



Inspiring Success,

TRUSTEE NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020



Thank you for being awesome!



The Board of Trustees continues to applaud all of our dedicated staff, our incredible students and their supportive families as we navigate the pandemic. Please accept our deepest thanks and acknowledgement for your ongoing focus on connection, safety, and well-being, in addition to learning.

We see your creativity and innovation shining through, as you find new ways to honor and preserve traditions and events wherever possible, balance learning and well-being, and positively support one another. We are in awe of your strength and resilience.

As we move forward into the new year, the Board remains committed to supporting our learning communities; cultivating collaborative relationships with our families, school councils and other key stakeholders; and highlighting the positive energy and many achievements prevalent in our Division.

The Board is looking forward to refreshing our strategic plan by engaging with our stakeholder groups in the new year. We will be hosting our Virtual Council of School Communities on February 23, 2021, so please save the date.

We will focus on defining the Division's overarching strategic priorities in these engagement efforts.

Strategic plans are an essential tool for organizations as they provide a sense of direction by laying out a guide for day-to-day decision making, and outlining measurable goals to evaluate performance. These strategic priorities work together to achieve the Division's Mission: *To Inspire Success*. Goals will change and develop; however good strategic priorities will remain in place for quite some time.

School Council Engagement on Core Values

As a first step in our strategic planning process, the Board is reaffirming our Division's Core Values. We will be facilitating discussion over the next few months at our local school council meetings in order to gather your feedback.

This will be an opportunity for you to let us know what our values mean to you, and how they relate to our stated mission. We look forward to these discussions and your input!

Our Core Values:

1. Student-Focused Learning
2. Relationships
3. Supportive Environments
4. Passion
5. Managing Resources Responsibly

We value the input and involvement from all areas of the Black Gold family, including our school councils. The core values will also be reviewed by all staff and administration.



On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Black Gold School Division, we wish you a wonderful and safe holiday season filled with peace, happiness, and good health.

May the magic of the holidays carry you into the New Year with Joy and Purpose.



Inspiring Success!

Yes Virginia, there is a purpose for the arts in education



Happy December! If you are like most people, your social calendar for this month looks quite a bit different than in recent years. Everywhere you turn, there are reminders that 'tis the season to be jolly—but only with your family or close cohort group! Events that normally bring meaning and joy to the holiday season have been cancelled. In fact, it leads one to wonder, “Is Christmas cancelled this year?”

A highlight for many Black Gold students, families and schools is the annual Christmas concert or celebration. Sadly, like so many other events, our school Christmas festivities have fallen victim to concerns around the alarming spread of the coronavirus. However, while the talent shows may have been cancelled, music, singing, dancing, acting, drawing, painting, sculpting and poetry are very much alive and well in our schools.

You may ask, without an audience to enjoy musical, dance or theatre performances, or take in visual art exhibitions, is there a purpose for including the arts in education? The answer is a resounding “Yes!” These disciplines are foundational and contribute a great deal to a child’s development and growth, and lead to more creative thinking, better problem solving, and greater academic success.

Consider musical notation; learning the language of the dots, stems, and lines on a sheet of music and translating them into sounds and melodies accesses parts of the brain not reached

through other mediums. There are countless scientific studies linking music to brain development, enhanced learning, and healing. The brain trained to understand music theory is also a brain that, in many instances, becomes trained to handle complex problems. The visual and theatrical arts teach students to use their imagination, think spatially, visualize ideas and bring them to life, and to communicate effectively. These abilities are not ‘frills’ or ‘optional extras’, they are essential to everyday life and work.

Our schools have a role in nurturing the next generation of Albertans, to help prepare them for the complex demands of the 21st century workplace. There is no crystal ball to show what the future holds for our children. By offering students a well-rounded education that includes the arts, we can provide them a solid foundation to become creative, compassionate, and contributing members of society.

In *How the Arts Develop the Young Brain*, author David A. Sousa presents this conclusion: “The arts play an important role in human development, enhancing the growth of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor pathways. Schools have an obligation to expose children to the arts at the earliest possible time and to consider the arts as fundamental (not optional) curriculum areas. Finally, learning the arts provides a higher quality of human experience throughout a person’s lifetime.”

Whether students are learning in the classroom or at home, a well-rounded education includes not only reading, writing and ‘rhythmic, but also music, dancing, art or drama. The arts help our children recognize and appreciate the beauty and wonder that surrounds them, and enables them to lead more enriching, inspiring and uplifting lives.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, may you and yours experience beauty and richness through the sights and sounds (and smells and tastes) of this Christmas season. Please celebrate safely with those you love, and best wishes for a wonderful new year too!

