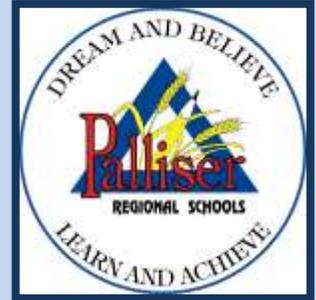


From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held Tuesday, May 18, 2010



- The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular meeting at Heritage Christian Academy in Calgary, one of the division's Christian schools operating as an alternative program in the public system. This was the fourth and final board meeting this school year held at one Palliser's sites. Heritage, located near the Calgary International Airport, has been operating since 1979 and joined Palliser in 2006. The school offers a faith-based education for about 500 students from kindergarten through Grade 12. While at the school, trustees were treated to a lively performance by the HCA senior choir, in addition to a tour of the facility.
- The Board passed a \$65.4 million balanced budget for 2010-2011. The budget is based on estimated student enrolment for September, and includes the addition of a new Hutterian colony school in the fall. Teacher wages will increase 2.92 per cent Sept. 1, 2010, based on the Alberta Average Weekly Earnings Index, as established by Statistics Canada. The index is used to determine the increase as per the Alberta Teachers' Association collective agreement. Had the government funded the teacher salary increase, Palliser would have received an additional \$1.16 million. Not only is the wage increase not reflected in funding, but none of the other provincial grants to Palliser increased this year either.

To address the shortfall in funding versus expenses, Palliser is reducing teacher preparation time as well as some teaching staff, some secretarial, custodial and learning assistant hours and some Central Office positions. Overall, there will be about 23 fewer full-time equivalent certificated teacher positions in the 2010-2011 school year than there were in 2009-2010. For the second straight year, Palliser will not set aside money for the purchase of new buses. Nearly 79 per cent of Palliser's projected spending is in ECS to Grade 12 programming and services. Administration costs account for 3.42 per cent of spending, well below the provincial cap of four per cent. In arriving at the reductions to staff and services, Palliser Central Office administration consulted with the administrators at each school. In reducing hours of some support staff, Palliser worked to retain the minimum number of hours needed so our employees would keep their benefits. The Board acknowledged how difficult this budget will be for Palliser staff but trustees also acknowledge the need for these decisions in order to keep the division on stable financial footing.

- The Board voted to rescind Motion 046/10 from the April 27, 2010 meeting, which called on the school councils at Coaldale and Sunnyside schools to hold a re-vote on the question of whether

parents were in favour of early Friday dismissal. At the April meeting, trustees expressed concern with the high number of spoiled ballots. In subsequent discussions with representatives of the Coaldale school councils, concerns were expressed with the difficulty in trying to hold a second vote this late in the school year. With that motion rescinded, the Board voted to accept an alternative school year for schools in the Coaldale busing cluster and Sunnyside School. The schools – Kate Andrews High School, R.I. Baker Middle School, Jennie Emery Elementary School and John Davidson School in Coaldale and Sunnyside, north of Lethbridge – will be allowed to have early dismissal on Fridays starting in the 2010-2011 year. The decision followed an effort to hear not only from parents, through voting, but from school staff, businesses and community organizations in the Coaldale area.

