

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

August 25, 2015



Board reviews wording of policies

At its first meeting of the new school year, the Board of Trustees reviewed four of its policies and approved in principle the largely housekeeping changes to their wording.

If approved, Board Policy 5, Role of the Board Chair, will be changed to add a responsibility to the Board Chair. The chair would be expected to ensure action on the board's "positive path forward" is addressed throughout the year. The trustees establish their areas of growth at their annual self-evaluation.

The board discussed amending Policy 12, Role of the Superintendent/CEO, to update timelines for annual evaluations.

Policy 16, Recruitment of Staff, is a housekeeping change to update references to the Secretary-Treasurer.

The draft of Policy 22, Alternative Programs, changes references to "Christian" programs to "faith-based" to reflect Palliser's addition of the Calgary Islamic School. The draft wording would also change references to the notice period for terminating an alternative program to indicate the notice would be in keeping with the master agreement. For programs not involving a society partner, the notice for terminating an alternative program would be 18 months.

The draft policies with proposed changes were included in the public agenda package, found [here](#).

Students to be invited to join board at PSBAA Trustee University in October

The Public School Boards' Association of Alberta has invited member boards, including Palliser's, to have two community or student leaders join them at the association's Trustee University Oct. 22.

Trustees discussed the importance of student involvement in the governance process and will invite two students to join Palliser's board at the event.

Review team finds strong community of learners at Huntsville School

Director of Learning Cynthia Gietz joined the board to present the results of a school review conducted at

Huntsville School on May 4.

Huntsville is a community school in Iron Springs, with an alternative junior high program for Low German-speaking Mennonite students. The school's student population of about 100 students in early learning through Grade 9 is predominantly Low German Mennonite.

Gietz thanked Palliser's LGM Liaison Worker Dan Doerksen for his help with the school review process. He translated survey questions for parents and helped some parents submit their answers online using a computer at the school.

She said the data collected by the review team show school strengths include: caring and respectful teachers and staff; strong family atmosphere; and collaboration among staff.

Areas of refinement include the condition of the playground and a desire for more books.

The school staff was led by Principal Shari Rogerson at the time of the review. The school's new principal this fall is Chris Spanos.

Gietz said the review was full of appreciative data indicating a staff that works well together and students who feel cared for.

The Board asked that congratulations for the results be shared with Rogerson, the outgoing principal.

Board refers Community Conversation report to committee for review, action

The Board of Trustees was presented a final report from "A Community Conversation 2015," a gathering of students, staff, parents and other stakeholders held May 28. The report is available online [here](#).

The board will resurrect its ad hoc community engagement committee to review the report in depth and determine an action plan out of the data collected. That committee will meet Sept. 22.

Stakeholders, working in small groups, reviewed factors of school success that emerged from a 2012 discussion, added a factor that was missed (leadership) and had suggestions for building on student and school success.

The board thanked Director of Learning Laurie Wilson and Communications Officer Dawn Sugimoto for their work reviewing all the data collected from the stakeholder meeting.

Board welcomes communications specialist to Palliser team

The board welcomed Communications Specialist Craig Albrecht to the Palliser team. Albrecht, the former communications officer for Westwind School division, joined Palliser Aug. 24. He will work with Communications Officer Dawn Sugimoto, who has assumed additional duties in support of the Superintendent's Office.

Strong team effort welcomes Calgary Islamic School staff to the fold

Superintendent Kevin Gietz thanked Associate Superintendents Stan Hielema and Ken Garinger, Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun, Director of Human Resources Mike Nightingale, HR Manager Linda Poirier and HR Executive Assistant Marliis Norlin for their work in transitioning staff at Calgary Islamic School into Palliser. The two campuses have more than 100 staff, and the HR team was able to prepare all the new contracts for presentation to staff Aug. 24. He said the staff at Calgary Islamic School were incredibly welcoming to Palliser. The school has about 1,300 students on two campuses and students come from about 20 different countries around the world.

No time to waste for struggling readers

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said the division is encouraging a "full-court press" on supporting struggling readers this fall. This is part of Palliser's new goal to ensure 95 per cent of Grade 3 students are reading at expected level by March 2019.

He said Palliser staff have seen the impact of the summer slide (the loss of reading skills in July and August) and there's no time to lose for students who need to recover those skills this fall.

Director of Learning Laurie Wilson spent three weeks this summer working with struggling readers in one community and found both evidence of lost skills in July, but also excellent progress with daily reading.

The project underscored the need for more summer reading projects in our communities.

After seeing Palliser's most recent literacy report "Leadership in Literacy," Dr. Janet Mort invited Palliser to present at the Second Calgary Summit being held in Calgary Oct. 22-23. The theme of the conference is "When Struggling Readers Thrive Dreams Come True." The conference is focused on vulnerable readers from kindergarten through Grade 4.

Students from Brazil set to join Palliser

Palliser's international student program is growing. On

Aug. 26, nine students from Brazil are booked to arrive for a semester in Coaldale and Picture Butte schools. There are also international students planning to attend schools in Champion and Vulcan this fall. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said when the international program was first in development, it was originally thought families would be drawn to Palliser's Calgary schools. Instead, many of Palliser's smaller communities are also drawing interest.

This summer an international student in Hong Kong became the first to complete credits through Palliser Beyond Border online school. Rivard said this was a test of how the online technology would work from another country and it worked well.

Rivard thanked Director of Learning Tom Hamer for his work on the international program.

Noble Central modernization likely to go to tender soon

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun said modernization of Noble Central School has been slowly progressing with design work now 90 per cent complete and a new costing estimate expected next week. The next step would be moving to tender, which may happen by mid- or late-September. The province has introduced a new layer of reporting on modernization projects that must be completed before funds are release, Braun said. If all goes well, work could begin in early December with completion for the 2017-2018 school year.

Board moves up organizational meeting

The Board of Trustees will hold its annual organizational meeting at its September meeting, a month earlier than normal. It also will hold future organizational meetings even earlier — in June — except in years when there's an October election.

The trustees discussed the benefits of organizing committee appointments and establishing meeting schedules in June so the board is organized when the new school year starts.

Online payment of fees coming soon

Palliser will introduce online fee payment systems at 18 of its schools this year.

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun said some schools won't have the online payment option because of their size or that they don't have access to the necessary software.

Training is occurring this week and the system should go live later in September. Benefits of the system include convenience, the safety of having less cash on hand at the school office, and email notifications to parents of events or items available to students.

Search is on for location for new Calgary outreach program

Palliser continues to search for a suitable location for a new outreach program in Calgary.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Stan Hielema said Alberta Education approved the board's application for the new program in early June. A location was found in Calgary but it was going to take months to get approval from the city. That site is no longer available and Palliser hasn't found another location that's near transit routes and easily accessible to students.

The outreach program will provide high school programming to Palliser students in Calgary who need an alternative to a traditional high school.

Hielema said he hopes a suitable location can be found in time for second semester.

Board changes up its meeting schedule

The board identified conflicts with its meeting schedule

and voted to change upcoming board meeting dates which are normally held on the second Tuesday of the month.

The September meeting will be held on Sept. 8, and the annual organizational meeting will also be held that day. The October meeting will be held Monday, Oct. 19 to allow trustees to attend the annual Public School Boards' Association of Alberta fall general meeting, and the November meeting is slated for Nov. 24.

Palliser to seek mediation with society at Master's Academy and College

Palliser Regional Schools will seek mediation with the Master's Academy Educational Society to help seek a new master agreement acceptable to both Palliser and the society. The mediation process is outlined in the existing master agreement. That agreement sets out the terms and partnership between Palliser and the society that established Master's Academy and College as faith-based alternative programs within Palliser. Master's joined Palliser in 2008-2009.

Next meeting: September 8, 2015

