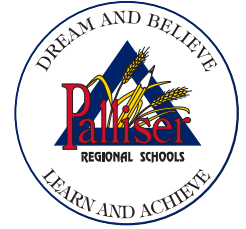


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

December 8, 2015



## Introductory lesson on Islamic faith and culture presented

The Board of Trustees welcomed Coalhurst Elementary School Vice-Principal Adam Browning to provide an overview of Islamic faith, culture and customs.

Browning, a practising Muslim, shared a bit of history of the faith globally and in Alberta —which is home to the oldest Muslim community in Canada— religious holidays, customs and dietary requirements. The first mosque in Canada was built in Edmonton, and Calgary is home to about 80,000 followers.

The board had requested this presentation to begin building an understanding of Calgary Islamic School, its staff, students and parents. About half the teaching staff at the two Calgary schools are Muslim.

## Board chair to serve on new provincial bargaining association

Palliser's representative on the new Teachers Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) will be Board Chair Colleen Deitz. Deitz was nominated by the board as it discussed new legislation to create two tiers of bargaining with teachers, with large matters such as salary increases discussed provincially, and local issues addressed between individual boards and their Alberta Teachers' Association locals.

TEBA will include representation from all 61 school boards in the province. TEBA was created under Bill 8, The Public Education Collective Bargaining Act. The bill takes effect in January and bargaining with the province's teachers is scheduled to begin in Spring 2016.

## New student info system to be adopted

Palliser Regional Schools will begin transitioning to a new student information system to be fully operational for 2016-2017. The move to Pearson's Power School system will ensure student information is compliant with Alberta's Provincial Approach to Student Information (PASI).

## Gathering of school councils received generally positive feedback

The board reviewed feedback collected at its gathering

of school council representatives held Nov. 23. A survey was sent to all participants as well as to all school council chairs, inviting feedback on the future and frequency of such meetings and desired topics for professional development.

Trustees who attended the session at one of three regional locations in Lethbridge, Vulcan and Calgary said the feedback they received in person that evening was quite positive, and that was echoed in the survey results with the majority of respondents saying they'd like to meet twice a year, and that a weekday evening would work best.

Some participants said they'd like to meet in their regional groups before joining all three sites by videoconference, something the board said it would do when the group meets again in the spring.

## Class sizes still small overall in Palliser

The board reviewed class size information from across the division, school by school. The class size reports are posted online at <http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/board-of-trustees/planning-and-reporting>

Again this year, Palliser's average class size was below provincial guidelines in Grades 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12 where Alberta Education suggests 23 students per teacher, 25 and 27, respectively. In kindergarten through Grade 3, the province suggests 17 students per class, and Palliser averages 18.2 students in core courses.

One area of concern is Jennie Emery Elementary School in Coaldale, a school serving about 465 students from early learning through Grade 4. The school is out of space for additional classrooms and is full despite the addition of two modular classrooms just over a year ago.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said there is also no more space on the site for more modular classrooms and it may be necessary to look at how space in other Coaldale schools can be better used.

The class size data is included in the Annual Education Results Report and Three-Year Education Plan, which received final approval from the board. Trustees had given the report approval in principle on Nov. 25.

## Sub teacher call system working well

Palliser's automated dispatch system for substitute

*Together we will ensure learning success for all students  
to develop their unique potential as caring citizens in a changing world.*

teachers went live at the start of December and is working well, said Associate Superintendent Human Resources Ken Garinger. The system automatically phones available substitute teachers when a Palliser teacher's requested absence is approved. Garinger said Human Resource staff led a training webinar available in Lethbridge and Calgary for interested substitute teachers who have to register in the new system in order to receive calls for jobs. If a replacement teacher isn't found within about one hour of the start of the school day, school staff receive a notification that manual intervention is required.

The new system integrates with payroll services, and will save school staff the time required to call substitute teachers in person.

## **Strong early reading skills shown**

More Palliser Grade 1 students are reading at or above expectation this fall compared to the previous year. About 62 per cent of Grade 1 students were at grade level this fall when assessed using the Fountas and Pinnell assessment tool.

Director of Learning Cynthia Gietz said the data this fall does not include Calgary Islamic School because the campuses are new to Palliser's literacy program.

Gietz said it's important for students in kindergarten and Grade 1 to develop basic skills including rhyming. This year, Palliser introduced a new assessment tool for kindergarten to focus on those specific skills. Principals whose schools are home to private kindergarten programs are encouraged to share Palliser's literacy resources with private providers.

## **Noble Central modernization project goes to tender**

The modernization of Noble Central School went to tender Dec. 7, and it's hoped work will begin in late January or early February. Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun said the project should be complete in time for the 2017-2018 school year. The modernization will improve the accessibility to the school for students and staff with mobility issues through the removal of some sets of stairs and the addition of an elevator. Students will be attending school as work progresses with some classes relocating to the gymnasium and some physical education classes moving to the rented community hall.

## **Board takes insurer's advice, cancels Europe travel for 2015-2016**

The board considered recommendations for student travel in light of terrorist attacks in Paris.

The Alberta School Boards Insurance Exchange (ASBIE) is the insurer for the majority of Alberta's school boards. ASBIE recently issued a bulletin regarding risk management and international student travel. The bulletin strongly recommended re-evaluation of board-sanctioned travel through 2015 and alternate arrangements for school trips to Europe.

"Students lose if we cancel travel, but if something goes wrong, we all lose," said Superintendent Kevin Gietz in presenting the bulletin information.

Palliser schools had one school planning a trip to Europe this school year, and other trips to the United States and Mexico in various stages of planning.

The board voted to follow ASBIE's recommendations, cancelling any scheduled trips to Europe for 2015-2016. Trips to other international destinations will be considered on an individual basis and monitored by administration using federal travel advisories.

ASBIE also provided an extensive best practices checklist for international travel which will be shared with school leaders in Palliser.

## **Schools OK to spend surplus funds again**

The board has given schools with larger surpluses an opportunity to begin investing that money in resources again.

Palliser schools were asked to stop spending their accumulated surpluses leftover from their allocation from the division's grant funding last spring in the wake of a dire provincial budget announcement.

The board decided to allow surplus spending to resume for schools in which the surplus represents more than 25 per cent of their annual board-allocated budget. For schools with less than 25 per cent of their annual budget in surplus funds, that amount should be retained as a cushion, said Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun.

Site-based surpluses should not be confused with school generated funds, which are raised through local fundraising and fees. The use of those funds was not frozen as the money is intended to be used in the year it was collected.

*Happy Holidays and see you in 2016!*

**Next meeting: January 12, 2016**