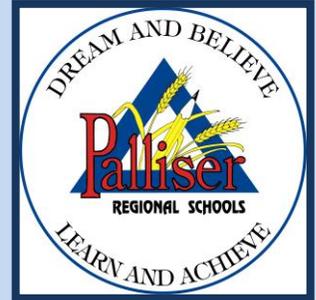


From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held February 15, 2011



- The Board of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular meeting at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge February 15, 2011.
- The Board discussed its recent meeting with the council of the Town of Coaldale. The trustees found the discussion and the sharing of information about common interests and issues helpful. Trustees also discussed looking ahead to similar meetings with its other partner communities.
- The Board heard several Palliser schools have been selected to participate in international testing. Master's Academy & College in Calgary has been selected to participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) field trial this spring. Since the purpose of this field trial is to assess Canadian students as one group only, no results will be published at the level of the school district, school or individual student. PISA is sponsored by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). PISA assesses the achievement of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science. This is administered every three years. About 1,400 students from 72 schools across Canada will participate in the field trial in English and French. According to Alberta Education, up to 35 students from each participating school have been randomly selected for the paper-based assessment and 20 of these students will also be selected to participate in the computer-based assessment.

Palliser has also been notified by Alberta Education that several schools have been chosen to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). These studies are sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, which investigates Grade 4 student achievement in reading across 50 educational systems worldwide and Grades 4 and 8 student achievement in mathematics and science in over 60 educational systems. The selected schools are Jennie Emery Elementary (Coaldale), Coalhurst Elementary, Dorothy Dalgliesh Elementary (Picture Butte), R.I. Baker Middle School (Coaldale) and Heritage Christian Academy (Calgary). None of the data collected in testing is published for individual students, teachers or schools.

- Secretary Treasurer Terry Kirkham sought Board direction on holding budget consultation meetings across Palliser as were held last March in Calgary, Coaldale, Picture Butte and Vulcan. The trustees agreed these meetings are important for our stakeholders and for trustees as Palliser moves forward in making budget decisions for the 2011-12 year. The timing of the meetings will hinge on when Palliser receives details on the new budget. The provincial budget this year is to be tabled Feb. 24, but it may take time for specific details to

reach the jurisdiction. The Board expressed a desire to be able to share budget details at the stakeholder meetings so the schedule will hinge on when specific information is available.

- Terry Kirkham provided an update on the Picture Butte High School modernization project. Work at the site stopped just before Christmas when the general contractor and its parent company filed for creditor protection. Palliser is now working with the project bond holder to restart work. The process may add a delay of 15 weeks to the \$7.8-million modernization project which began in the summer of 2010.
- Dan Ryder, co-ordinating principal of school improvement, presented the findings of a review of Jennie Emery Elementary School in Coaldale. The on-site visit was conducted on December 9, 2010. Through an appreciative inquiry process, the review examines school strengths and areas of possible improvement. Identified strengths included: a caring team approach and warm and welcoming atmosphere; effective programming and leadership; and strong sense of team. Areas of improvement included: addressing bullying; communication with home and staff; and enrichment programming for all students. The school administration also wanted data collected on parking in front of the school. The report is to be presented to school staff who then use the data to determine an action plan for ongoing school improvement. The Board discussed the positive response from parents to the review process and the value of the information collected in the process. Palliser hopes to share information about its school review process at a meeting later this year with the Alberta School Boards' Association Zone 6 meeting.
- The Board approved a recommendation from its transportation committee that Palliser adopt a policy to pick up Palliser students residing in country residential dwellings 2.4 kilometres or less from their school for free, providing there is room on the bus. The practice takes effect immediately. A policy to this effect will be written. Palliser does not receive transportation funding for any student who lives within 2.4 km of their school. Trustees have been debating how to handle transportation for students who live within the province's 2.4-km limit, particularly those who live in rural areas, where the route to school has children walking on the side of the road, alongside traffic travelling at 80 km/h, where there are no sidewalks. The Board also passed a motion that Palliser engage in discussions with the Town of Coaldale, and other communities as necessary, regarding in-town busing of students.
- On behalf of Kevin Garinger, Associate Superintendent (Human Resources), Superintendent Kevin Gietz reported on Palliser's new Lead Teacher Cohort, a new program to support teachers with an interest and aptitude for pursuing a career in school administration. Twenty-three teachers were recommended by their principals. Some interested teachers have been interviewed already and interviews will continue in early March.
- The Board passed a motion to proceed with a lease agreement for technology equipment for Heritage Christian Academy and Menno Simons Christian School, both in Calgary. Both schools joined Palliser five years ago and both are in need of technology upgrades. Trustees discussed the pros and cons of leasing. Given how quickly technology needs replacement, a leasing program would provide new equipment on a four-year cycle.
- Dale Backlin, Associate Superintendent (Alternative Programs & Technology), presented the draft calendar for Coaldale's John Davidson School, an alternative program for students from Low German Mennonite families. The school calendar reflects religious holidays celebrated by the LGM community. The Board passed a motion to table the John Davidson School calendar until draft calendars from the other schools in the Coaldale busing cluster are submitted for consideration. Other schools which share busing will also have their calendars reviewed simultaneously.
- Barbara Gammon, Associate Superintendent (Learning Services), gave the board an update on Action on Inclusion, the movement by Alberta Education to a more inclusive school

system. She and several Palliser principals attended a provincial meeting Jan. 25, 2011 hosted by Alberta Education. The committee of Palliser administrators who have been delving into what Action on Inclusion will mean to the division met last week to discuss what was heard at that provincial meeting. The consensus was that the model being discussed provincially is very similar to the model Palliser already has for ensuring an inclusive education. Some changes ahead will include the replacement of Individual Program Plans (IPPs) with a new provincial tool called an Inclusive Education Planning Tool (IEPT). The new inclusive system will also have “learning coaches,” teachers who would support classroom teachers. This person would be well versed in curriculum and differentiation of instruction (recognizing that every learner is unique).

- The Board heard that a letter will be sent to parents who have yet to pay their \$10 preschool registration fee or the \$75 a month preschool fee for those children who do not receive provincial funding as a result of their special needs. Payment arrangements must be made the end of February. If payment or payment arrangements are not confirmed by March 1, the child will no longer be eligible to attend preschool until outstanding fees are paid.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools