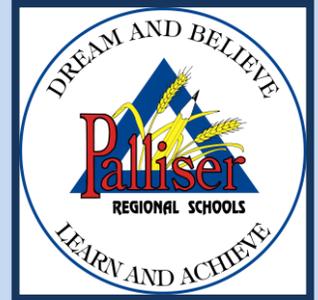


From the Chair ...



Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held Tuesday, September 21, 2010

- The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools met at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge.
- Superintendent Kevin Gietz reported on the opening of the school year so far. Student enrolment is at 6,588 students, up about 180 students over projection, ECS to Grade 12. An update will be provided after the Sept. 30 deadline, when the enrolment number becomes official. That Sept. 30th enrolment is the figure used for funding.
- By board consensus, Palliser Vice-Chairperson Colleen Deitz, who serves as the Alberta School Boards Association Chair of Zone 6, and trustee Esther Willms, Palliser's ASBA delegate, will complete a ASBA survey on Palliser's behalf. The survey seeks member boards' input on what issues they want the ASBA to pursue in tripartite discussions with the Alberta Teachers' Association and Alberta Education. The ASBA was invited by the Education Minister to part in a future workforce agreements. Earlier, the ASBA asked member boards for support in taking part in tripartite discussions. Colleen Deitz reported more than 70 per cent of boards, including Palliser, agreed the ASBA should be at the table with the ATA and Alberta Education. The ASBA survey has to be submitted by Monday.
- Barons School Principal Terri-Lynn Duncan provided a presentation to the board, reporting on the action plan the school developed in the wake of a review of the school in Spring 2010. That review, which included input from teachers, support staff, parents and students, found one of the school's strengths was its sense of community. Areas needing work included the lack of playground equipment, library resources and student respect for each other. In response to those areas of need, Mrs. Duncan explained fundraising for the playground continues and she hopes work on the playground can occur in Spring 2011; she continues to seek grants to support the purchase of library resources; and there are weekly conversations in the classroom about bullying and respect. Barons School serves students from the Low German Mennonite community. Students often come to school not knowing a word of English. To address the students' language needs, Mrs. Duncan said she has adopted Alberta Education's English as a Second Language benchmarks to track students' language skills. Over time, as the school attracts students from the time they are in preschool, their language skills are improving as well. However, there are still some students who come to school in later grades without any English language knowledge. Mrs. Duncan also explained how she has been working with Lethbridge College to introduce students to trades training available through the College. A job fair will be held in October at Barons School to connect students with local employers. Students from John Davidson School in Coaldale (another alternative program for Low German Mennonite students) and Huntsville School (where a majority of students are also from a Low German background) will be bused to Barons for the fair. Although the Low German Mennonite community has not traditionally placed a priority on education, Mrs. Duncan said through relationship building and trust, parents are embracing the school as their own. "I have a great staff, great parents and great kids," she said. "The school is running as well as it is because there are great people in the building." Mrs. Duncan explained that in response to the review findings, school staff, parents and students from Grades 1 to 9 were asked to consider strategies already being used by the school and then identify their Top 5 priorities for the school.
- Palliser Board Chairman Don Zech and any other trustees who are available will take part in a special meeting called by the Public School Boards Council to discuss the Public School Boards' Association continued role as intervener in a legal dispute between Aspen View Regional Division and the Government of Alberta. The case

focuses on the use of the “alternative process” for separate school expansion. The special meeting will be held by videoconference Friday, Sept. 24.

- The Board passed a motion supporting that a nomination be submitted to the Alberta School Boards Association for its Public Engagement Award. This new award is intended to recognize a board’s efforts to embrace public engagement as a method to inform, involve and gain input from stakeholders on school jurisdiction plans, programs and services. Palliser’s nomination will focus on the four meetings the board held last winter inviting input and sharing information about the upcoming budget deliberations. The public was invited to provide input on the division’s priorities. In addition, every Grade 9 student in the jurisdiction was invited to participate in Alberta Education’s Speak Out forums, adding their voice to the feedback considered by the board.
- Barbara Gammon, Associate Superintendent (Learning Services), reported on Palliser’s continued use of AISI project funding. The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement was created by the province to improve student learning through initiatives that enhance student engagement and performance. In comparing notes with colleagues in other jurisdictions, Mrs. Gammon discovered that Palliser is unique in that it uses its AISI funding to support strategies already supported by research, rather than using the money on new initiatives that aren’t yet shown to improve student learning. In Palliser, the AISI funding supports the beginning teacher induction program, school reviews, character education initiatives, and induction program for new administrators, instructional supervision, assessment for learning, and professional learning collaboration days that bring staff together from across the division to discuss their shared interests at common grade level or subject. By using AISI money for already proven strategies, Palliser is able to save operational grants for other school priorities.
- Barbara Gammon also reported on the number of parents who have committed to the Coaldale before and after school program. There are 18 students who have made monthly commitments to the program which has solidified the revenue for the program.
- Mrs. Gammon shared that a number of Palliser initiatives are reflected in a new ASBA report on improving high school completion rates. Palliser’s completion rates are above the province. Its strategies include early intervention services, including preschool programs, and peer mentorship programs for at-risk students.
- The board passed three motions to respond to issues that have been raised in recent meetings to discuss busing. The board moved that the Corner Store school bus transfer site located at the junction of Highways 23 and 24, north of Vulcan, be eliminated, and that administration consult with those bus drivers affected to implement this change. Second, the board directed Superintendent Kevin Gietz to present a draft transportation policy amendment at the Oct. 19, 2010 regular board meeting that will ensure all future significant transportation issues be circulated to all transportation employees for comment and direct consultation prior to implementation. Finally, trustees supported a motion to reduce the Early Childhood Services program ineligible rider transportation fees to \$95 per child, retroactive to the start of this school year. That ineligible rider fee for students outside ECS remains at \$185 for the school year.
- Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger reported that he and Barbara Gammon are working to address emergent needs that require additional teaching and learning assistant staffing. So far, an additional 12,294 hours of learning assistant hours have been added into the system to address special needs. Palliser has had 16 severe needs students join the division since the start of the school year.
- Kevin Garinger also reported he is investigating automated substitute teacher systems that would likely save school administrators and secretaries significant time in identifying and contacting substitute teachers. At a recent Administrators’ Association meeting, principals from across Palliser supported the idea of the automated system. Mr. Garinger reported there are a number of suppliers and he has only begun to investigate the options available and the costs.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools