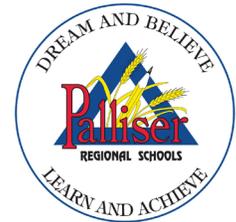


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees meeting



Tuesday, December 20, 2011

## 2012 schedule for the Board

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular monthly meeting Dec. 20 at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge. Here's a look at the meeting schedule for the remainder of the year, including locations for four meetings which will be held at schools as the board hits the road.

January 17, 2012	Palliser Centre, 3305 18 Avenue N., Lethbridge
February 14, 2012	Calgary Christian Elementary School, 2839 49 Street SW, Calgary
March 20, 2012	Milo School, First Street S., Milo
April 17, 2012	Coalhurst Elementary School, 510 51 Avenue, Coalhurst
May 15, 2012	Chin Lakes School, Lakeside Hutterian Colony
June 19, 2012	Palliser Centre, 3305 18 Avenue N., Lethbridge
August 21, 2012	Palliser Centre, 3305 18 Avenue N., Lethbridge

## Space crunch at Jennie Emery Elementary

Trustees discussed frustrations shared with them by parents at Jennie Emery Elementary School regarding the conversion of part of the library into classroom space. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin shared that when the province restored \$107 million in funding across the province, the focus was on investing in the classroom, particularly to ensuring classes were within the provincial size guidelines. Jennie Emery Elementary had some classes with higher than recommended student-to-teacher ratios so the decision was to devote some of Palliser's restored education funding to adding two teachers to reduce class size in the core subjects.



Dale Backlin

Backlin explained there are four large classrooms in one wing in space that could have accommodated six classrooms, but at the time of construction the decision was made to leave them as

larger class spaces. At this point in the school year, those renovations aren't possible without disrupting the existing four classes for up to a month.

In the meantime, Backlin said, the staff looked within the school for other space to use as temporary classrooms for the remainder of this school year.

One open area, called the "fishbowl," will be used to accommodate 10 to 12 students in the morning, to reduce class size during math and language arts instruction.

The other area is the music room located off the gymnasium. It shares a wooden floor with the gym, so adjustments will be made to the flooring to reduce vibration and noise coming from the gym. The room will still be available for music classes in the afternoons.

That still left need for a third classroom space in order to address the class size issue.

Backlin said the principal suggested an area behind the staff room, but in order to reach the space, students would have to travel through the staff room and be separated by only an accordion wall. He said a space above the library was also considered, but it's unacceptable to the fire marshal because there is just one exit. The same deficiency was identified in space above the staff room. There's only one exit and no windows. To use the space, Palliser was told it would have to build a second staircase. The school also has space behind the gym but it's cold storage and would not be suitable for student use.

That left the option of temporarily using space in the library. Backlin said a temporary wall is being built to create a classroom that will have windows to the outside and will leave the spectacular art on a feature wall intact. The library will continue to function.

A longer term solution for the space crunch at the Coaldale school remains problematic. Palliser has applied to Alberta Infrastructure for a modular classroom, but Backlin said the school has already been told it does not qualify for funding because, on paper, it looks as though the school has ample space for its student population.

The provincial formula for school utilization takes into account hallways, entrances and all other available square footage even when that space can't be used for instruction. Backlin said the school was built before the current utilization rates were applied. Its design, though beautiful, left wasted space throughout the building that

is now hurting the school's chances of adding a modular to create more classroom space.

Already, a number of special spaces in the school have been converted from their original use. The original music room has already been converted to a classroom. The music room near the gym was originally built as an activity room, but it now functions as a classroom as well.

Backlin said Palliser weighed a number of options before making a final decision on the three temporary classroom spaces on December 19th.

## **Discussion of school calendars continues**

Trustees shared feedback they've heard from staff and parents about draft calendars they presented to administrators and school councils across Palliser in the past month.

The drafts were formulated in response to a Board directive to use a research-based approach to ensure the school year and organization of the school day are supportive of student learning.

The trustees had recommended a start time of no earlier than 8:45 a.m., an end time of no later than 3:35 p.m., lunch breaks of at least 45 minutes, and for elementary student, two 15-minute recesses a day, one morning and one afternoon.

Each of the trustees shared comments they heard from stakeholders over the past month. In Calgary schools, for example, parents shared concerns about a later start and end time which would have school traffic moving at peak traffic times. Elsewhere, schools with a four-day week expressed desire to maintain that tradition because it's been in place for years. Trustees also heard concerns about child care arrangements under various calendar scenarios, desire by parents whose schools have early dismissal on Fridays to maintain that, and questions about the length and number of professional development days.

The Board directed administration to formulate new draft calendars to reflect some of the common themes reflected in the feedback so far, including adjusting the start time to no earlier than 8:30 a.m. Trustees also encouraged administration to work with school administrators to promote a common block of time among schools to encourage the provision of courses using videoconferencing technology. Palliser has some experience offering VC courses between schools and trustees expressed support for more use of the technology as a way of offering a broad range of programming to small schools.

