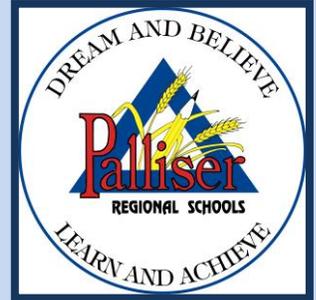




From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held Tuesday, December 16, 2008



- Following a thorough presentation by representatives of BDO Dunwoody LLP, the Board approved the Audited Financial Statements for the 2007-08 school year for submission to Alberta Education.
- Don Zech and Jean Mrak volunteered to sit on the Crisis Response Manual Review Committee.
- The Board approved the Annual Education Results Report for the 2007-08 school year for submission to Alberta Education.
- Two society/school council workshops were held earlier this month in Calgary to review the new role of societies of alternative Christian schools that recently joined Palliser Regional Schools. A follow-up workshop will be planned for late January/early February, which will include all six alternative Christian schools.
- The Board established a special meeting on January 26, 2009 to review the Board Policy Handbook with Terry Gunderson of the ASBA.
- The Board offered support for the ASBA Strategic Plan 2008-11 as presented, including an additional strategy related to student health and wellness.
- In order to streamline the paper process, representatives of the ATA Local and administration met recently to discuss changes to the forms/processes for teacher individual and site professional development funds. Revised forms will be distributed early in the new year.
- Commendations were extended to the staff involved in coordinating the first annual District-wide Band Workshop, which was held at Glenmore Christian Academy in Calgary. Nearly 350 students participated in workshops throughout the day, culminating in two large performances of 175 students each in the late afternoon. The Board indicated support for planning future district-wide student events as well, perhaps in the areas of drama and student leadership.
- Following the positive feedback from the Palliser Leadership Team Retreat held in May 2008, and the numerous initiatives that have resulted, the Board will host a similar retreat in the spring, tentatively scheduled for May 1-2, 2009, which will include trustees, central office and school administrators, and supervisors.
- Palliser Wall of Fame nominations are being finalized for induction in 2009. Completed nomination packages should be sent to the attention of the Superintendent of Schools.
- The February Board meeting has been rescheduled to February 10 at Dorothy Dalglish School.
- The Student Services team was commended for the high conformity rate of student files submitted during the severe disabilities profile review in 2007, as 74.3% of Palliser files met provincial standards compared to the provincial average of 55.8%.

- Rob Cowie, AISI Team Leader, presented information to the Board regarding a proposed Western Canada Character Education Conference (WCCEC 2009) being planned for the fall of 2009, and received Board support to continue with planning. Mr. Cowie and a delegation of Palliser staff have attended the National Character Education Conference in Huntsville, Ontario, for the past 2 years, and the hope is to attract a similar level of speakers and 200 delegates to a conference in Western Canada. The dates and location will be announced as soon as they are finalized.
- The Board received an update regarding the Vulcan Innovation Project. Alan Pasolli and Ken Losey reviewed the purpose of the initiative and plans to offer training to local organizations regarding advanced technologies. Palliser Regional Schools is a partner in the VIP, along with the Vulcan Business Development Society and the Lethbridge College. Planning is underway for ways the CTS mobile unit recently placed in Vulcan, as well as videoconference facilities, can be used to offer training in the community through this partnership. Funding for the project is provided through Rural Alberta's Development Fund.
- Esther Willms volunteered to serve as the Board representative on the Inclusive Education Advisory Board. The purpose of this Board, established by the Lethbridge Association for Community Living, is to provide parents of students with special education needs a shared voice.
- The Board approved locally developed courses for use in Palliser schools, as follows: Instrumental Jazz 15-25-35 and Vocal Jazz 15-25-35 (HCA, January 2009 – August 2010); Learning Strategies 25-35 (CS, January 2009 – August 2011); and TEAM Leadership 15-25-35 (CCS, January – June 2009).
- The Board authorized administration to enter into a contract for development of a proposal for a before- and after-school child care program in Coaldale. Timelines are short, as the Boys and Girls Club of Lethbridge will be discontinuing the program at Jennie Emery Elementary School at the end of January. Trustees were advised that parent fees may increase by as much as double to cover the cost of the program if it is operated by Palliser, as the Board has indicated the program must be financially self-supportive. This sharp increase in fees may cause some parents to withdraw their children from the program; however, it was noted that the current fees are significantly lower than those being charged for similar programs in Lethbridge, and the fees are not sufficient to offset the costs of the program. A draft budget for the program will be developed shortly, at which time actual fees based on attendance scenarios will be determined. A subsidy is available through Alberta Children's Services for parents to send their children to before- and after-school programs if they meet the income criteria. More information will be provided at the January Board meeting.
- Trustees were advised that the draft Off-campus Education Manual proposes significant changes to current practice. In particular, the requirement of teacher on-site visits to work site placements is significantly increased. Currently some area schools use paraprofessional staff to make on-site visits, and proposed changes will require a teacher to make the visits, with a minimal amount of visits required. In most cases, it will equate to one visit by a teacher for every credit being earned. This is a significant change to current practice and will result in a significant cost as well, as teacher time will need to be dedicated to this off-site supervision.
- Southwest Alberta Child & Family Services has been receiving a number of requests from families to provide funding for child care during the school year because their child will not be attending school during "exam" week. It was noted that students not involved in exams should still be attending school during exam week, including students receiving special needs programming.
- The Board rescinded its previous motion #146/08 which approved continuation of benefits for staff accessing the Transition to Retirement Program upon proof of enrolment for employees, at their existing coverage level, and pending approval by the ATA. The Board has become aware that other jurisdictions offering benefit coverage during the transition period have a related clause included in their collective agreement; Palliser does not. Therefore, the Transition to Retirement Program will continue to operate in its current format.

- The Board approved changes to Board Policy #16 (Recruitment and Selection of Staff), in principle, pending feedback from stakeholders. Proposed changes clarify criminal record check requirements for staff joining Palliser Regional Schools.

To you and yours, best wishes for a safe and relaxing Christmas break!



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools