

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

February 9, 2016



Board expresses sympathies to students killed, injured at Canada Olympic Park

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular monthly meeting Feb. 9, opening the day with Chair Colleen Deitz expressing thoughts and prayers to the families of two teens who died at Canada Olympic Park in Calgary Feb. 6. Two students from Heritage Christian Academy were injured in the incident.

Board will proceed with independent review of system operations

The board will proceed with an independent, external operational review of the school division to be conducted by three individuals. The individuals will be selected by a committee comprised of Vice-Chair Robert Strauss, trustees Craig Whitehead and Debbie Laturus, and Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun. Four school council chairs will be consulted by the committee.

In January, the board requested oversight from Alberta Education to ensure the independence and credibility of a review. At a meeting Jan. 28, trustees met with Deputy Minister Lorna Rosen and others from the department who advised that the operational review is the responsibility of the board.

The board received two public presentations about the review. Chair Colleen Deitz said concerns shared with the board would be forwarded to the review panel.

Board seeks input on draft policy on safe and caring learning environments

The board reviewed a draft policy called "Safe and Caring Learning Environments," and directed it be circulated to stakeholders for feedback. The new policy is in response to legislative changes to ensure individuals are protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The draft was reviewed by Palliser legal counsel to ensure compliance with new legislation.

The board will consider feedback from stakeholders at its next regular meeting March 15.

The approved policy is to be submitted to Alberta Education by March 31.

A PDF of the draft policy can be downloaded [here](#). Feedback can be submitted by email to feedback@pallisersd.ab.ca.

Parent from CIS wins draw to attend school councils conference on Palliser

A parent from the Omar Bin Al-Khattab Campus of Calgary Islamic School will have registration and travel to the Alberta School Councils' Association conference and annual general meeting paid for by Palliser, following a draw by the board.

Palliser pays for all school councils to be members of the association, and sponsors one school council representative to attend the conference annually. This year, four parents expressed interest in attending the conference. The conference is in Edmonton April 22-24.

March board meeting rescheduled

The board voted to reschedule its next regular meeting to March 15, from March 8. It's expected the provincial budget will be tabled March 10.

First Nations achievement targets will be added to Palliser education plan

The board's three-year education plan and annual education results report will be amended to identify specific learning targets for Palliser's First Nations students.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said the request for those targets came from Education Manager Dan Ferguson. The Alberta Education official met with the Superintendent and central office leadership Jan. 25 for a review of the annual plan. Ferguson commended Palliser for the amount of information shared in the report each year.

Gietz said staff is reviewing the achievement results of the division's relatively small First Nations population and would recommend appropriate targets.

Huntsville School adding literacy resources and club activities

Huntsville School students are reaping the benefits of more books and more time for reading, says Principal

Chris Spanos. Spanos, in his first year as principal of the school in Iron Springs, said the school has increased time in the schedule for students to read, which has led to even more reading time at home as students discover a true enjoyment of this leisure activity.

“They take books home and read there as well,” Spanos said.

Improving reading levels has been an area of emphasis at the school following an overwhelmingly positive school review conducted last year.

Spanos said the review data celebrated the school’s strengths, including a family atmosphere, caring staff, collaborative team and literacy focus. The school serves about 110 students from early learning through Grade 9.

The review identified a need for more activities, athletic and non-athletic, more partnerships with the broader community, opportunities for student leadership and improvements to the school’s outdoor area.

The school now offers club activities on a wide range of activities, including cup stacking, juggling, origami, card games and art. Students from Grades 1 through 9 select activities of interest and get a new choice every four weeks.

Spanos said the school introduced a leadership club. Students lead assemblies and create and share multimedia presentations each month. Junior high students are mentoring younger students, and all students participate in spirit days.

Students have volunteered at a local food bank and visited with seniors at a lodge in Picture Butte. They also participate in “Do the Bright Thing,” a campaign which encourages students to recognize other students they see doing something positive.

The school is seeking a grant to purchase picnic tables and volleyball equipment to enhance the outdoor area.

Spanos said the school has also started holding a coffee

club for parents following assemblies.

The board thanked Spanos and his staff for their efforts.

Planning started for leadership event for Palliser elementary students

Palliser continues to encourage students to demonstrate leadership at all grades.

Associate Superintendent Education Services Pat Rivard said Vulcan Prairieview Elementary School Principal Shane Cranston is leading a group of elementary school principals in planning the division’s first Elementary Student Leadership Conference. The event will be held April 28 at Vulcan Prairieview with an expected 400 students from across Palliser in attendance.

Meanwhile, middle and high school students who attended the Discover U Student Leadership Conference in November continue to work on their school-based leadership projects. Students who helped plan Discover U are working on a follow-up event where student groups will be able to share their accomplishments. The student-led conference will be the topic of a presentation by Palliser staff and students at the National Congress on Rural Education, to be held in Saskatoon this spring.

Administration to investigate what’s involved in sponsoring a refugee family

The board approved in principle support for an education program at Calgary Islamic School to bring international students to Calgary. The board also supported administration’s exploration of a potential sponsorship of a Syrian refugee family in Calgary. Administration has been asked to report back on the commitment and costs related to sponsorship.

Next meeting: March 15, 2016