



Newsletter—January 2012



# J.T. Foster School

## Accountability Pillar

As an annual check-up on the education system, the Accountability Pillar provides an opportunity for Alberta Education and school authorities to ensure that we're equipping students for success.

The Accountability Pillar uses a set of 16 indicators consisting of surveys of students, parents and teachers on various aspects of quality; student outcomes such as dropout and high school completion rates; and provincial assessments of student learning.

From January to the end of February, Alberta Education will be conducting the annual Accountability Pillar Survey. In January, parents of students in grades 4, 7 and 10 will receive a survey from Alberta Education. In February, students in grades 4, 7 and 10 and all teachers will be completing their surveys online at school.

All surveys are anonymous and ask questions about experiences with the school. In addition to English and French, the parent survey is available in Chinese, Punjabi, Arabic, Blackfoot, Cree, Korean, Spanish and Tagalog.

Your participation in the survey helps provide important information on the quality of education your child is receiving, so we encourage you to return your survey promptly.

Survey results will be available to school authorities in May 2012, and will be reported publicly as part of their 3-Year Education Plans and Annual Education Results Reports.

### February Parent Council Meeting

Parent Council will meet on February 1st at 7:00 pm  
J.T. Foster VC Room  
We look forward to seeing you there!

### Leo's Meeting Dates

The next Leo's meetings are January 22 and Feb. 8 here at J.T. Foster at 5:30. If anyone would like more information regarding the Leo's they can contact Gradon Vachon or Tanner Halbert.



### **J.T. Foster Ski Trips—Castle Mountain**

February 8th

The bus will leave at JTF School at 6:30 am and return at 5:00 pm.  
If you have not received a "Ski Form" please come to the office.

## Principal's Message January

I pen this Principal's message in our J.T. Foster Library as I look out over a sea of determined faces and tightly focused thought, supervising our grade 12's as they write, for what is for many, their first experience of diploma exams. Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2 kick off our January diploma exams today.

I look out on this group of confident yet anxious young people and cannot help but consider the process we use to assess learning at the higher grades. As your Principal, I ultimately bear the responsibility to ensure that each student I see before me is as well-prepared to write the exam before him or her as possible. Even as I allow myself the indulgence of a brief smile at how well I have watched these students and their teachers prepare for this event (for they have done a truly excellent job) I am struck by the burden of weight the students, the teacher and even I feel in these assessments.

If you grew up in Alberta in the 1970 to 1980 period, you might be one of the unique individuals like me, who have never experienced high-stakes standardized testing. If you went to High School prior to the seventies, you experienced examinations in grade 12 which on one level, that of the volume of content recall of course material required were more challenging than today's exams. However, the level of critical thinking, analysis or abstract reasoning that those exams required would be minimal in comparison to today's assessments. In short, if you were born blessed with a good memory and study skills, you probably thrived under that system.

If you went to High School in the eighties or later, you would probably be much more familiar with the format of the diploma exams students write today, but beyond that superficial similarity you might be surprised. There are several myths about the exams which have grown up, myths about the curriculums they are based on, the tasks that students are asked to do and the level at which our students do them.

In the nature of my role, I am often asked and indeed even challenged when out in public with generalizations offered about students today. The familiar "kids today can't read or write" is often mentioned to me, I suspect at least partially to invoke a discussion. We all tend to think our own generation is the best and brightest and we sometimes suffer from what Jamie Vollmer refers to as a mixture of nostalgia and amnesia which makes us view our own school experiences in a somewhat rosy hindsight. There is no question that both the amount of background knowledge required in all the core courses, as well as the level of sophisticated analysis required is much higher today, a fact those of us from older generations, like myself, have trouble accepting or believing.

It has always been my hope to combat misinformation and misperception with facts and truth. The fact is that our students today, as a whole, write more, write more complex ideas, and write with better command of conventions than students twenty or even ten years ago. When Alberta Education has periodically analyzed the meta-data from all exams, the results clearly show that although we can always find examples of individuals who are not meeting standards, overall our Alberta students are doing well. Marks in all marking criteria have shown a steady and slow increase over time.

One fact to consider is that the sheer number of students taking diploma exams and graduating is the highest it has ever been. Whereas fifty years ago about a third of all students may have left school to seek employment and not have even written any grade 12 exams, we routinely have 85-100 per cent of our students completing their programs. In short more students go farther in school than in the past.

The changes in our curriculums to reflect the needs of business, industry and our society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have resulted in the expectation that our students, quite beyond the traditional content-based education we experienced ourselves in the past, will be collaborators, problem-solvers, communicators and critical thinkers. I can speak specifically to the demands in my own discipline of English Language Arts and can verify that the level of analysis of literature required to write an English 30-2 (i.e. non-university stream) diploma exam in 2012 is considerably harder than the level of analysis required by a comparable English 33 student back in 1995. Add to this that in addition to the traditional print texts, students today are expected to have a grounding in film, visuals, blogs, email, scripts, storyboards and emerging text forms that didn't even exist ten years ago.

As our world stresses a different set of skills than we would have needed for success in the past, and equally given that those skills are not necessarily best assessed with a pen and paper test, this is another area in which education must change. Even so, the nature, depth and pace of that change is connected to a tradition of assessment that cannot be and should not be immediately abandoned. It is a cliché, but we are indeed building the airplane as we fly it, simultaneously seeking better ways to assess our student's progress and abilities even as we use traditional assessment practices for sorting and selection process.

It is not by accident that I sign my e-mails with a quotation from one of my heroes, Albert Einstein, who said, "If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid." I try to think on this daily, as we look out on the collection of diverse birds, fish and animals that are the metaphors for our students. We still all too often in school only measure isolated skills in one possible way, when we know that our world needs complex answers measured in many ways.

Our pledge and our challenge is to prepare each student for success, both for the immediate need of diploma exams and yet also for future success. I understand that 23 of our 32 students writing today's exam had come in for tutorial assistance and exam preparation last weekend. This commitment to academic achievement on the part of parents, students and teachers cannot help but pay dividends.

I am proud of the work of our students, teachers and parents to prepare our students. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with your questions or concerns.—Peter Weeks, Principal

## Dealing With Anger- by FSL Brenda Schlaht

*"Anger is a signal, and one worth listening to." Dr. Harriet Lerner*

Just as physical pain tells us to take our hand off the hot stove, anger is a legitimate experience. It exists for a reason and deserves respect and attention. In my work with youth, there are times when they are angry but may not be able to deal with their anger appropriately.

Anger is a powerful feeling to handle, and may seem difficult to control at times. Some children are raised to believe that it's not "okay" to show anger, so they hold it inside. Unfortunately, that held-in anger usually shows up in other ways, such as an upset stomach, a headache, or trouble sleeping. For other children, anger is outwardly displayed through physical aggression, such as yelling at another person, stomping around, clenching fists, or punching a younger sibling.

To summarize, it is the venting of anger (blowing up) that is often ineffective. This may lead to fighting and blaming. "Pent-up" anger is equally ineffective. For some youth, they purposely avoid conflict because they may shy away from confrontation and/or anger.

*What can one do about anger?*

1. Stop and "rate" your anger (on a 1 to 10 scale with 10 being extremely angry, and 1 being calm). This acknowledges the emotion, which is important.
2. Ask yourself three questions:
  - a) *What am I angry about?*
  - b) *What is the problem or issue?*
  - c) *Whose problem is it? (who is responsible for what) .*
3. Pay attention to what "triggers" anger for you.
4. Calm yourself down then express your anger assertively. Turn your anger into "I" messages, which are a non-blaming statement about self.
  - i. *When I see you \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I am worried that \_\_\_\_\_ .*
5. Take a firm stand; let go of blaming another person who we see as causing our problems; rather "own" the problem and take responsibility for own feelings. .

The one thing that is certain about anger, is that we don't always know when or where anger will happen, and that means we need to prepare for it. Talking about anger, acknowledging it, and understanding it is a proactive approach. Rather than being reactive, which leads to fighting and blaming, let's assume a perspective of assertive claiming.

If you have any questions or concerns please call me at the school (403) 646-2264 or my cellular number is (403) 336-2703. Thanks, Brenda Schlaht



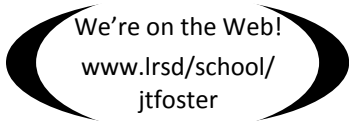
**Livingstone Range**  
SCHOOL DIVISION No. 68

**J. T. FOSTER SCHOOL**

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*Knowledge, Truth,  
Excellence*



**Exam Schedule 2012 & Other Important Dates!**

- January 19 - English 30-1 and 20-2 Part B in the Library - 8:30 am
- January 20 - Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2 Part B in the Library-8:30 am
- January 23 - Last day of Regular Classes
- January 24 - Science 7— Room 12—8:30 am  
- LA 8—Room 7 and 10—8:30 am  
- Math 9— Room 11 and 13—8:30 am  
- Chemistry 20— Room 9—8:30 am  
- Social Studies - 10-1 and 10-2 Room 6—8:30 am  
- Biology 30—Library 8:30 am  
- LA 7—Room 15—12:30 pm  
- Science 8—Room 11 and 12—12:30 pm  
- Social Studies 9 - Room 6 and 7—12:30 pm
- January 25 - Science 9—Room 9 and 11—8:30 am  
- Math 7—Room 12—8:30 am  
- Social Studies 8 - Room 10—8:30 am  
- Pure/Applied Math 30 —Library—8:30 am  
- Biology 20—Room 9—8:30 am  
- Math 10C—Room 13—8:30 am  
- LA 9—Room 7 and 12—12:30 pm  
- Math 8—Room 11 and 13—12:30 pm  
- Social Studies - Room 7 and 15—12:30 pm
- January 26 - English 20-1 and 20-2—Room 7—8:30 am
- January 27 - ALDC Exams—8:30 am
- January 31 - No School—Staff Planning Day

**SPORTS**

**Basketball**

- Ms. Henthorne's Jr. B Girls – practice Mon at AB Daley & Wed 3:45 pm—5:00 pm at J.T. Foster
- Mrs. Robinson's Jr. A Girls – practice Tues and Thurs 3:30pm to 5:00pm at AB Daley
- Sr. Girls—practice Mon & Wed 3:45 pm—5:30 pm at JTF

See J.T. Foster's Webpage Extra-Curricular Events—Sports Calendar for Game Schedules

**Tournaments**

- Jr. A Girls—Holy Cross Collegiate Hawks Invitational - January 13 & 14
- Jr. A Girls Sedor Riley Invitational - January 20 & 21
- Sr. Girls WCCHS Invitational—Feb 3 & 4

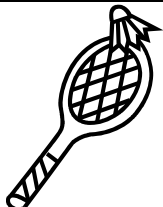
**Jr. High Band Concert**

**January 18th**

**7pm**

**A.B. Daley Amphitheatre**

Please come out and support our Jr. High Band Students!



All JTF PE students it is almost Badminton season. Each of you require your own badminton racquet for PE class. Please see Mr. Gammie if you need assistance in purchasing one.