

January 21, 2014

Dear Students & Families,

I am both privileged and honoured to be the new Principal of William Aberhart High School. I look forward to personally meeting you and learning about your interests, passions, and goals. Before introducing myself, I would first like to thank Mr. Baldwin for his leadership and commitment to the school community over the past few months. He has established meaningful relationships with colleagues, students, and families and has earned the respect of all. I strongly believe in shared instructional leadership as both a concept and practice. I believe that “leadership is not the property of any one individual or group [but] grows out of the shared vision, beliefs and efforts of a committed group of teachers, [students, parents, and members of the community] who have a sense of belonging, a sense of being valued members of their school community and a deep commitment to collective action for whole-school success (*Cronther et al., 2002b*).” I value Mr. Baldwin’s experience and counsel as we move forward and work together to ensure we continue to meet the learning needs of all our students.

My rather unconventional career path began in Halifax, NS where, following degrees in English Literature (B.A.) and Education (B.Ed.), I completed a Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) followed by admission to the New Brunswick Bar. The highlight of my practice was working in a Legal Aid Clinic where I enjoyed advocating for disenfranchised clients, many of whom were young offenders or adults facing systemic barriers that prevented them from accessing the legal system. After moving to Calgary in 2001, I have enjoyed working for the Calgary Board of Education in several capacities – as a high school teacher of Humanities and English Language Arts and as IB Coordinator at Lester B. Pearson High School, as System Assistant Principal in both Area III and the Department of Community Engagement and Operational Planning and, most recently, as Assistant Principal at John G. Diefenbaker High School.

Students frequently and incredulously ask why I “left law to become a teacher.” In their minds, I’m sure they compare the fast paced drama and lifestyle of lawyers in T.V. series such as *Law and Order: SVU* with the not so glamorous or particularly flattering world of *Mr. D!* I’ve had many conversations about the reality of the legal profession and how much more of a lawyer’s time is spent on research and writing than on gripping court room drama. We also talk about their reality – that they too will probably change university majors and/or careers more than twice in the years following high school. This is the new reality as our students will choose from programs that weren’t even anticipated when we, their teachers and parents, were in university. Imagine a degree in robotics, cyber security, or computer game design!

As we continue the important and transformative work of making learning relevant and meaningful to the lives of the students we serve, I welcome the involvement of home and community. With your collaboration and support we will do what is necessary to ensure that school is a “socially, academically, and intellectually exciting and worthwhile place to be (*Friesen, Sharon (2009). What did you do in School Today?*).” As stated in the provincial *Ministerial Order on Student Learning (2013)*, our fundamental goal is “to inspire all students to

achieve success and fulfillment, and reach their full potential by developing the competencies of engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit, who contribute to a strong and prosperous economy and society.” It’s an exciting time to be attending and working in high school in Alberta and I genuinely look forward to meeting you in the next few weeks!

Sincerely,



Tamie Annis-Johnson  
Principal, William Aberhart High School