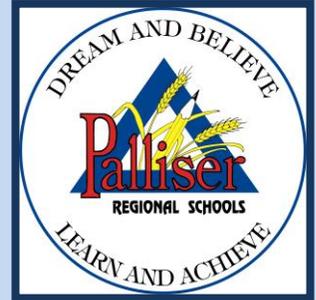


From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held Monday, December 14, 2009



- Palliser's board expects its schools to hold preschool and kindergarten registrations by the end of February for the 2010-2011 school year. This is earlier than in past years for some schools, but the additional time is necessary so Palliser early intervention specialists can co-ordinate with local health officials to arrange developmental checkups for the children. Anyone interested in attending a Palliser preschool or kindergarten program should contact their community school for more information. Palliser's preschool fees will remain unchanged for the coming year.
- The first meeting of the new audit committee, membership of which was established at the board's organizational meeting in October, will be Jan. 12. Trustees Jean Mrak, Robert Strauss and Don Zech serve on that committee.
- Representatives of two of Palliser's Calgary schools attended the board meeting to give trustees and administration an update on how they've responded to reviews of their schools conducted in the 2008-2009 school year. During the reviews, central office staff and administrators from other Palliser schools visited the school being reviewed, interviewed staff, students and parents and assessed strengths and areas of improvement. The findings are used to help shape the school's goals for the coming year.

Rob Cowie, principal of Glenmore Christian Academy, reported that since the school was reviewed in April 2009, a number of strategies have been implemented in response. The review of GCA commended the school's academic achievement, its focus on delivering a Christian education, and its energetic and enthusiastic culture. Challenges include the need for more space, communication and a sense of team among teachers in the elementary, junior and senior high grades.

The other school review presentation was provided by administrators from Calgary Christian School, which was reviewed in February 2009. Harry Fritschy, principal of CCS kindergarten through Grade 6, told the board he found the review process incredibly helpful, offering quantifiable information about the schools strengths and areas for improvement. The review found CCS's strengths were its integration of Christian values in every area of instruction and its sense of community. To address concerns about bullying, the elementary school introduced a Grade 6 leadership program and cross-grade chapel teams. With instructions from Coalhurst Elementary, CCS elementary introduced a variety of outdoor games for students to play at recess, a move the school administrative team says has reduced discipline problems during recess. Fritschy also commended Palliser for a workshop it held for administrators to analyze their provincial achievement test results, which helped focus attention on areas of improvement. Elementary vice-principal Glenda Jullion said the school has also developed a library program in response to the review.

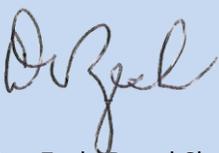
In Calgary Christian's Grade 7-12 school, Principal Gwen Uittenbosch said the review found four key strengths: the school's God-centred education; caring atmosphere; strong community; and

philosophy of discipline, which emphasizes the student taking ownership of their conduct and the administration's offering of forgiveness and a fresh start.

The school's areas of improvement were technology, its library, peer advisory groups, program choice and sustainability. In response, SMART or active boards have been added to all the classrooms, and the school, which already offers a math class by videoconferencing to students at Brant Christian School, will be adding more VC courses in 2010-2011. The school added \$600 of books to its library and is focusing on electronic resources which are more easily kept current. Peer advisory groups have been created for students in Grades 10 through 12 and the groups have initiated a range of activities to boost the spirits of others around the school. Principal Uittenbosch said some parents and students expressed concern about program choice and sustainability, and the school is working to provide additional options for students to complement existing choices, such as a sports performance course, sports medicine, drafting, music, sociology and psychology.

Palliser's school review process continued this fall with reviews at all 15 colony schools. Other community schools may be reviewed in the new year if time and resources allow.

- A presentation to the board was also made by Sherrie Nickel and Aaron Skretting, teachers who have been seconded to an AISI (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) inter-jurisdictional project. Working with teachers from Prairie Rose and Horizon school jurisdictions, Nickel and Skretting are developing instructional resources and units related to the Social Studies curriculum with a goal of increasing student academic success. Nickel and Skretting demonstrated how they are creating SMART Notebook files, with visuals, Web links and other information, to reinforce key information. Students can be asked questions and give their answers on hand-held voting devices which offer instant feedback on their responses. The teachers say the key is for the information to be well organized, not just scattered with an overload of visuals. Nickel and Skretting have visited nearly a dozen Palliser schools to share and get feedback on the units they have created so far. Although their project focuses primarily on junior and senior high school unit development, they plan to also visit elementary schools to gain feedback on the material. The teachers and their collaborative partners from Horizon and Prairie Rose school divisions will present their project at an AISI Showcase in February and a One-to-One Conference in March. Associate Superintendent of Learning Services Barbara Gammon told the board this cross-jurisdictional project is a first for AISI in the province and Alberta Education is keen to observe how the project works to the benefit of teachers in all three divisions.
- The board passed two motions related to its agreement with Master's Academy aimed at resolving outstanding issues between the Master's Academy and College Society and Palliser Regional Schools. The board has agreed to extend the deadline for serving notice of intent to terminate the lease agreement with Master's until March 31, 2010. If Palliser and the society can't resolve outstanding issues, either party may then serve notice of its intent to terminate the lease, effective July 1, 2011. The motions follow a series of meetings and communications between representatives of Palliser and Master's society. Superintendent Kevin Gietz planned to meet with school staff to explain the situation.
- The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 17, 2010 at Barons School.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools