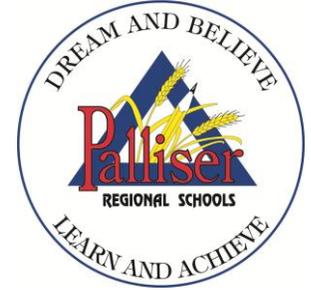


From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting Tuesday, May 17, 2011



- The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular meeting at John Davidson School in Coaldale. John Davidson School opened in August 2009 as an alternative program serving children from the Low German Mennonite community. During the visit, trustees were treated to performances of music and poetry by students ranging from preschool to Grade 9. The Board thanked the students and staff for the performances which were a highlight of the meeting.
- The Board passed a motion reconfirming its support for the provision of Registered Apprenticeship Programs where possible in Palliser. This program allows high school students to begin apprenticeship training while still completing their high school courses.
- The Board passed a motion to approve the continued use of two locally developed courses, acquired from Edmonton School District No. 7. The courses, Sports Performance 25-5 and Sports Performance 35-5, are both used in the Kate Andrews High School Sports Performance Hockey Program.
- The Board offered congratulations to three parents in Palliser who were recognized with Parent of Distinction Awards by the Alberta School Councils' Association. As the Board was meeting, an award ceremony was held at Coalhurst Elementary School recognizing the contributions of Marla Hope-Rapp and Kelcey Walker, members of school council. Earlier this month, Tanya Wurzer, a parent at Jennie Emery Elementary School in Coaldale, received a Parent of Distinction Award from the ASCA. Of the 10 individual ASCA awards in the province, three were in Palliser schools.
- The Board received a report on the findings of a school review conducted at Menno Simons Christian School on March 9, 2011. The Calgary school serves about 200 students from kindergarten to Grade 9. Palliser Co-ordinating Principal of School Development Dan Ryder told the board the review incorporated data collected through 246 surveys completed by students, parents/guardians and staff; interviews with teachers; focus group discussions with learning assistants, parents and students; classroom observations; and a review of documents that included staff meeting minutes and the school's Annual Education Results Report. The data indicated the school's strengths include caring teachers, supportive

leadership, a strong Christian community and a safe and caring learning environment. Areas of improvement indicated were in the areas of communication with parents and among staff. The results of the review will be shared with staff who then analyze the results and identify school successes to celebrate and strategies for ongoing improvement of the school.

- The Board made adjustments to its three-year capital plan, in keeping with direction from Alberta Education. The plan does not change the previous plan's identified priorities which are: modernization of Noble Central School; modernization of County Central High School; gymnasium expansion at Champion School; and enclosing the courtyard area at Kate Andrews High School to provide a cafeteria. However, it adds to the plan priority issues related to lease funding: continued lease funding to Brant Christian School, Menno Simons Christian School and Heritage Christian Academy; and new lease funding for Glenmore Christian Academy, Master's Academy and College, and Calgary Christian Schools. Given the province's budget realities and the needs of other boards coping with a shortage of schools in rapidly growing communities, Palliser's trustees do not expect our capital project priorities will be made provincial priorities at this time.
- Administrators from R.I. Baker Middle School in Coaldale presented their response to the school review conducted at that facility October 18, 2010. Principal Cynthia Fritzler and Vice-Principal Broc Higginson told trustees that following the review, a workshop with staff was held January 31, 2011 involving teachers as well as representatives of other staff groups, including learning assistants, caretaking staff and the family school liaison counsellor. The school review data was also shared with school council on March 14, 2011. The administrators described the review as a positive process that served as a perception check of how the school is performing. In response to the review, the school is encouraging communication with parents by expanding its use of technology, including email and the school website. Podcasts, for example, are posted online, which is particularly helpful to students who are auditory learners. Lesson information is online and can be accessed by both students and parents. Handbooks being prepared for next year will emphasize the availability of teachers to help students before or after school and at lunch hours, extra help that has been available all along, but many parents were not aware.
- Hans Schrempf, principal of Noble Central School, presented that school's response to the school review conducted there November 23, 2010. Over the course of four meetings, staff at Noble Central analyzed the review findings. He shared with trustees what he called the schools "Big Rocks," a reference to a concept Stephen Covey uses to demonstrate the need to focus on priorities. Noble Central's "Big Rocks" that emerged from the review data and the staff discussions are: team; positive, safe and caring environment; academic success; feedback/assessment for learning; responsibility; approachable and open; extras (such as non-athletic activities for students); and opportunities (diverse programming including CTS). The school, which serves students from kindergarten to Grade 12, is working to increase parent involvement, to hold learning assistant team meetings, to encourage more student

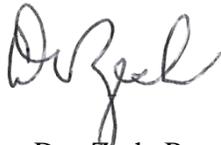
leadership opportunities; to offer more non-athletic activities for students; and to increase communication with parents, students and staff.

- The Board welcomed Michael Monner to the meeting, representing a community group in the Milo area that is proposing a multi-pronged community effort to encourage families to move to the area and attend the Milo School. The group calls it a “Survival Proposal,” citing its concern over a static, declining and aging population within the Milo Recreation Area. The Milo School has 56 students. The group suggests the community create a bursary program, raising the necessary cash by applying a 1 mill increase to the mill rate in the Milo Recreation Area. The increase would amount to about a \$22 increase per quarter section of land per year. Residents in the village itself would see an increase of about \$50 a year to the taxes they would pay. That money would support a bursary of up to \$5,000 a year for up to five years of post-secondary education for Milo students who had attended the school for three consecutive years. The amount of the bursary would be prorated based on the number of years the student attended Milo School. In addition to the bursary, the group suggests creation of a home purchase rebate to encourage families with school-aged children to construct a new home or purchase an existing home. The third prong of the proposal would raise awareness of the potential for infrastructure developments in the Milo Recreation Area and Lake McGregor over the next three to five years. So far, the group has presented its ideas to the Vulcan County Council as well as at a public meeting held in Milo. Mr. Monner said some legislative change may be needed before the program could be put into action but the group will continue to work on supporting the community and the school. The Board thanked Mr. Monner for sharing this information and expressed hope the campaign is a success. The Board has not discussed closing Milo or any other schools this year.
- The Board approved the 2011-2012 school calendar submissions from Master’s Academy and College, Calgary Christian School’s elementary and secondary campuses, Heritage Christian Academy and Sunnyside School. In some cases, the calendars had been approved earlier but required minor revisions. Every school in Palliser now has had its calendar and instructional hours approved by the Board. In discussing the calendars, the Board encouraged administration to look at producing draft school calendars for three years at a time, in order to give parents plenty of advance notice as they look at planning vacations and other family commitments. Associate Superintendent (Alternative Programs, Technology, Transportation and Maintenance) Dale Backlin suggested Palliser look at streamlining the calendar process by coming up with a reasonable number of calendar options that would have consistent start and end dates, spring and Christmas breaks from which schools could choose the best fit for their school community. The process would move Palliser toward a more consistent calendar across the division, but would retain flexibility to address the division’s diverse needs.
- Palliser Maintenance Supervisor Grant Stauth provided the Board an update on the Picture Butte High School modernization project. Construction has been stalled since December

following the bankruptcy of the general contractor. Since then, Palliser has been working with the bonding company to re-tender the project, pay sub-trades for work already completed, and try to bring those same contractors back to finish the project. The new tender closes May 31st and it's hoped work will resume soon after. The Board thanked Grant for his efforts overseeing the project.

- The Board passed a motion to maintain the status quo on school fees. That means the Board will continue to waive the \$39 a year fee for students in Grades 1-6. The fee for Grades 7-9 remains unchanged at \$49 a year and \$59 for Grades 10-12.
- The Board also passed a motion to engage an accredited real estate appraiser for the purpose of reviewing all existing agreement/leases at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge with the intent of establishing fair market value.
- Finally, the Board passed a motion to grant a pay increase to support staff of 4.54 per cent for the 2011-12 year. This increase is in keeping with the Alberta Average Weekly Earnings Index, as determined by Statistics Canada, that is part of the collective agreement of Palliser's teachers.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be June 21 at County Central High School in Vulcan.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools