

QUARTERLY REPORT

November, 2023 - January, 2024



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Quarter 2



Red Deer Catholic
Regional Schools

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A Message from the Superintendent of Schools

"We need each other. I have found in my personal experience that we can not do it alone, that the best of how we enjoy and make it in this life is if we reach out to others. I have come to realize that no matter how gifted and talented any one of us are, not one of us can totally become their best self without the help and support of God and one another." (Enterprises of the Heart)

If I could sum up quarter two in Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools (RDCRS) with one word, I would use community. I have had the opportunity to be witness to the remarkable work of our people within our school communities ensuring we are reaching one another with open hands and hearts. This quarter we celebrated Faith Day during the season of Advent, encouraged potential teachers to teach in RDCRS through numerous hiring fairs, welcomed new families into our early learning programs, developed plans for a new school in Blackfalds, and implemented unique and innovative programs through our Indigenous Education Services Team. Each person in RDCRS contributes to the learning environment and enriches our Catholic faith community while ensuring students are given the knowledge, and confidence needed to reach their full potential.

As we begin the season of Lent in RDCRS, we are reflecting on the ways that we can continue to build up our communities through the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We are encouraging people to spend quiet time each day talking to God and bringing those whom they care about to God in prayer. We are making space for God in our lives by fasting from behaviours that may be taking too much of our attention and time and devoting more time to God and to others who may need our help and attention. Through almsgiving, there is so much that we can do to help others. In our school communities, we are discussing how we can share what we have with others this Lent and give to those in need.

Blessings to you and your families on your Lenten journey. Continue to shine a light on positive connections, continue to be people of hope, and lean on God to provide you with courage.

Dr. Kathleen Finnigan, Superintendent of Schools

DIVISION FAITH DAY

Division staff, Trustees, and invited guests gathered at St Joseph's High School Fieldhouse on December 8, 2024 for Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division's annual Faith Day. Archbishop Richard W. Smith presided over the opening Mass and delivered a homily about the importance of tuning one's life to Jesus.



RDCRS staff attended the Division Faith Day



Chris Stefanick presenting to Division staff.

The featured keynote speaker for the day was Chris Stefanick. Chris is an internationally acclaimed author, speaker and television host who has devoted his life to inspiring people to live a bold, contagious faith. Chris spoke with passion about each person's infinite worth to Christ, as well as the importance of being filled with the joy of Christ. Chris outlined steps to follow in order to live life as a joyful Christian, and shared ways that people can build new habits, change their thinking, and live a more joyful life.

The Board Vice Chair and the Superintendent addressed staff sharing stories and giving thanks to the dedication of staff as they continue learning and grow on their faith journeys. The day ended with breakout sessions offered by RDCRS faith leaders, including RDCRS youth ministers, administrators and teachers. Adoration, Confession, and a display of the Eucharistic Miracles of the World by Blessed Carlos Acutis was also offered to staff as opportunities to nurture their faith on Faith Day.



Faith Retreats Occurring In Schools



St Elizabeth Students tour St Mary's Parish

Many RDCRS elementary schools are organizing faith retreats for students at their designated parishes. The retreats are organized by grade level, with Faith Coaches taking the lead on organizing and facilitating church tours for students, as well as their participation in Mass and faith-focused skits, games, crafts, stories, and songs at the parish. The retreats are engaging ways to teach young students about the Catholic faith as well as they help build a connection for students with local parishes.

Alberta Catholic School Trustees of Alberta (ACSTA) Hosts Symposium

Trustees, community members, educators, parents, and administrators participated in the ACSTA Catholic Education Symposium: Teachers as Missionary Disciples: Forming Witnesses for Catholic Schools in Edmonton on February 9-10, 2024. Three Division Faith Coaches, the Religious Education Curriculum Support Lead teacher, and Trustees attended the symposium to participate in discussions that will help set the future direction of teacher faith formation in the province. One of RDCRS' Associate Superintendents also presented a keynote session at the symposium.

Archdiocese of Edmonton Art Project

This year the Archdiocese of Edmonton is hosting an 'Archdiocese Art Project' collaboratively between the Archdiocese and the school divisions it serves. Student artwork from each school division will be presented to the Archbishop on May 7, 2024 and will then be displayed in the Archdiocese of Edmonton Assembly Hall. RDCRS will select the winning entry of this year's division theme art contest depicting the theme 'Inspired by Christ on a Journey to Encounter, Nurture and Serve' to represent our school Division.

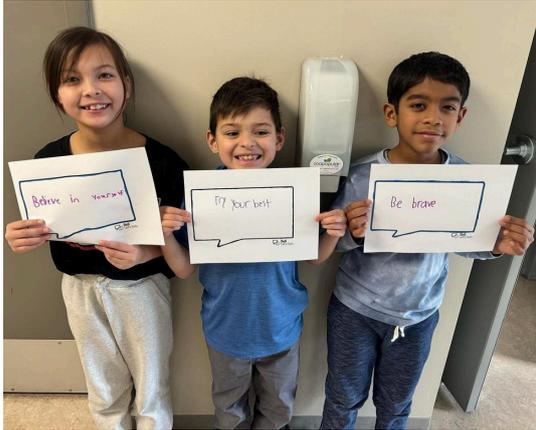


RDCRS

Inclusion

UPDATE

Our District Lead Counsellor shared with the counselling teams a Days to Acknowledge document early in the school year that outlines specific dates that encompass and recognize the mental health domain. Bell Let's Talk Day is one of those days where we recognize mental health matters and every school in our district brought awareness on January 24 in their school communities. All schools tailored their prayers and announcements to focus on breaking the silence and reminding them they are not alone, many shared presentations about the importance of self care and positive mental wellness, and most had visuals around the school and completed follow up activities like the Bell Let's Talk reflective bubble where staff and student could write/draw messages to others to let them know they are cared for and belong.



In addition, our Family School Counselling team have organized and facilitated the following groups and family opportunities:

Rainbows: creates community and provides resources that empower youth to navigate loss and uncertainty.

Circle of Security: reflective program designed to help caregivers and those who support families as they understand their child's emotional world by learning to read the emotional needs, support the child's ability to successfully manage emotions, enhance the development of the child's self-esteem, and honor the caregiver's innate wisdom and desire for their child to be secure.

Connect: Connect is for any parents who are interested in improving their relationships with their youth.

Poverty Simulations: designed to help participants begin to understand what it might be like to live in a typical low-income family trying to survive from month to month.

Family Carnival Events: Families are given a passport to 10 fun activities where they learn how each activity builds assets and which of the 40 assets it is building. Once a family has filled their passport they will understand why these activities are important asset building opportunities and be able to replicate or expand on them at home.

Family Freezer Meal Sessions: With grant monies, vulnerable families are invited into the school after hours to gather and cook and create freezer meals that are welcome to take home.

Wellness Exchange Workshops: Skill-building wellness program that focuses on helping the participant build and strengthen their skills in 5 areas: Problem Solving, Managing Reactions, Healthy Connections, Positive Activities, Helpful Thinking.



RDCRS HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Key Highlights:

- 106 new teacher hires
- 125 new support staff hires
- 35 substitute teachers hires
- 34 support substitutes hires



Teacher Recruitment and Retention:

Red Deer Catholic Regional School (RDCRS) has enthusiastically re-embraced an active role in various Career Fairs. This strategic initiative serves a dual purpose, not only focusing on recruiting prospective teachers but also elevating the Public Relations profile of RDCRS across esteemed institutions. The University of Alberta, St. Joseph College, Red Deer Polytechnic, Burman University, and three upcoming events have been key platforms for this transformative engagement.

Beyond Recruitment:

While the primary goal was to recruit prospective staff, RDCRS recognized the broader impact of active participation. The focus extended to ensuring that the name and reputation of RDCRS became synonymous with excellence, actively hiring, and fostering an environment conducive to unparalleled education.

Comprehensive Public Relations Campaign:

The engagement at these career fairs was not just about establishing a recruitment presence; it was a comprehensive PR campaign. RDCRS aimed to imprint its name on every attendee's mind, emphasizing the commitment to providing outstanding education and actively contributing to the academic community.

Building a Reputation as an Exceptional Employer:

Acknowledging that an outstanding educational institution requires exceptional staff, RDCRS used these platforms to showcase that it is not only actively hiring but also a workplace of choice. This strategic move aims to attract top-tier talent, reinforcing the commitment to excellence in education.

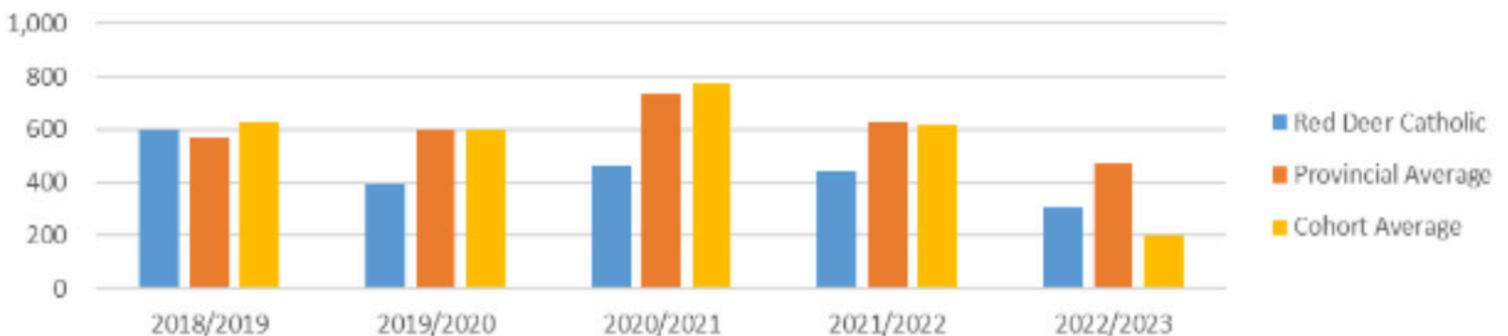
Forecast Talent for Certified Teachers

Forecasting talent is crucial for personnel management as it enables RDCRS to proactively identify, nurture, and retain the right individuals to meet current and future school division needs. By predicting talent requirements, personnel can strategically plan recruitment efforts, succession planning, and skill development programs. This proactive approach minimizes the risk of skill gaps, ensures to build a pool of talent, and allows for timely adjustments to workforce strategies. Ultimately, talent forecasting empowers organizations to stay agile, competitive, and well-equipped with the human capital needed to navigate evolving industry landscapes and achieve long-term success. RDCRS will be forecasting talent yearly in the month of December prior to all the Career Fairs.

Financial Services Update:

- The fall funding announcement for enrolment growth provided RDCRS an additional \$444,000 to help fund our increasing population.
- Classroom Complexity Grant - \$482,384 provided to add more classroom support staff to address classroom complexity.
- Learning Disruption Support - \$55,082 to provide support strategies for students in grades 1 - 5 identified as at risk.
- RDCRS is piloting Kindergarten for Home Education and we have 66 children enrolled.
- Ministerial approval is no longer required prior to using operating reserves or transferring capital reserves.

Adjusted Accumulated Operating Surplus per Student



Student Population Update:

Prior to 2020, RDCRS experienced continual growth. In both 2020 and 2021, the overall student population declined slightly. In 2022, RDCRS experienced a modest increase of 1.9%, restoring the Division to pre-COVID enrolment levels. In 2023, RDCRS experienced a notable 3.12% increase in enrolment, returning to pre-pandemic growth rates. For the 2024 school year our student population is 10,723, indicating a 3.12% increase.

BLACKFALDS SCHOOL Update:



The P3 Development of a new kindergarten to grade 5 school in Blackfalds continues to move forward. The schematic design has progressed smoothly and the plans look excellent. We also received official notification that a full build out to just over 500 students was approved.

Work is ongoing between Alberta Infrastructure and the town of Blackfalds to ensure the steps to secure the land in the new development are completed. The land needs to be ready for construction according to the timelines and criteria established in the P3 project. This component has been challenging as much work is still needed to be done to secure title to the land within the development and appropriate elevations need to be created on site. Several key steps still need to be accomplished and increased collaboration between Alberta Infrastructure and the town has been initiated to meet these deadlines.



RDCRS PRE-KINDERGARTEN UPDATE



With the 2023-24 academic year, RDCRS welcomed 252 eligible Pre-Kindergarten students out of 403 total registrations. Each Pre-Kindergarten program worked to foster and develop each child's unique identity as a learner.



Our division housed 17 Pre-Kindergarten programs. In total, 66 students have met the criteria for a severe/moderate disability, 50 students with a mild disability, and 82 students met the criteria for gifted and talented within Pre-Kindergarten.

As we prepare for the 2024-25 school year, we are looking forward to maintaining our 17 Pre-Kindergarten classes while also having over 500 Kindergarten students.

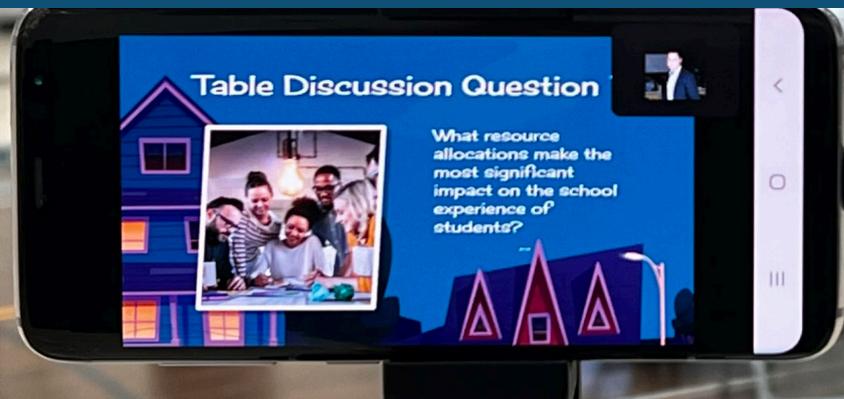


RDCRS was also able to offer 54 community placements to students.

RDCRS

Stakeholder Engagement

UPDATE



Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools (RDCRS) Board of Trustees looks for ways to regularly engage our community to help form the decisions and direction of the school division. The RDCRS Engagement Summit allowed an opportunity for parents, staff, and community members to provide input into two key areas of our strategic planning. The two areas for this Summit were (1) helping to establish budget priorities for future planning, and (2) feedback on developing RDCRS exit outcomes for learners. Approximately 40 stakeholder participated either in person or online in this hybrid summit.

RDCRS has an annual operating budget of \$119 million, serving student enrollment of 10,261 FTE. We employ over 600 teachers and 475 support staff.

Participants were asked two questions. What resource allocations make the most significant impact on the school experience of students? Recognizing that there is limited funding, what are some new and innovative ideas the Board can consider?

The Board's Strategic Plan set out a priority to Build a Workplace Culture in Red Deer Catholic of Engagement, Empowerment, and Innovation. The strategic plan calls for the division to redefine success by developing Exit Outcomes for RDCRS that all staff, students, and stakeholders can articulate and embrace. These Exit Outcomes would help compliment the faith permeation we undertake as a Catholic school division and the academic goals set out by Alberta Education in the curriculum for each student. During this engagement process, participants were asked to review proposed exit outcomes that have been developed based on feedback provided by parents as part of our annual Schollie Survey that was conducted in the spring of 2023.

Participants were asked the following questions:
What resonates with you about the draft outcomes presented?
What if anything is missed in the draft outcomes presented?
How can we continue to bring these draft outcomes to life in RDCRS?

The Exit Outcomes are continuing to be refined based on this stakeholder input and the revised outcomes will be shared for approval at a future board meeting before being rolled out to the Division.

Indigenous Education

UPDATE



- Our Indigenous Education Family School Counsellor has been working to host after school Indigenous student groups where students come together learn culture through community and hands on culturally relevant activities.
- Our team is attending the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) training for leaders. This is a national organization that our schools will have the opportunity to be part of to facilitate mentorship amongst our Indigenous youth.
- High School and Beyond information sessions have been created for students at all three high schools. Red Deer Polytechnic Indigenous Services, Red Deer Polytechnic Indigenous Student group, the Metis Local and Rupertsland have all been invited in to share supports for Indigenous students after graduation. This is for all grade 11 and 12 students to attend.
- Our Indigenous Education team has been running pre-teaching lessons for our high school students who are attending our land camps. On March 1 we will be hosting our overnight portion of the land camp. In partnership with Red Deer Polytechnic, ACTUA and Painted Warriors. Students will be gaining up to 5 high school credits, their hunter education certification and a post secondary science credit. Working alongside Red Deer Polytechnic, we are creating an Indigenous perspectives in Science course our students will be able to receive.

Board Strategic Plan

UPDATE

Key elements of the strategic imperatives achieved in this quarter:

Building proficiency of staff’s foundational knowledge in the trauma-informed practice with a focus on regulate - relate - reason.

- The Collaborative Support Model (CSM), which focuses on lagging skills and unsolved problems, was identified as the action step and next stop for trauma-informed practices in 5 pilot schools. In addition, 268 educational assistants have received professional development on the CSM.
- Professional development was given to key members (ILT, Counsellors, Family School Counsellors and Administrators) on the Collaborative Support Model (CSM). In addition, 42 School Counsellors, 30 ILTs, 55 Administrators, 11 Family School Counsellors, 4 Mental Health Transition Consultants, and 5 pilot schools have received the full-day PD session.

Establish a new Faith Coach Model to support schools in the enhanced formation of staff.

- Selection of Faith Coach (.1) and Administrator (.2) at the school level based on prior experience, interest, knowledge, skill set, and capabilities (45 in total).
- Divided the RDCRS Faith Team into an elementary team and a middle school team. Meetings occurring on October 3, October 19, December 5 and December 6. The strategic plan was reviewed presentation on Division Schollie data, activity on school Schollie data, “What, So What, Now What”, and determination of next steps in team.
- Developed roles and responsibilities. At this time, Faith Teams at all schools meet weekly to establish processes and individual roles to carry out the respective school priorities as established in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Professional Learning Framework

- Revised the School Improvement Plan template and process to create efficiencies in planning and targets.
- Two internal summits were hosted with four different stakeholder groups to determine collaboration structure processes and key professional development best practices and challenges.

Establish Exit Outcomes for RDCRS to define a definition of success and revise the school improvement plan process.

- Collected data from parents/guardians on surveys to build a bank of potential characteristics and skills that are valued as potential data for use in the development of RDCRS exit outcomes.
- Followed with a focused stakeholder engagement evening to get further feedback on proposed Exit Outcomes.

Mental Health and Safety

Purposefully, Tangibly, and Visibly Demonstrate our Faith

Build A Workplace Culture of Engagement, Empowerment and Innovation

Parkland Regional Safety Committee Award of Distinction:

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools has been honoured to receive the 2024 Award of Distinction. This award is in recognition of RDCRS’s dedication to Safety in the Parkland Region and the division’s contribution to helping raise health and safety awareness and injury prevention to young workers in schools around Central Alberta.