

## **A Message for Parents**

**From Marilyn Bergstra, Trustee Ward 5**

**May 18, 2010**

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With the 2009–2010 school year coming to a close, I would like to wish all the families of Edmonton Catholic Schools a very safe, healthy, happy and wonderful summer!

As promised in my last newsletter, I am going to update you on the presentation to the Edmonton PC MLAs.

The Board of Trustees of Edmonton Catholic Schools Advocacy Committee led a meeting with the Edmonton PC MLAs on Friday, March 12. The meeting highlighted the many facets of programs and initiatives in our District, reinforcing the many good things that are happening in education. We spoke to the success of the Supportive Transition for Emotional, Physical, Psychological, and Spiritual Well-being Program (STEPPS) and the importance of the role of support staff and their effectiveness in the classroom (Special Needs Teacher Assistants). MLAs also heard about the value of Early Learning Programming and the need for funding to support these programs for all students. We reinforced that continuation of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) is critical in targeting certain aspects of education such as high school completion. The presentation included statements on the impact of the current fiscal reality for both school jurisdictions and the government and how it affects quality education in Alberta. At this meeting, the committee also highlighted some exciting innovative initiatives including our Health Pathways Initiative where we have bundled together Career and Technology Studies (CTS) courses and partnered with outside agencies so that students can simultaneously explore career interests and gain credits in the Health Care field. Another initiative that was mentioned included a partnership that our District has established with the City of Edmonton to explore the feasibility of building a combined high school completion and community centre. This innovative relationship will enable young people to complete their high school diploma in a centre that serves the whole community with a library, sports fields, a school, and community-use gymnasium.

As the Chair of this committee, I am happy to report that the meeting was a success. One of the outcomes was that the MLAs strongly encouraged utilization of all of the ministries that relate to education in providing services to students. Collaboration among ministries has the potential to improve services with increased efficiency of tax dollars.

On another note, the Board held a Special Public Meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup> to release the latest high school completion rates for Edmonton Catholic Schools. The high school completion rates are part of Alberta Education's Accountability Pillar Report that is tabulated each May and sent to all school districts.

The report shows a significant improvement in the 3-Year High School Completion rate for the Edmonton Catholic School District. This rate rose to 73.8% for the 2008/09 school year, an increase from 71% for the 2007/08 school year. The 2008/09 year rate is 2.3% above the provincial three-year rate. The District's 5-Year High School Completion Rate for 2008/09 is 80.2%, an increase from 79.8% from 2007/08 and this new rate is 1.2% above the provincial five-year rate.

These results are attributable to several programs the District has initiated during my term as trustee. I think this shows the dedication of the staff at Edmonton Catholic Schools and a desire to see all students succeed. This is so important to me as your trustee to know that we are doing what we can to provide for students at all ends of the spectrum. When kids win, we all win.

In closing, I would once again like to invite all parents to join me for coffee and a casual conversation about education on **Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>** at the **Second Cup** in **Riverbend Square** from **9:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

*Marilyn Bergstra*