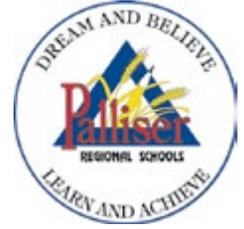


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, October 16, 2012



## New Vice-Chair named by acclamation

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its annual organizational meeting in addition to its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 16 at Glenmore Christian Academy in Calgary.

Don Zech was returned as Board Chair by acclamation. He has served in this capacity since 2004.

Robert Strauss was declared Board Vice-Chair by acclamation after being nominated by Colleen Deitz. Deitz had served as vice-chair since 2001.

The chair, vice-chair and trustees took their oaths of office before examining their committee structure and composition.

External committee appointments are as follows:

- Alberta School Boards' Association: Esther Willms.
- Public School Boards' Association of Alberta: Don Zech.
- County of Vulcan Adult Learning Council: Colleen Deitz.
- County of Lethbridge Community Learning Council: Jean Mrak.
- Vulcan and District Joint Use Committee: Robert Strauss (this committee was renamed from the Cultural Recreation Centre Joint Use Committee).
- The Board's former external committee on Safe and Caring is now an internal body called the Wellness Advisory Committee, and the Southern Alberta Learning Resource Centre is defunct and no longer requires representation.

Representation on Palliser's internal committees was determined as follows:

- Labour Relations Committee: Joe Watson, Jean Mrak and the Board Chair.
- Board-Teacher Advisory Committee: Colleen Deitz, the Board Chair and the Chair of the Labour Relations Committee.
- Audit Committee: Colleen Deitz, Robert Strauss and Don Zech.
- Wellness Advisory Committee: Joe Watson and Esther Willms.
- Health and Safety Committee: Robert Strauss and Joe Watson.
- Technology Advisory Committee: Colleen Deitz,



Chair Don ZECH



Vice-Chair Robert STRAUSS



Colleen DEITZ



Jean MRAK



Joe WATSON



Esther WILLMS

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

Jean Mrak and Robert Strauss.

- Inclusive Education Advisory Committee: The Board held off nominating a trustee to this, but maintains the committee should the need arise.
- Public Engagement Committee (formerly the Communications Committee): Joe Watson, Esther Willms, Colleen Deitz and the Board Chair, ex-officio.
- Wall of Fame Committee: Esther Willms, Joe Watson and Don Zech.
- Transportation: Robert Strauss, Joe Watson and Esther Willms.
- School Calendar Committee: This committee was eliminated because school calendar issues are brought to the full board at regular meetings.
- Effective Governance Committee: Robert Strauss and Esther Willms.
- Facilities Committee: Jean Mrak, Robert Strauss and Joe Watson.

The Board also established its regular meeting schedule for the coming year. Meetings will continue to be held on the third Tuesday of the month, except for November and February when scheduling conflicts were identified.

The meeting dates are as follows: Nov. 26; Dec. 18; Jan. 15; Feb. 12; March 19; April 16; May 21; June 18 and Aug. 20.

The Board's meetings will be held at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge, with the exception of four off-site locations. The organizational meeting was held at Glenmore Christian Academy in Calgary. The three remaining off-site locations are R.I. Baker Middle School, Coaldale, on Nov. 26; Vulcan Prairieview Elementary School in Vulcan, March 19; and Huntsville School in Iron Springs, April 16.

The Board voted to increase remuneration for trustee preparation time to \$550 a month, from \$450, and \$800 from \$700 for the chairperson. No other elements of the remuneration package were changed.

## Touring Glenmore Christian Academy

With the organizational meeting completed, the Board

was treated to a brief tour of Glenmore Christian Academy, at which Palliser offers programming for Grades 1-9 for about 650 students. The school is also home to a privately operated kindergarten.

Grade 1 students performed a selection of songs for trustees. The Board also visited a Grade 8 band class to catch part of their performance.

## Glenmore administrators respond to school review findings

The Board welcomed Derrick Mohamed, Principal of Glenmore Christian Academy Intermediate (Grades 6 to 9) and Gwen Uittenbosch, Principal of Glenmore Christian Academy Elementary (Grades 1-5), to the meeting to share their response to the school review Palliser conducted in April 2012.

