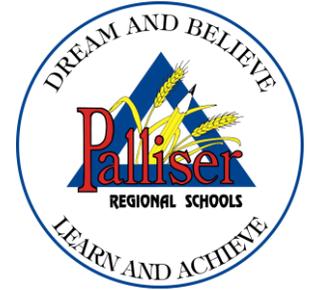


From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting Tuesday, December 14, 2010

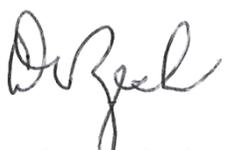


- A survey will be sent to parents of bused students early in the new year inviting comments and feedback. This is the second time this school year parents of bused students have been invited to comment on the Palliser transportation system. Since the first survey in September, a number of changes in transportation occurred, including the tweaking of several routes, providing Palliser email addresses to all bus drivers and adding a daily busing notice to Palliser's website. The new survey, as the last one, will be sent home with bus students. A copy will be posted online in January for parents as well.
- The Board of Palliser was to have met with school societies operating at Palliser's Calgary Christian alternative schools earlier this month, but that meeting was cancelled because of treacherous road conditions. The meeting has been rescheduled to January 6, 2011.
- Superintendent Kevin Gietz, reporting on behalf of Associate Superintendent (Alternative Programs and Technology) Dale Backlin, said Palliser Colony Principal Wayne Tate is looking forward to meeting with his counterparts from neighbouring jurisdictions in early January. The purpose of the meeting is to share best practices for educating students attending Hutterian colony schools.
- Associate Superintendent (Learning Services) Barbara Gammon provided the Board an update on Alberta Education's Setting the Direction initiative, including the rebranding of the Special Education Branch as the Inclusive Supports Branch. An update from Deputy Minister Keray Henke described what inclusion means in the new context as this: "At the core of inclusion is the concept of making differences ordinary so all students have a place, feel valued and welcomed and are equipped for success." The Associate Superintendent said it appears funding to meet special needs in schools will be changing. There had been no increase to the grant to meet the needs of severely disabled students for two years.
- Barbara Gammon reported that the Division Wellness Advisory Committee will meet in Vulcan Jan. 19, 2011, where it's expected a number of schools will share wellness initiatives they've undertaken in their schools.
- Barbara Gammon met last week at Palliser Centre with law enforcement, partner agencies involved in risk assessments, and others to review Palliser's risk and threat assessment protocol. She explained Palliser requires all principals and family school liaison counsellors to have at least Level 1 risk assessment training. Palliser has been using training resources developed by Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response. The purpose of the regional review is to standardize Lethbridge-area schools' approach, at the encouragement of Lethbridge Regional Police Service. Vice-chair Colleen Deitz suggested it might be wise for an information session on the threat assessment protocol to be shared with trustees at the

Alberta School Boards' Association Zone 6 meeting in January or March. Barbara Gammon said she would pass along that suggestion to the other regional partners.

- Barbara Gammon reported that about \$6,400 in grants Palliser had received last year to support peer mentorship programs had not been spent, so that money will now be used to support the program in Coalhurst and Nobleford this year. Those programs will be able to start operation after Christmas. Programs in Vulcan, Coaldale and Picture Butte have already begun. These programs have been very well received in the communities and the schools. However, several sources of funding for these programs had ended. With some community help and support from the Board, the mentorship programs will continue this year.
- The Board passed a motion to eliminate the use of any multi-functional activity buses that are not up to national D270 standards by the end of the school year. In the meantime, Palliser administration and the board will investigate alternatives for transporting students to activities.
- Kevin Garinger, Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) gave the board an update on the division wide focus on instructional leadership and succession planning. A committee of administrators from across Palliser met December 8, 2010 to begin developing a three-year plan to support instructional leadership and instructional supervision in Palliser. A group of administrators new to administrative roles or new to Palliser will continue to meet as part of the Administrators' Induction and Mentorship program, now in its second year. As well, the associate superintendent sent a letter to all Palliser teachers inviting them to put their names forward to participate in an action-based school leadership cohort. This is intended to build leadership capacity in Palliser. There are 54 teachers or administrators in Palliser who are 55 or older this year.
- Central Office staff are using two days of vacation time to allow for the closure of Palliser's Central Office from Thursday, December 23, 2010 to Sunday, January 2, 2011, inclusive. School and Central Office operations resume January 3, 2011. With stat holidays, the office would have been closed for all but two days between Christmas and New Year's Day.
- Dan Ryder, co-ordinating principal of school improvement, presented data collected in the school review of Coaldale's R.I. Baker Middle School, conducted in October, one of six Palliser schools being reviewed this year. Data was collected from parents, staff and students. Strengths were: a wide variety of programming offered by the school (athletic and non-athletic); encouraging, caring staff; and high quality instruction. Interestingly, when students were asked about what they'd change about their school, the prevailing theme was that there was nothing they'd change about it. Other groups thought discipline and communication could improve. As part of the review, five principals from other Palliser schools visited R.I. Baker to gather data in the classroom. Focus groups of students and parents were also held. With the data now collected, the results are shared with school staff who can then begin to form a course of action to use the data for school improvement.
- The next regular meeting of the Board will be Tuesday, January 18, 2011.

On behalf of the Board, I wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and all the best in 2011.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools