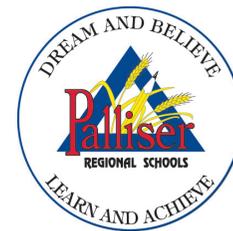


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting



Monday, November 26, 2012

## Board pays a visit to R.I. Baker

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular November meeting at R.I. Baker Middle School in Coaldale, the second of four meetings this school year that will be held in schools. The Board typically meets on the third Tuesday of the month, but this meeting was rescheduled by Board motion in October to accommodate trustees' attendance at the Alberta School Boards Association annual conference.

While at R.I. Baker Middle School, trustees were treated to a performance by the Grade 7/8 band, under the direction of teacher Travis Conrad, and Mayor for a Day campaign speeches by Grade 6 students Amaya Perry, Justin Pitcher and Colter Kinniburgh. All three waged successful campaigns in their classrooms to be elected Mayor of Coaldale for a Day.

R.I. Baker Middle School is a Grade 5-8 school in Coaldale, serving nearly 300 students.

School Boards' Association of Alberta conference Oct. 17-20 which featured Canadian Effective Schools President Wayne Hulley speaking on "Making a Difference — The Power of Personal Choice." Palliser uses Effective Schools research as the basis for its school review process.

Trustee Colleen Deitz, a 14-year veteran on the school board, said the PSBAA conference was the best conference she's attended as a trustee, and gave her a better understanding of Effective Schools, a sentiment shared by others who attended.

Trustee Esther Willms had commendations for the Alberta School Boards Association conference, Nov. 18-20 and keynote speaker Dr. Gabor Maté, a physician and author who spoke about childhood behavioral disorders.

Trustees also commended schools across Palliser for the excellent Remembrance Day services they organized. Trustee Joe Watson said he worked with Picture Butte High School teacher Aaron Skretting to bring more photos and stories about Picture Butte and area veterans to the high school's ceremony.

Trustees also attended a number of school council meetings, fundraisers and awards events, as well as committee meetings and sporting events since the last meeting.

The Board commended Alberta Teachers' Association President Katherine Pritchard and her team for the ATA induction and years of service recognition events held for Palliser teachers in both Lethbridge and Calgary.

## Annual results report and three-year education plan approved in principle

The Board of Trustees reviewed a draft of the Annual Education Results Report for 2011-2012 and the Three-Year Education Plan for 2012-2015. Called a "Report to the Community" for short, the document includes the division's results for last school year and strategies for coming years.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said the plan doesn't attempt to list every strategy for improving education to be found in Palliser's schools. Instead, it focuses on the areas Palliser considers key to continued success: assessment for learning practices; instruction that meets individual needs; safe and caring schools; literacy; instructional leadership;



Student Justin Pitcher prepares to make his campaign speech as Principal Terri-Lynn Duncan holds his election poster and Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin looks on.

## Trustees share impressions of recent PD

During their monthly roundtable discussion of their recent activities, several trustees shared how impressed they were with professional development opportunities they had this past month.

In particular, they gave rave reviews to the Public

*Together we will ensure learning success for all students  
to develop their unique potential as caring citizens in a changing world.*

meaningful school goals; and regular school reviews.

The report is a public document that will be posted on Palliser's website and must be submitted to Alberta Education no later than November 30, 2012.

Palliser's results are excellent across the board with 89 per cent of all Grade 3, 6 and 9 students achieving the province's acceptable standard on Provincial Achievement Tests. The acceptable standard means the student passes the test. Ninety per cent of high school students writing provincial diploma exams achieve acceptable standard as well. Nearly one in three students achieve the provincial standard of excellence on PATs and nearly one in four do so on their diploma exams.

Surveys conducted by Alberta Education in spring 2012 found more than 90 per cent of students, parents and staff are satisfied with the quality of education being provided and the safe and caring atmosphere in our schools.

The Board approved the plan in principle. The draft needed to be updated with the audited financial statement for 2011-2012 and the updated budget information for 2012-2013. Both documents were on the Board's agenda for later in the day.

## March meeting date changed

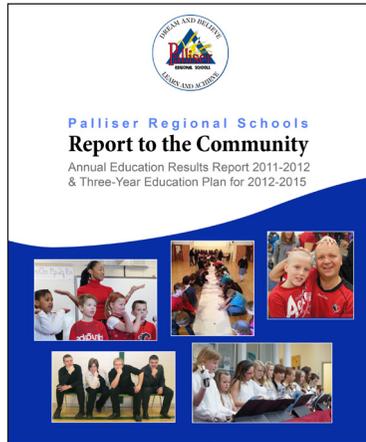
The Board voted to change the date of its regularly scheduled March meeting to March 26 from March 19, 2013. The change was made at the request of trustees who are interested in attending the 18th National Congress on Rural Education in Canada, scheduled for March 17-19 in Saskatoon. Palliser is applying to present at that conference on a number of initiatives in the division. The meeting March 26th will begin at 9 a.m. at Vulcan Prairieview Elementary School.

## Draft agreement approved

The Board approved the final draft of the Reciprocal Use of Town of Vulcan Community and Palliser Regional Division School Facilities.

The agreement updates a joint use agreement that had been in place for years, said Vice-Chair Robert Strauss, who represents Palliser on the committee reviewing the agreement.

"This highlights a good relationship between the



jurisdictions," Strauss said.

The committee has voting representatives from Palliser, the Town of Vulcan and the district recreation board. The principals of County Central High School and Vulcan Prairieview Elementary School as well as the community's recreation director serve as advisors to the committee.

## Committee to promote LGM education

Superintendent Kevin Gietz updated the Board on an initiative sparked by a conversation the southern Alberta school boards had this fall with Education Minister Jeff Johnson.

Rural boards had raised their concerns about Low German Mennonite families and home schooling.

Students from LGM families often do not speak English in the home, making home schooling a difficult option for educational success.

The minister recently invited representatives of Palliser, Horizon, Grasslands and Prairie Rose school divisions to discuss the issue with officials from Alberta Education and other provincial departments, including Alberta Health.

The board welcomed the opportunity to address the issues and promote education to LGM families.

Trustees who attended the Alberta School Boards Association conference in November said they were pleased to hear the minister refer to both home schooling and southern Alberta's Low German Mennonite population in his comments to conference delegates.

Representatives of the four divisions will meet Dec. 10th before meeting again with Alberta Education representatives in January.

## Sunnyside School review showcases strong sense of community

The Board welcomed Director of Learning Dan Ryder to the meeting to present the report on the Sunnyside School review.

The review was conducted Oct. 2, 2012 when a team of Central Office administrators and principals from other Palliser schools visited Sunnyside School to view the facility, interview staff and conduct focus group meetings.

At Sunnyside, a small school in a rural area northeast of Lethbridge, the review found a strong sense of community was a key strength. The staff demonstrates that they care about students, and students indicate they feel safe at school. There is strong parental involvement in the school, adding to the sense of community.

Areas of improvement indicated in the review included facilities (small gym), school bus ride times, and Grade 3-6 students indicated they want to learn more. Interestingly, parent comments indicated "nothing" needed to be improved at their school.

Overall, 80 to 90 per cent of the key stakeholders groups (parents, teachers, support staff, kindergarten through Grade 2 students and Grade 3 to 6 students) rated their school as very effective or effective.

Sunnyside School is unique in that it is located in an entirely rural setting, with no remnants of a town or village around it. In essence, the school is the community.

## **Superintendent thanks team for its work in face of difficult loss**

Superintendent Kevin Gietz publicly thanked members of the Central Office team, Palliser's counselling staff and principals from Calgary schools for their support of Heritage Christian Academy's staff and students following the sudden loss of a teacher there Oct. 30.

Meredith Schultz, a long-time teacher at Heritage, was killed in a motor vehicle collision as she made her way to work.

Gietz credited Heritage Principal Ryan Brennan and Vice-Principals Rachelle Prud'homme and Leslie Olson for their handling of a difficult situation. Several administrators from Palliser's other Calgary schools spent Oct. 31st at Heritage to serve as substitute teachers, freeing up staff to deal with students' and colleagues' needs. Additional counselling staff were also made available to the school.

## **Division calendars approved**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin presented the Board draft division calendars for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

The calendars include several days of preparation time at the end of August before students return, provide four divisionwide collaboration days during which Palliser teachers work in small professional learning groups, and continue to link school professional development days to a weekend rather than mid-week, which was something well received by parents.

The Board approved both calendars. Those division calendars are to be shared with school principals who can then begin to work on their own school calendars for the next two years.

By adopting division calendars for two years, Backlin said the division hopes to make life easier for Palliser families who need to book and co-ordinate their work schedules and vacations.

## **Fall budget update approved**

The Board approved the updated budget submission for 2012-2013, which reflects revenue based on actual

student numbers. The budget as presented in May was based on enrolment projections.

Corporate Treasurer Michelle Gibb said the update also reflects a change in how teacher retirement funds are reported. Certificated staff contribute to a teacher retirement fund and the provincial government matches their contributions. The government will now make that contribution through the school division, meaning the government will pay its share of the contribution to Palliser which then makes the payment into the fund.

The change in reporting makes it clearer what it actually costs to operate a jurisdiction. The change to the reporting of teacher retirement contributions changed both Palliser's revenues and expenses by \$4.19 million in the 2012-2013 fall budget update compared to the spring budget. Other variances between the spring budget and the fall update include higher than projected student enrolment and staffing increases that accompanied the additional students.

Gibb said the budget numbers reflect a zero per cent salary increase to staff. The teachers's latest contract expired in August 2012. The budget also includes a capital expenditure of \$500,000 to purchase five school buses.

The updated budget document projects a modest surplus of \$13,676.

The Board approved the budget update. The budget documents will be posted to Palliser's website in the Documents section.

The Board also accepted its audited financial statements for 2011-2012, presented by a representative of KPMG. The audited financial statements will also be posted on Palliser's site.

According to the audited financial statements, Palliser had revenues of nearly \$77.6 million in the year ended Aug. 31, 2012., and expenses of about \$77.2 million, leaving a surplus of about \$410,000.

## **Palliser approves auditor**

The Board of Trustees accepted a recommendation from its Audit Committee to retain KPMG as Palliser's independent auditor for a term of three years.

Board Chair Don Zech and trustee Joe Watson declared a conflict of interest and recused themselves from the discussion and decision.

## **Next meeting December 18**

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge Tuesday, Dec. 18. The meeting starts at 9 a.m.



