Programs at Elementary Schools**

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has recognized that a number of small district school boards have specific challenges to overcome in developing numeracy programs in all schools (e.g. lack of support staff with numeracy expertise; large geographical areas to cover). Last week it was announced that we are one of the boards selected to receive one-time funding to hire a Numeracy Facilitator to develop local capacity in mathematics teaching and learning. This 2009-2010 position, which is open to elementary teachers with expertise in mathematics, is focused on improving student achievement in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6, with an emphasis on grades 3 and 6. The successful candidate will receive Ministry training, attend professional learning sessions and travel throughout the county to facilitate the use of evidence-based strategies in mathematics.

#### **Transition Program for New Secondary Students**

Grade 9 students will be received differently this school year as a result of the Board's commitment to improving our transition programs. With over 1000 new grade 9 and secondary students entering our high schools for the first time, the Board recognized the need to implement a program that would alleviate the stress and anxiety of entering a new school. Link Crew is a high school transition program that welcomes students new to secondary school and makes them feel comfortable throughout the first year of their high school experience. Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, Link Crew trains grades 11 and 12 students to be Link Leaders. As positive role models, Link Leaders are motivators, leaders and teachers who guide grade 9 students to discover what it takes to be successful during the transition to high school.

Research shows that if students have a positive experience their first year in high school, their chance for success increases dramatically. Link Crew begins with a powerful orientation day that makes new students excited and proud to be attending their new high school and allows them to begin developing relationships and strategies that will contribute to their high school success.

After orientation, Link Crew continues to provide a variety of both academic and social follow-up activities throughout the year, as students experience for the first time many new and exciting school activities. Some of these activities include presentations by Link Leaders on proactive study skills, mock exam experiences, and assistance with joining extracurricular activities. Our pilot projects at General Panet, Opeongo, and Arnprior District High Schools showed improvements in attendance, student engagement, academic performance and a reduction in discipline referrals to the office.

## **Renfrew County Welcomes New Schools**

On September 1, 2009, the Renfrew County District School Board will be expanding from twenty-two to twenty-four elementary schools by welcoming Madawaska and Whitney Public Schools to our district. Over the summer months, administrative staff from both school authorities and the RCDSB worked diligently to ensure a smooth transition. Two experienced, half-time principals have been hired over the summer. Mr Don Deakin will be principal of Whitney Public School and Mrs. Linda Zummach will be principal of Madawaska Public School. Due to previous commitments, Mrs. Zummach will start her assignment on September 21, 2009 and former Madawaska Public School teacher, Elaine Schweig will be filling in for her until that date. We have also assigned Mrs. Darlene Visneskie, Principal of Palmer Rapids Public School to act as a mentor to support both schools. She has been given release time to work with staff on the many transition items that will arise throughout the year. Mr. Russ Holmberg will also assist us with transition matters during the fall months as he is a familiar face to both school communities. Superintendent Stephen Sliwa will be responsible for the Madawaska Family of Schools, and the trustee for the area is Mr. David Kaiser.