



For Immediate Release

October 31, 2016

### **BRSD Board adjusting student entrance age**

The Battle River School Division Board of Trustees was learned at a recent meeting that BRSD's school entrance age is being adjusted by three months. Currently, children entering Grade 1 must turn 6 years of age by March 31 of the school year. Under this new entrance age, students must turn 6 by December 31.

In addition, students starting Kindergarten (who are currently required to turn 5 by March 31 of the school year) will also have their entrance age bumped to December 31.

"That three months can make a significant difference to a child's readiness and ability to learn," explains Rita Marler, Superintendent of Schools. "We want all children to get off to a good start in school and we believe that this adjustment will help ensure that our youngest students are more prepared."

### **Budget being finalized**

Battle River School Division staff are also in the final stages of preparing the 2016-2017 budget, for submission to the provincial government by the end of November.

With enrollment down by about 160 students, budgets are being scrutinized carefully. All schools and departments are evaluating decisions thoroughly prior to spending. According to Assistant Superintendent, Business, Imogene Walsh, budget figures are based on the student population as of September 30, and take into account a number of factors, such as an average teacher salary / benefits cost of \$102,460; the BRSD Board's decision to provide additional funding to the division's smallest schools; and a higher government funding allocation for lower elementary grades.

Another consideration for this school year is preparing for the incoming carbon tax, which will increase the cost of student transportation by about \$41,000 and the cost of natural gas for schools and other worksites by an overall amount of about \$66,000 in 2017.

Last year the school division established an Instructional Reserve designated to provide funding in support of four core areas of focus, known as "The Everyday Four". These are:

- Welcoming and caring schools
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Teaching and Learning (21<sup>st</sup> Century).

Those reserve funds will continue to support additional programming and staffing this year as well as for the 2017-2018 school year.

### **Summer programs were well used**

The Board of Trustees also heard in October that the school division's summer programs were well used and provided a successful experience for many students.

There were 126 students who completed at least one course through the BRSD Summer School, and 45 students who wrote a Grade 12 diploma exam in August. More than 600 high school credits were earned at Summer School, which took place in the month of July. A further group of students were also enrolled in Registered Apprenticeship Program and Off-Campus Education summer programs, in which they earned 217 credits.

The month of July also saw 76 grade 2 and 3 students from across the school division participate in Reading University, to maintain and improve their basic reading skills. There were RU campuses in Camrose, Killam and Tofield.

### **Did You Know . . .**

- Battle River School Division has about 20 full-time students from across the world enrolled in its schools, through the International Student Program.
- New Norway has one of a handful of Alberta schools who are participating in an international Math exchange program. Delegates from New Zealand visited BRSD in early October and shared their best practices for math instruction, as well as taking Alberta ideas home with them.
- BRSD is offering opportunities for students and staff to learn more about Canada's First Peoples, their important place in our country's history, and why Truth and Reconciliation is so important to our future.

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