Strengths identified by the review process included the school's strong faith focus, caring staff and supportive parents.

Areas for improvement included communication with parents, meeting different student needs, parking lot issues, consistent homework expectations, too many days off for students and bullying.

In response, Mohamed said monthly summaries of curriculum progress are being sent to parents by email; weekly meetings are held by teachers to discuss student

needs and progress; the school is using an online calendar to share information with parents; and the principal provides a weekly update by email.

The school is also focusing on identifying assessment for learning best practices, with both staff and students involved in the assessment process.

Mohamed, who was principal of all grades at GCA last year, said the addition of Uittenbosch as principal of the elementary school has improved staff access to administration and created more time for instructional supervision, classroom observation and working with individual teachers about their goals.

To address concerns raised during the review process about bullying, Grade 9 students have begun mentoring younger students, and Grade 6 students

have taken on the goal of eliminating bullying.

During school council meetings, experts are being brought in to discuss issues such as cyberbullying.

Mohamed said the school has implemented a tracking system of discipline and is reviewing its discipline policy.

Uittenbosch, who joined the school this year, said improvements have been made to the cafeteria service and to the traffic flow through the parking lot to address issues.

For younger children, the school has increased lunch time supervision and has implemented a procedure to immediately call a student's parents when there's an issue so the consequences for behavior are immediate.

For staff, Uittenbosch has implemented a weekly "check stop," at which the elementary staff meet to debrief and share information. She said she's also excited that the staff is working collaboratively to learn from brain-based research and to implement strategies in their classrooms.

The Board thanked the administrators for their work to address issues identified by the review. Superintendent Kevin Gietz encouraged the staff's work on assessment for learning, which "will impact kids very, very quickly."

## Kate Andrews provides its response to 2011 school review

The Board welcomed Kate Andrews High School Principal Danny Roberts to share his school's response to the review which took place in September 2011. He compared the school review process to a house inspection because when you live in a place for years you stop noticing things that could be fixed up or improved. "The review was an opportunity to have things pointed out by third-party observers," Roberts said.

Kate Andrews High School serves nearly 390 students from Grades 9 to 12.

One issue raised by stakeholders related to timetabling of classes. At the time the review was conducted, the school was late in finding out its staffing for the new school year and that caused problems with scheduling students. This year, the school staff had more time to organize staff and schedule students so the process was smoother.

The scheduling challenge is also reflective of how much choice students at the Coaldale school have, Roberts said. As the school adds programs, such as jazz, hockey, baseball, choral and financial management, students have more choice which makes juggling schedules more complex. To further support student choice, the school will pay the cost of distance learning if a student needs a course that isn't offered at KAHS.

Communication was raised as an issue. The school sends out monthly progress reports from every teacher to every student. Roberts said the issue may be that the

reports aren't making it home with students. This year, the school has been using the Synervoice automated phone system to leave parents a message when they should expect these reports. The school also continues its phone home program. At the start of the school year, every family gets a call from a teacher welcoming the kids back and sharing information about the school and its website. The program is well received by parents.

Roberts said an analysis of report cards is also being done to ensure comments are student specific and communicate information about work habits, attitude, effort and readiness for the world of work. Roberts said he tracks staff communication to parents and guardians as well.

To improve communication among staff, Roberts said the school has created an online common calendar so a teacher planning a field trip, for example, can see whether its timing will affect another school activity.

Teachers are using their site-based professional development funds to support collaborative group work. For example, the school's math teachers will meet three times this year to work on building consistency in homework expectations and assessment practices. Teachers are providing the principal an assessment plan reviewing how student learning is being assessed. Roberts said the school does not have a no-zero policy, but before a zero would be assigned, there are a number of steps taken to give the student opportunity to demonstrate learning. If the student doesn't take advantage of the opportunities presented, the teacher is expected to call the parents. If all else fails, a zero may be awarded.

Teachers are also working collaboratively to address special needs of students.

Roberts said the administrative team has begun a process to adopt a consistent approach to handling behavior issues, with one vice-principal and some teachers already having attended specialized training. The rest of the admin team will take training next before rolling out the program to the rest of the staff.

Roberts said bullying is an issue, and it almost always has a social media element. While the activity is happening off campus and out of school hours, Roberts said he addresses issues with parents and students because of the effect the behavior has on students at school.

To encourage a sense of belonging at the high school, the school had a Grade 9 Day in August. Students were introduced to mentors, had activities in the school to help them learn the layout of the building, and were treated to lunch on a day when Grade 10-12 students were not present.

The Board thanked Roberts for his presentation, particularly his work on assessing student learning and addressing bullying on social media.



Teacher Jen Eklund works with the Grade 8 band.



Teacher Margaret Bouma leads the Grade 1 choir in a performance for the Board.

## **Palliser enrolment up 200 over projection, tops 7,000 for first time**

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger presented the Board Palliser's official enrolment numbers as of Sept. 30. The numbers are used to determine student funding.

Palliser had 7,237 students from kindergarten through Grade 12 at Sept. 30, compared to 6,627 in 2011-2012. About 350 students in the increase are at Trinity Christian School in south Calgary, which joined Palliser as a faith-based alternative program this year. Overall, Palliser had about 200 more students than the division had projected in the spring. This is the first time Palliser has served more than 7,000 students.

## **Trustees take on alternative program assignments to ensure representation**

Trustees continued their practice of assigning themselves to the division's faith-based alternative programs to ensure students and their families outside Palliser's traditional boundaries are well represented at the Board table. The trustees attend school council meetings, other functions and serve as the go-to person for the schools when issues arise.

The assignments this year are: Brant Christian School, Jean Mrak; Calgary Christian School, Colleen Deitz; Glenmore Christian School, Don Zech; Heritage Christian Academy, Joe Watson; Master's Academy and College, Robert Strauss; Menno Simons Christian School, Esther Willms; and Trinity Christian School, Don Zech.

## **Palliser staff see benefits of collaboration**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin shared feedback provided by Palliser's teachers following the division-wide collaboration day held Oct. 9.

The online survey was completed by 202 Palliser teachers.

The results found that nearly 78 per cent of respondents agreed or highly agreed that guest speaker Tom Hierck's key note address was inspirational. Hierck, an educator of 30 years and author, spoke to teachers about the difference they can make to students when they connect at an individual level.

The collaboration day was split with half spent with Hierck and the other half spent working in collaborative groups. Nearly 81 per cent of responding teachers agreed this was an efficient use of time.

Nearly 89 per cent of respondents said lunch was satisfying.

Palliser's model of professional learning through

small collaborative groups was also strongly endorsed by respondents. These groups bring together teachers from across the division who have in common the grade level they teach, subject matter or topic of interest.

Asked if the work of their collaborative group will have positive impact on students, 97 per cent of respondents agreed or highly agreed. Ninety-three per cent of responding teachers said they are looking forward to collaborative work this year.

The next division-wide collaboration day is Nov. 13.

## **Palliser a full partner in Rocky View Student Health Partnership**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard updated the Board on Palliser's student health partnerships. This fall, Palliser was accepted as a full partner in the Calgary Rocky View Student Health Partnership, joining Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District, Rocky View Schools, Alberta Health Services, and the Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority.

Palliser has been working for a number of years to become a full partner in the Rocky View SHP in order to address the health services needs of the division's students in Calgary.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz thanked Central Office administrators Pat Rivard, Dale Backlin and Laurie Wilson, as well as former Associate Superintendent Barbara Gammon, for their efforts to work with the Calgary Rocky View SHP.

## **Rep appointed to rec board for year**

The Board approved a motion to appoint Robert Strauss to the Vulcan and District Recreation Board for a one-year term.

## **Pillar results continue to be excellent**

Superintendent Kevin Gietz provided the Board the latest Accountability Pillar summary which shows the division continuing to perform at a high level. The division's results are ahead of the province in every measure.

Gietz said the division continues to focus on ensuring safe and caring learning environments, continued improvement through school goals and school reviews, and an emphasis on literacy and assessment.

## **Next meeting MONDAY, Nov. 26**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will start at 9 a.m., Nov. 26 at R.I. Baker Middle School in Coaldale. Please note, this meeting is on a Monday due to other scheduling conflicts on the usual meeting date.