

## Principal's Message

### Welcome Back!

On behalf of Watson Lake School Council and the staff at JES, we extend a warm welcome to all our students, parents and community partners. We believe that our students will find our school to be a warm and friendly place in which to learn social participation skills, develop positive character traits and values, enjoy extra-curricular activities and achieve academically.

This year, all schools in the Yukon will begin to implement the Yukon Department of Education Curriculum Redesign. To ensure this curriculum redesign is successful, public education in the Yukon must be rooted in the collective values and aspirations of all its citizens, based on a foundation of active partnership with each community and Yukon First Nation. As educators, our goal is to support all learners in developing the essential skills, knowledge and personal qualities that they need to thrive in life. Parents and communities play a fundamental role as we work together to actualize the above goal. Today we live in a global, technology-rich society where communication is instant and information is immediately accessible. This information rich society has changed the way we interact with one another personally, socially at work and in school. Knowledge is growing at exponential rates in many domains, creating new information and possibilities. This is the world in which our students are entering. Content and knowledge are no longer just memorized and recited. We are moving away from content memorization to a focus on competency and skill development. We are transforming education to focus not only what students learn, but also how and where they learn.

We know much more about how people learn and how the human brain works. To facilitate learning for everyone, we must look at each learner holistically. This includes the social, cultural, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual domains of each student. To move forward, the education system in the Yukon as a whole must be truly collaborative, action-orientated and encouraging of trying new ideas to improve outcomes for all learners.

We, at Johnson Elementary School, are poised and ready for the transition to a curriculum redesign. Moving into Year 4 of the Balanced Literacy Initiative, we have learned that reading is a constructivist approach that is strength-based and begins with what the student is good at. We as educators, must become sensitive observers and intent listeners, taking our cues from the students. Learning is a process and students need to become problem solvers and critical thinkers as they begin to master the skills that will enable them to read. As teachers, our job is to ensure our students' processing system is becoming more proficient. As students become more proficient, they will become more critical thinkers in utilizing the following important reading strategies and skills until they learn to read:

- Monitoring or noticing
- Re-reading or meta-cognitive skills:
  - Does it make sense?

- Does it sound right? or
- Does it look like that? and
- Checking
  - with letters
  - with pictures/meaning
  - with language
  - with knowing

Once the students have mastered these skills and strategies of 'learning to read', they will then be 'reading to learn' which is also an essential skill set required for further school success.

In summary, the 'learning to read' process incorporates many of the principles of the curriculum redesign helping to build student critical thinking and independent learning skills. Utilizing this process, students become more actively engaged and empowered while also learning the important skill of self-assessment as they become student readers. These are just a few examples of the changes in curriculum which will deliver more flexible and personalized learning for all of our students.

This year also begins the second year of the Department of Education Positive Behaviour Intervention Strategies (PBIS) Initiative.

This social/emotional learning program will incorporate principles that help develop a school climate where:

- students know what is expected of them, they know what to do, have the skills to do it and see the natural beauty for acting responsibly.
- teachers and students have more time to focus on relationships and on classroom instruction.
- an instructional approach to discipline provides opportunities for students to learn and practice pro-social behaviour.

The JES CARES program is modelled from the PBIS framework. This year we will be reviewing our school discipline policy outlined in the Parent Handbook and updating it to ensure the policy incorporates the above principles.

This year, the Grade 6 and 7 students will continue to participate in the Youth Culture and Safety Program sponsored by the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS). The second part of this program, JES will continue to partner with LAWS and Watson Lake Secondary School to sponsor a formal year end cultural clothing regalia and traditional meal for Grade 7 students moving on to the high school and Grade 12 students graduating. During the ceremony, open to the public, a traditional meal will be provided while the students showcase the beautiful beaded apparel (shawls, vests and dresses) they made under the teaching and direction of our Elders.

Prior to the above ceremony, as a farewell to our Grade 7 students, there will again be another year-end trip to celebrate their 8 years of schooling at JES. To that extent, the Grade 7 students will be involved in numerous fundraising activities throughout the school year.

I would like to recognize our new teacher, Kristen Stewart, and welcome her to the community. JES believes "It takes a whole community to raise a child." Collaboration of School Council, staff, students, parents and community partners is essential if our school is to realize its full potential. As such, parents and guardians of our students are encouraged to become involved in the education of their children. Please feel free to visit the school and become more knowledgeable of the education program and how you can support your child/children. If you would like to set up a meeting with your child's teacher, do not hesitate to call the JES office. We will be most happy to arrange this for you.

Lastly, JES staff is very honoured to educate our community's children. We espouse three basic rules. They are:

1. Come to school on time.
2. Work hard while you are here.
3. Show respect for yourself, others and property.

It is our sincere hope that you, as parents, guardians and community members will help us reinforce these important behaviours and values.

This newsletter will continue to inform you of upcoming events and important dates on a monthly basis.

We wish you all the best and welcome aboard the JES team!

Ralph Pilz  
Principal

## **School Starting Time**

The earliest time to drop off students at school is 8:03 a.m. Please refrain from sending your children earlier than the time mentioned above due to teacher supervision beginning at that time. We do not want to create situations where children are not being formally supervised.

Between 8:03 and 8:23 a.m., students will remain in the main foyer under the supervision of the Principal. At 8:23 a.m., the bell will ring and all students will be allowed to go to their coat hooks and drop off their belongings and put on their indoor shoes. Parents may wish to accompany their children with this task. Students can then go to the gymnasium or play outside, depending on weather.

When the next bell rings at 8:43 a.m. to announce the beginning of the school day, all students are to go to their classroom.

Your cooperation and understanding in helping us to apply these morning routines consistently keeps students properly supervised and safe.

Morning Recess is from 10:21 – 10:41 a.m.

Lunch is from 12:01 – 12:43 p.m.

Dismissal at the end of the day is 3:10 p.m.

## **Student Drop-Off and School Parking**

Please note that the driveway in front of the main entranceway is for student drop-off only. Please do not block access for any reason. Traffic flow is required for the safety of all students, staff and visitors.

If you choose to come into the school, please park your vehicle in the designated parking areas. Please do not park in the driveway or on the sidewalk. Many of our students are young, small enough to be outside of the driver's range of view, and unaware of the driver's intentions. We would like student safety to be our number one priority.

Please drive with courtesy and obey the speed limit in the school zone. When the red lights are flashing on the school bus, please do not pass in either direction. RCMP will be in attendance and will be enforcing the speed limit and parking zones.

## **School Photos**

**Robert Postma will be at JES on September 26 to take student photos.**

**If you would like to have a package of your child's photo, a price list is included with this newsletter.**

**Please put your order form and money in an envelope and put your child's name and grade on the outside of the envelope. The envelope will be given directly to Robert Postma. He will also be scheduling family photos after school on Sept. 26. Please call the school to arrange an appointment.**