- Trustee Esther Eckert

Important Dates & Events

- **January 20, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **February 17, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **February 23, 2021** - Virtual Council of School Communities - stay tuned!
- **March 17, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **April 14, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **May 26, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **June 23, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)

Resources:

BGSD Board Agendas and Minutes:
<https://blackgold.civicweb.net/Portal/>

Board Member Profiles & Contacts:
<https://www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/board/board-member-profiles/>

Follow Us:

BGSD Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/BlackGoldSchoolDivision>

BGSD Twitter Page:
<https://twitter.com/BlackGldSchools>

BGSD YouTube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/BlackGoldSchoolDivision>

Keep looking out for the rainbow!



It has been a year to remember as the COVID-19 pandemic has led to unheard of lockdowns, school closures, face-masks, social distancing, and constant hand sanitizing. It is important during these trying times to ask yourself, "What good can come out of this unprecedented new normal."

With what seems like entire countries on lockdown, I know from personal experience there are some silver linings in hitting the pause button; time with family, less running around, fewer appointments, more quality down time, maybe a few more family game nights, and a newfound interest in puzzles. These are some of the more positive results of the Great Curtailment.

After months of closures, when the provincial government gave us the go ahead for school re-entry, many of us eased forward with trepidation, cautious but relieved at the same time. We are now nine weeks into the re-entry, and as a school board trustee I wondered what our stakeholders were actually feeling - I wanted to hear of the positives that 2020 has brought us. Below are a snippet of actual comments from our staff, students, and parents during these unprecedented times:

- "I appreciate the staggered lunches and recesses - less conflict, more one-on-one opportunities."
- "I love learning from home - I don't have to 'people' as much."
- "I get to use a swing I have never been able to get a turn on before because there are fewer kids at recess."

- "No microwaves means healthier lunch choices, and no 20-minute waits to warm up food daily."
- "Staggered school bus drop-off equals two and a half minutes to get 500 kids off the buses and into their classes."
- "People finally understand what personal space is!"
- "Learning how to Zoom and Google Meet - technology is not so scary anymore."
- "It's pajama day every day when I learn from home!"
- "I like that things are being kept cleaner - I feel safe."
- "Just so great to be together again!"
- "I have a new-found appreciation for friends and coworkers."
- "No school lockers means no loitering in the hallways."
- "I am saving so much money on lipstick!"
- "Masks are the new accessory; I love to match my mask and my shirt."
- Socialization is so important in learning; it's great to be back together.
- "Phew, I don't know if I would graduate if I had to keep learning at home"
- "Good to have a choice in learning - we are all unique and all learn differently."
- "I learned to sew!"
- "I am constantly singing Run DMC in my head when I see all the floor stickers that say 'Walk this way.'"
- "No worries about garlic breath when I wear a mask!"

It's heartwarming to hear all the little joys that we can find in each day. I love that I can see a twinkle in someone's eyes and know there is a big smile greeting me behind that mask. I appreciate the small things like an elbow bump, tapping on a window to say hi, or how much I enjoy seeing a smiling face on a Google Meet.

We may not all be in the same boat, but we are all weathering the same world-wide storm. So as my grandma used to say, keep looking out for the rainbow, because you will always find one after the rain.

- Trustee Robyn Steed

COVID-19 Mental Health Supports

For those experiencing stress, anxiety or depression due to the COVID-19, remember you are not alone. Below are some important resources and phone numbers that can help to support you.

Toll Free Crisis Support:

- Text4Hope - Text COVID19HOPE to 393939 to subscribe
- Addiction Helpline 1-866-332-2322
- Family Violence - 310-1818
- Kids Help Phone - 1-800-668-6868
- Mental Health Help Line - 1-877-303-2642
- Edmonton & Area Crisis Line -- 780-482-HELP(4357) or toll free 1-800-232-7288
- Dial 211 (780-482-4636) for other information and resources

For Your Information

- **Advocacy:**
In order to increase awareness of our advocacy efforts and priorities, our advocacy letters are now being posted online. We will continue to develop this page with other types of advocacy: <https://www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/board/board-committees/community-engagement-advocacy/>
- **COVID-19 Tracker:**
<https://www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>
- **Mental Health:**
A link for resources and wellness information: <https://sites.google.com/gshare.blackgold.ca/mental-health/>



Wishing all Students, Staff, Parents
& Community Members a very

Merry Christmas

Warmest wishes for
Peace and Joy
this Holiday Season!

May the New Year be filled with
Hope, Health and Happiness!



Black Gold Division Office will be **CLOSED** at noon on Thursday,
December 24, 2020 and will reopen on Monday, January 4, 2021.

Board of Trustees & Division Office Staff



**Wherever
you
find love,
it feels
like
Christmas.**

- from The Muppets Christmas Carol

