

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

April 25, 2017



Journey to self-regulation has changed lives of students and adults

The principals of Palliser schools piloting a self-regulation process to alleviate stress, anxiety and behaviour issues describe it as nothing short of life-changing.

Four Palliser schools — Jennie Emery Elementary in Coaldale, Dorothy Dalgliesh in Picture Butte, Champion School and Menno Simons Christian School in Calgary — are piloting self-regulation. Three of the four principals joined Director of Learning Shane Cranston and Behaviour Specialist Karen Braun at the board meeting to share with trustees some of the early outcomes.

Cranston and Braun led a Palliser delegation to Ontario earlier this school year to talk with colleagues who have adopted self-regulation. Menno Simons Principal Denise Weaver characterized it as the best professional development of her life.

“It was a tremendous learning experience over three days,” Cranston said.

Self-regulation is a tool for addressing stress, anxiety and other related issues. The process of reframing how we view behaviour, recognizing and reducing stressors, encouraging self-reflection and responding to give individuals the tools to be in control and at their best.

Braun used her hand to demonstrate brain function. The thumb, she said, is like the limbic system, which controls our fight and flight reaction. Tucking her thumb under four fingers, she said the fingers represent the thinking part of the brain. In the face of stress (short-term or chronic), trauma or medical issues, the brain’s limbic system takes control. Eventually the thinking part of the brain takes back control. How efficiently and effectively an individual deals with stress affects how long it might take for this recovery.

“Some people don’t recover from stress effectively,” she said.

Cranston said the self-regulation process is a way for teachers and students to be more proactive in dealing with stressors. The need is great. The number of referrals to Palliser’s team of Family School Liaison Counsellors is rising with more than 600 students now on the combined case load. An increasing number are anxiety-related, as anxiety is now the most common mental health problem



To see self-regulation in action, please [watch this video](#) from Champion School where students made fidget toys which students can use to help with their focus.

among children, Cranston said.

Symptoms such as trouble listening, volatility, social withdrawal or aggression are all signs of stress behaviour, Braun said. Through self-regulation, we can see some misbehaviour is actually stress behaviour.

“There’s no such thing as a bad kid,” she said.

Through self-regulation, the adults are reframing behaviour. Where some behaviour might have previously led to calls for school suspension, principals now see sending those students out of the school environment is not a solution at all.

Instead, they’re working with students to identify stressors, such as noise, and finding solutions, such as noise-cancelling headphones.

The solutions, though, aren’t just imposed by the adults. Instead, students learn to reflect on their own needs.

“It’s called ‘self-reg,’ not ‘me-reg-you,’ ” Braun said.

Students learn tools and strategies for effectively addressing their own needs, skills they can use for life.

Associate Superintendent Education Services Pat Rivard said that is key to the success of self-regulation. These aren’t just solutions for a school environment. They will work when these Palliser students are adults.

In fact, the self-regulation process can be a way for

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

teachers to address their own wellness, Braun said.

“It’s hard to help a student if you’re not regulated,” Brauns said. “We need to regulate ourselves before we can help the kids.”

The team involved in the pilot project point out this is a life-long process, not a program that can quickly be implemented.

At Champion School, Principal Jody Beagle credits self-regulation with calming one student to the point he is no longer on medication.

Weaver and Jennie Emery Principal Sherrie Nickel both said they’d been accused of “being too soft on these kids.” Through self-regulation, they now understand the science behind the behaviour and how to support the student in a learning environment, instead of sending them home.

“We are protecting potential in this way, too,” Weaver said.

The board thanked Cranston, Braun and the principals for their presentation and their efforts to help students self-regulate.

Organization review response continues

Acting Superintendent Dr. Garry Andrews provided his monthly update on actions taken to respond to the recommendations in the organizational review of Palliser Regional Schools.

Several recommendations were touched upon through the Board of Trustees’ ongoing review of policies at an April 11th workshop, facilitated by Dr. Terry Weninger. Several draft policies are now open for stakeholder feedback. The next workshop is May 17.

A committee discussing Canadian Standards Association’s Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace standards is scheduled to meet again May 17 (recommendation 2). Led by Directors of Learning Mike Nightingale, Ryan Brennan and Jason Kupery, committee members representing a broad cross-section of Palliser staff will begin establishing the next steps forward in terms of changing the organizational culture.

A complete monthly summary will be posted on the board’s [Organizational Review webpage](#).

The board received a report on electronic monitoring (recommendation 14). While student email accounts are routinely filtered for troubling keywords, such as weapons or “suicide,” there is no similar ongoing monitoring of staff accounts.

The report says some staff email may be forwarded to another person if the employee is on leave or resigns to ensure continuity of service. A “vault search” of an individual account may also occur to access necessary information, such as retrieving password reset information, or to investigate viruses or other

compromised accounts. Vault searches have also been conducted to collect specific information for Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) requests.

Recruitment firm selected to support search for new superintendent

An international recruitment firm with 70 years of experience and an office in Calgary was the unanimous choice by the Palliser Board of Trustees to lead the search for a new superintendent.

The company, Boyden, will be paid a flat rate of \$50,000 plus expenses. Among information guiding the search process will be hundreds of comments from Palliser stakeholders who answered a single question: What is the most important quality the new Superintendent of Schools should possess to be successful and best serve the students of Palliser Regional Schools?

Board Chair Robert Strauss said both the applicants for executive search services and the volume of submissions from stakeholders to the quality question were impressive.

“I am grateful to all who took the time to submit responses to our question,” Strauss said Tuesday, April 25, following the board’s regular meeting. “The survey results will be shared in full with Boyden as part of our search.”

Strauss said he expects stakeholders will find their comments echoed in an ideal candidate profile which will be part of the search process.

The anonymous, online survey was open from March 27 to April 7 and received about 470 responses. Another dozen responses were submitted on paper. To invite a broad spectrum of respondents, a link to the survey was shared with Palliser staff, posted on the division and school websites, and advertised on Facebook to users from Coaldale to Calgary.

Many of the responses named more than one quality. To ensure each was considered, the responses were separated into individual qualities. Overall there were more than 660 characteristics or ideas submitted.

Once grouped into synonymous terms, key themes emerged.

The top qualities in order of the number of mentions are shown in the chart on the next page.

Qualities that were only mentioned once or submissions that did not answer the question were not included in this summary.

Strauss said the verbatim comments would be shared with Boyden and he expected the consulting firm would begin its work almost immediately.

While the search continues, the board voted to extend the contract of Acting Superintendent Dr. Garry Andrews

Survey Results on Superintendent Qualities					
Quality	Mentions	Quality	Mentions	Quality	Mentions
Integrity/ethical	106	Distributed leadership	9	Catholic/Christian/Godly	4
Honest	56	Good listener	9	Empowers others	4
Approachable	31	Kind	9	Engaging	4
Trustworthy	30	Teacher/Teacher-centric	9	Excellent Communicator	4
Respectful	26	Team Builder/Team Player	9	Female	4
Student-focused	25	Business Professionalism/ Professionalism	8	Fiscally Responsible	4
Caring	23	Courageous	8	Innovative	4
Transparent	19	Credentialed/Doctorate/ Qualified	8	Progressive	4
Accountable	18	Instructional Leader	8	Role Model	4
Humble	13	Staff-focused	8	Authentic	3
Relationship Builder	13	Fair	7	Competent	3
Compassionate	12	Wise	7	Intelligent	3
New to Palliser	12	Knowledgeable	5	Selfless	3
Supportive	11	Open-minded	5	Servant leader	3
Empathetic/Understanding	10	Visible in schools	5	Status Quo	3
Experienced	10	Wellness focused	5	Visionary	3

to Aug. 31, 2017.

A second board request for proposal for ombudsperson services has closed and will be considered when trustees meets for another policy review workshop May 16.

Name set for new Calgary school

Work to establish a new alternative program in Calgary took another step forward with the establishment of a name for the new school. Horizon Academy Elementary School will be created out of the new partnership between Palliser and Horizon Academy Institute. The school is slated to open this fall in southwest Calgary, providing a focus on leadership and Arabic and Islamic studies for students in kindergarten through Grade 6.

Board to write letter of support for maintaining lab service in Picture Butte

The Board of Trustees voted to write a letter of support for maintaining an Alberta Health Services laboratory service in Picture Butte. Trustee Craig Whitehead said the town recently wrote its own letter to

raise concerns about potential closure of the lab.

He said students needing lab tests may miss more school if they have to book appointment time in Lethbridge.

Bylaws set stage for fall election

The board passed a number of bylaws needed to run the Oct. 16, 2017 school board election in conjunction with the municipal elections in its communities.

The board appointed Joanne Siljak as returning officer, a role she's filled in previous elections. The modified voting procedure bylaw was given all three readings unanimously, so school board ballots could be held in the same locations as municipal ballots, and advance votes can be held on the same date as municipal advance balloting.

Trustees concerned about public perception of nutrition program funds

The board expressed concern over confusion that may stem from a recent provincial announcement about additional funding for school nutrition programs. Palliser's

share in this new funding is expected to be \$141,000. In the announcement, the Education Minister stated “suggested funding is \$5 per student, per day, for the school year.”

In Palliser’s case, based on this year’s enrolment, \$5 per day for 180 days of school is about \$7.4 million. Trustee Colleen Deitz said based on funding for next year of \$141,000 for school nutrition, Palliser will receive about \$17 a year per student.

She said some parents have already been asking her about the new nutrition programs. Some corporate citizens who have been funding nutrition programs in various schools may also be rethinking their gifts based on the impression these needs are now provincially funded.

Associate Superintendent Education Services Pat Rivard said his team is still reviewing provincial criteria on how the funding can be used and he’ll share additional information with the board once available.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: May 30, 2017