## **Kate Andrews school review report**

Director of Learning Dan Ryder was welcomed to the meeting to share results of the Kate Andrews School

Review. The review team of Central Office administration and administration from other schools converged on the Coaldale high school in late September 2011 for a day of visiting classrooms and talking with students, parents and staff.

Ryder explained that the report was delayed by challenges with the survey. It took extra time to get responses and participation particularly by parents so the surveys were not finalized until late November.

The review team visited the school and talked with stakeholders looking for evidence of the correlates of effective schools, as based on research by Dr. Larry Lezotte. This is the first review since Palliser modified its effectiveness model to include "Inclusive Education Supports," as one of the characteristics of an effective school.

Looking at the data collected, Ryder said strong themes emerged that Kate Andrews staff forge caring relationships with students and make themselves available to help students outside of class time, have high expectations of students academically, and have created a strong program of athletics. The data indicated areas of improvement include meeting individual student learning needs, effective time tabling and communication with parents. Ryder also commented on specific commendations from students about the cleanliness of the building.

The results are to be presented to the school principal and staff who are then encouraged to analyze the data and determine a plan of action to respond to the findings.

## **Board approves in principle renovation of Central Office**

Trustees supported in principle renovation of Palliser's administrative offices in Palliser Centre and directed administration to begin investigating options and costs. Any costs related to a renovation would not come out of instructional dollars.

## **Milo Sustainability Committee proposal**

Dale Backlin, Associate Superintendent (Education Services) reported on a meeting he attended Dec. 7, 2011 with the Milo Sustainability Project, a committee of the Milo Agricultural Society, to discuss a proposal for use of a room in Milo School.

The committee is seeking a location for a "business centre" which could provide services to the community of Milo, such as access to a lawyer or real estate agents on a regularly scheduled basis, Internet/photocopying/fax or other services.

The committee asked the Board to consider granting use of the former library area, no longer used by the school. The area has an external door so the "business

centre” could be accessed without giving its users access to the rest of the school. Washrooms would have to be installed at no cost to the school division. The committee discussed the possibility of providing a 4G network which would also be of benefit to Milo School.

The Board and administration of Palliser discussed potential security issues and the need for any professionals using the business centre on a regular basis to be part of the school’s evacuation plans and practices. The Board agreed with the concept as long as there is no cost incurred by Palliser in the set up or operation of such a service centre.

## **Work continues on new AP on Community Use of Facilities**

The Board reviewed the latest draft of a new Administrative Procedure on Community Use of Facilities. The new AP identifies the primary purpose of school facilities is to serve the educational needs of the students of Palliser. However, it acknowledges that facilities in rural communities may be limited and schools often serve as a community resource for gatherings of all kinds. The AP addresses when school buildings may be used, security measures, care of the facilities, and fees for school use. The draft also makes provision for rentals that involve consumption of alcohol, something not sanctioned in almost all Palliser buildings at this time. The exception is the Cultural Recreation Centre in Vulcan, which is governed by a separate community use agreement. However, the committee heard that in some Palliser communities, there are no other community halls or venues, so the school receives requests for wedding receptions and other activities. The draft requires a higher damage deposit for any events involving alcohol. Applications for events involving alcohol would require Board approval. Other rentals could be approved by the principal. The trustees discussed the draft. Ultimately, the decision to approve the administrative procedure is the Superintendent’s responsibility.

## **Admin Procedure on Volunteer Drivers reviewed**

The Board discussed Administrative Procedure 544 Volunteer Drivers and changes Superintendent Kevin Gietz is considering. The draft removes the maximum age of 65 for volunteer drivers, increases the minimum age of volunteer drivers to 25, from 21, and increases the required minimum liability insurance to \$2 million, from \$1

million. Administration sought trustees’ feedback on the draft. Approval of the final draft is the Superintendent’s decision.

## **Palliser fleet may be used during Alberta Summer Games**

The Board supported a request from the organizers of the 2012 Alberta Summer Games that will be held in Lethbridge July 26 through July 29, 2012. The Board agreed Palliser buses and drivers could be used for the event. Drivers would be paid and the division would be reimbursed for using the buses. An estimated 3,000 people are in motion between venues during the event.

## **Palliser to use ASBA Labour Relations Services in next negotiations**

In advance of the 2012 teacher negotiations, the Alberta School Boards Association sought direction from member boards about whether they plan to use the ASBA’s Labour Relations Services staff as a resource. Palliser’s Board opted to seek ASBA representation on the board’s bargaining committee during negotiation meetings, and planning and preparation for negotiations.

## **Preschool rates unchanged**

The Board accepted a recommendation from Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger to leave Palliser’s preschool registration fee unchanged at \$80 a month.

## **Palliser part of international testing**

Two of Palliser’s high schools have been selected to participate in the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, PISA is an international assessment of the competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science. Canada is one of more than 60 nations participating in PISA.

From April 16 to May 18, 2012, students at County Central High School in Vulcan and Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale will join about 20,000 students from more than 900 schools across Canada in taking the math assessment.

No results are given to the individual student, school or school division. The results are intended to assess Canadian students as a group.

**NEXT MEETING: January 17, 2012**