

Release date: Nov. 19, 2008

Attention: Education reporters

MEDIA RELEASE

The ASBA Premier's Award for School Board Innovation and Excellence recognizes school boards for their role in launching innovative programs and initiatives that enhance student achievement. This prestigious \$3,000 award is sponsored by Xerox Canada.

Horizon School Division wins ASBA Premier's Award for School Board Innovation and Excellence

In recognition of its success in building partnerships that saved schools from closure and enhanced the education of students attending small schools, the ASBA presented the Horizon School Division Board of Education with the 2008 Premier's Award for School Board Innovation and Excellence. The school system serves about 3,400 students in the region running south-north from Coutts to Lomond. Thirteen school boards were in the running for the award sponsored by Xerox Canada. The Northern Lights School Board was the runner-up. See the project summaries: www.asba.ab.ca/news_index/premiers_submissions.html.

Faced with dropping enrolments that potentially compromised students' educational choices, the Horizon school board built partnerships that changed the course of this trend. Working with local communities, government and private industry, the board attracted new students to the division and enhanced the education offered to students. The results of these partnerships include:

Opening a girls hockey school in Warner (pop. 400) which attracts 20 students from across Canada each year. Offering a first class athletic program and a solid academic foundation, Warner Hockey School graduates have earned scholarships to post-secondary institutions across North America. The 20 extra students mean all students attending Warner School have access to a broad-based academic program – previously jeopardized by dropping enrolment. A baseball program launched in Vauxhall (pop. 1000) has seen equal success. Aspiring baseball players come from across Canada to attend this small Alberta school. Plans are in the works to add another team within the next two years. The local community's support and involvement were essential to the success of both programs.

The town of Lomond (pop. 177) and the board are building a multi-purpose facility together. The gym at the local school wasn't big enough for high school physical education programs and the town needed a place to host community events. A partnership was born. The results – a multi-purpose facility that will give high school students access to a regulation size gymnasium and the community a place to meet. The board contributed project management and labour while the community raised the balance of the funds.

“The board of Horizon School Division recognized that building capacity in small schools and sustaining the schools in our rural communities required strategic partnerships,” said board chair Marie Logan. “We believe in taking an active role in the development of quality learning environments by furthering partnerships with the community and agencies that can assist the school in program enhancement.”

For more information:

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