

Taking the



# Pulse

of Palliser Regional Schools

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



In a changing world, Palliser Regional Schools is focused on creating the biggest impact on children. In this issue of the Pulse, I am proud to feature how teachers and bus drivers help to create exceptional educational experiences that change children and give them engaging learning opportunities. It is true that a Palliser bus driver is the first employee a student will see and the last ones entrusted with returning them home safely every school day. Our bus drivers work hard to provide safe and caring transportation for our children. In addition to the in-depth training required to join the Palliser bus driving team, many drivers structure their entire day around driving school bus.

New curricula continues to be implemented in our classrooms, and much of it requires teachers to engage students in new ways of learning. Teacher Mike Gibson, featured in this edition of the Pulse, is doing just that with the support of his school: helping students learn social studies by engaging them in real-life projects that promote citizenship. Similar projects are being encouraged and supported throughout Palliser; learners of today are developing into global leaders of tomorrow.

Palliser Regional Schools is proud of province-leading supports and programming provided to students with special learning needs. That excellence continues in the hands of Marian Biggins, our new Director of Student Services, who strives to bring every support available to children in Palliser. From testing, to working with external agencies, to supporting children in classrooms as they learn and succeed, Palliser is committed to ensuring all children achieve their potential, and Marian is an important cornerstone as we continue to build an excellent school division.

Kevin Gietz, Superintendent of Schools

## SOCIAL STUDIES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Mike Gibson's teaching changes the lives of kids. Gibson teaches Social Studies 10-1 at Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale. Through a recent "Village to Village" project organized by World Vision, students raised over \$2000 to help purchase a stable full of animals for a village in the third world. While this was a major project in Mike's classroom, it is not the only one supporting global education in the Grade 10 social studies curriculum. Projects like this often engage students from other classes and often last beyond the school year. Raising money for Habitat for Humanity and donating

musical talents to a fundraising event are other projects that focus on citizenship and expose students at Kate Andrews High School to the world, its complexity and needs. Students in Mike's class create projects that are community-service focused. "Some projects are less time consuming but make a big impact on both the community and the students involved," Mike commented.



The outcomes of the new provincially

mandated social studies curriculum centre around globalization and global education. "The new social studies curriculum allows me to excite kids and raise awareness to the needs of those less fortunate in our community and in our world," Mike said. Students are taking social studies outcomes to a whole new level and recognizing that they have the capacity to make a tremendous difference in their world.

Visit the Alberta Education website for information related to the new [social studies curriculum](#).



## AAC APPOINTMENT

Clarice Gilbert, Palliser AISI Team Leader, has recently been named a Regional Assessment Advisor to the Alberta Assessment Consortium. In her advisory role, Clarice will assist in planning and co-facilitating regional seminars; provide advice to fellow assessment specialists on a variety of assessment related topics including the selection, design and adaptation of PD presentations/sessions; provide advice and coaching to assessment specialists on the development of assessment materials (including performance assessments) and collection of student exemplars in connection with seminars; serve as a member of the Fall Conference Planning Committee; and provide input to the AAC annual work plan.

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### Inside this issue:

Superintendent's Message	1
Social Studies Beyond the Classroom	1
AAC Appointment	1
The Challenges and Rewards of a Palliser School Bus Driver	2
Meet the New Director of Student Services	2
Coming in February . . .	2

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For your online subscription, visit the Palliser Regional Schools website at [www.pallisersd.ab.ca](http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca)

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## THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF A PALLISER SCHOOL BUS DRIVER



The school bus for Route CD-1 comes to life as a puff of diesel-scented exhaust leaves the tail pipe and its bus driver, Rosalie Stearns, steps out and starts her maintenance and safety check with the calm confidence of a jet mechanic. Circling the exterior, she closely examines the tires, lights and bumper to ensure that the Palliser school bus is ready for service. With an S (school bus) endorsement on her Class 2 license, and certification to train other bus drivers, Rosalie is very well qualified to transport the 35 children she escorts to school and back home each day.

"I love the whole job—the people, the driving, and especially the kids," she comments as she pulls up to her first stop and flicks on the flashing red stop lights to signal to the waiting child that she can cross the road safely. Every student along her route is welcomed by a "good morning" greeting and a smile. Rosalie emphasized that she works hard at reminding students how to get on the bus safely, and the majority of them are great about it.

Driving a school bus is a challenging and rewarding job. Dealing with so many children ranging in ages from 5 to 18 from a wide variety of backgrounds requires a lot of organizational and interpersonal skills. "Dealing with upset parents is a challenge," she said, "but at the end of the day, they have to realize that maintaining a safe environment for all the students is the first priority." Rosalie runs a "tight ship" and says it has to be that way, as distractions for the driver impact all the students. "If there are discipline issues, they are dealt with in a calm, rational manner, which sometimes involves reporting an incident to the school principal." She noted that bus drivers undergo extensive training, which includes how to deal with stressful situations, and they certainly appreciate the support they receive from their parents in ensuring their children behave appropriately on the bus. Rosalie makes it a priority to get to know all of the families on her route, and she has a seating plan for the younger children who ride her bus to maximize their safety.

Like the majority of drivers, Rosalie has a second job as a driving instructor at the AMA. She noted, "The fact that bus drivers make driving the bus their priority and work their second jobs and the rest of their day around driving bus is a testimony to their dedication."

With 15 years of bus driving experience behind her, Rosalie smiles "I love my job and will be driving school bus for many years to come," as she passes on wishes to the last of the children to have a great day as they exit the bus in Coaldale. As she reaches for the door pull, she knows she has played a big part in helping children begin their day in a safe and caring way.



### COMING IN FEBRUARY . . .

- Several changes have recently taken place in Palliser's Human Resources & Technology areas.
- Nathan Jackson, a Champion School teacher, goes above and beyond to help his students outside the regular school day.



## MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

Marian Biggins, Director of Student Services for Palliser Regional Schools, provides division leadership to school administrators and consulting teachers in the area of special education. As part of the Learning Services team, she is also responsible for Palliser's early literacy and early intervention programs. Providing support to those who provide service to children with special needs is Marian's passion.

Palliser Regional Schools is recognized throughout the province for our Student Services program. Survey results from parents, stakeholders and other service providers consistently confirm extremely high ratings in terms of the excellence of the program model, the programs and the supports we provide.

One of the challenges for the Director of Student Services is coordinating

Palliser's partnership with community service providers, such as health care professionals, REACH, Family and Community Support Services, Parents as Teachers, behaviour specialists and psychologists, who all help with the development of programs to meet the needs of our students.

Alberta Education, Special Programs Branch, also forward initiatives that impact the education of children with special learning needs. Marian communicates and implements these changes and opportunities to enhance learning needs.

"I love making a difference in the lives of children," said Marian, who enjoys any opportunities to work directly with students and their families. One example is her work on developing an Inclusive Education Advisory Committee, which is a stakeholder

group of parents of children with special learning needs and parents of typically developing children, along with teachers and administrators. The Committee develops best practices in terms of social and academic inclusion.

For more information about Palliser's excellent programming services for children with special learning needs, please contact Marian Biggins, Director of Student Services at 403-328-4111 (1-877-667-1234 toll-free).

Visit the [Student Services](#) page of the Palliser Regional Schools website to view the Student Services Handbook, and for department contact information.