- Palliser will submit an application to Alberta Education to offer an outreach program to students in the Low German Mennonite alternative program at Barons School. There are already 10 students from the Barons LGM community who are interested in continuing their education into Grades 10, 11 and 12. Right now, Barons School only offers programming through Grade 9. The outreach program, like the Barons LGM School, would offer a regular education in English, with a religious component and respect for the Low German Mennonite culture and language. The initial challenge has been to identify a suitable, affordable space in Barons. For now, Palliser is considering using space in the Carmangay School, which was closed in 2001. The Carmangay option would save the division both leasing and transportation costs. There is already a bus that travels from Barons to Carmangay. The process of opening a new outreach program is in its earliest stages. The board committed to holding public information meetings with stakeholders in the area to discuss the proposal as the process moves forward.
- The board received the latest Accountability Pillar summary from Alberta Education, released earlier this month. The pillar, a report card from Alberta Education for the division, continues to be very strong, with an earlier identified issue with Palliser's dropout rate significantly improved from past year's. One identified issue on the pillar was the diploma acceptable rate, where Palliser fell from 91.7 to 87.5 per cent. Even with that decline, Palliser's diploma acceptable rate remains above the provincial average. Palliser's diploma participation rate also rose significantly which means more students are participating in academic courses that require diploma exams. The Accountability Pillar is released by Alberta Education each spring and fall. The data is used by Palliser administrators in determining school goals for the year and to help measure progress in school improvement. The May pillar incorporates survey data from students, teachers and a sampling of parents at every school. The latest Accountability Pillar for the division is available online at www.pallisersd.ab.ca under the Reports and Plans section of Division Documents.
- While in Calgary, the board had an opportunity to meet and congratulate members of the division's teaching community who were nominated for prestigious awards. In attendance were Kelly Bouwman, Calgary Christian School teacher and winner of the Zone 6 ASBA Edwin Parr Award for beginning teachers; Heather Teichrob, teacher at Calgary's Glenmore Christian Academy and nominee for the Edwin Parr Award; Warren Thompson, a teacher from Vulcan's Country Central High School, who was nominated for an Edwin Parr Award; Sandy Karg, teacher at Menno Simons Christian School, and nominee for a 2010 Excellence in Teaching Award; and Kevin McCorquindale, Heritage Christian Academy teacher and nominee for an APEGGA Teaching Award. Anne McCullough, a teacher from Glenmore Christian Academy, is also nominated for an APEGGA award, but was unable to meet with the Board Tuesday. A similar

invitation to meet with the Board will be extended next month to teachers in the southern part of Palliser who have been nominated or won provincial awards this year. The Board appreciates the excellent work being done by teachers across the division and congratulates these teachers for the various honours and nominations they've received.

- Associate Superintendent of Learning Services Barbara Gammon shared with the Board feedback her office has received from parents to the new Palliser report card template. That report card moves away from percentage grades to more descriptive terms of how students are progressing in their learning. Ten schools across Palliser used the new format this year. Of the survey responses, 64 were positive, 22 negative and 12 were neutral. The new report card is intended to provide parents more information about how their child is progressing, rather than just comparing the individual to a class average. More schools will be adopting the Palliser report card this fall.
- Barbara Gammon reported that some grants that had supported the mentorship programs operating at high schools in Vulcan, Picture Butte, Nobleford, Coaldale and Coalhurst will not be available next year. These programs are well received and considered important for reaching out to at-risk youth. The Associate Superintendent of Learning Services said she hoped to access funding for the mentorship programs through the AISI initiative (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement). Another possibility to help continue the valuable work of mentors is that as the CTS program is changed, there are provincial plans for new one-credit mentorship courses that would include a practical component. However, not all high schools have the resources to offer the new one-credit courses. Palliser is also investigating whether any local service clubs in the community would be able to help support the resources necessary to keep the mentorship programs operating. The programs encourage leadership skills among the mentors while at the same providing a valuable service to younger students who benefit from having a role model.
- District Principal Dan Ryder made a presentation to the Board reporting on the findings of the school review of the Barons Low German Mennonite School. A team of Central Office administrators and principals from two other Palliser schools met with students, staff and parents at the Barons School to review areas in which the school is performing well, suggest areas of improvement, celebrate successes of the school and provide information to help with future planning. The process includes site visits, classroom climate observations and surveys. The review found the school has a clear vision of its purpose, has a climate of respect for students, parents and staff, and a high level of collaboration and trust. One area for improvement was the playground area. The findings are turned over to school administrators for use in establishing goals for school improvement next year. The school review process includes a follow-up report to the Board by the school principal to discuss what came out of the review process. That will likely occur next fall.
- The Board accepted a proposal to notify the public of any surplus items the division no longer needs. Every six months, Palliser would advertise in local newspapers that surplus items will be posted on the Palliser website. The postings would be made any time in the first week of the month, complete with detailed descriptions of the items and photos. Some items may carry a reserve bid. No public viewing would be available. Sealed bids would be accepted at the Palliser office by 3 p.m. on the third Friday of the month. The bids would be opened publicly at 9 a.m. the following Monday and the highest bid would win the item. The proposal was adopted because it ensures the public fair access to any surplus goods no longer needed by the division.

The process also seemed simple and would not require extra manpower to manage. It was noted Palliser schools would be given first opportunity to have any surplus goods before they went to auction.

- Finally, the Board of Trustees publicly thanked Palliser Director of Technology Gord Smith for his many contributions to the division. Gord has resigned his position from Palliser.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Zech". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail on the "z".

Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools