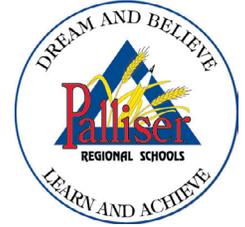


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, May 24, 2016



HR team shares annual report

This has been a year of growth in Human Resources, with new tools for staff, and more division employees than at any other time in Palliser history.

Directors of Human Resources Ryan Brennan and Mike Nightingale presented to the board the HR department's annual accountability report. It summarized services provided to some 560 full-time equivalent teachers and school administrators, and hundreds of support staff, including counsellors, educational and administrative assistants, speech language pathologists, librarians and instructors of German and Arabic languages.

Nightingale said the addition of 116 employees at Calgary Islamic School in late August involved the collection of more than 2,000 documents such as contracts, criminal record checks and teacher certifications.

The team also adopted a new payroll system, SRB, which went live in stages, he said. Employees began managing leaves in the new system in May 2015, with payroll going live on the system in September. An automated dispatch system for substitute teachers went online in December. Training opportunities were provided to staff along the way, including sessions for substitute teachers on how to use the system.

Employment opportunities are now posted through the division's website, a new service introduced this year, giving prospective and current employees an opportunity to be notified of new job posts that may be of interest to them. More than 1,100 people have created accounts to access the Career Opportunities listings, where they can upload resumes and other documents securely and sign up for notifications of new postings.

Brennan, who joined the department in February, said HR supports staff through a variety of professional development programs including induction programs for teachers in their first-, second- and third-year of teaching; induction and mentorship programs for principals and vice-principals in their first two years of school leadership; an orientation program for all teachers new to Palliser; and a lead teacher program for those interested in school leadership. The division introduced a program for teachers designated to serve as their school's acting principal this year as well.

Associate Superintendent Human Resources Ken

Garinger said the HR department has adopted a service model.

"We have a strong team in HR and I'm looking forward to the great things we can achieve," he said, as he thanked Brennan and Nightingale for the report.

New admin procedure will address how to handle concussions

Palliser will begin drafting a new administrative procedure on concussions, following a recommendation by its insurer, ASBIE. The Alberta School Boards Insurance Exchange provided a draft to member boards. Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun said he expects to have a draft ready for circulation to stakeholders in June.

Coaldale grade configurations to remain unchanged for another year

The board will hold off making any changes to grade configurations in its Coaldale schools until September 2017.

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun recommended holding off any changes until after September 30, 2016, when the 2016-2017 enrolments are known across Coaldale.

Once those numbers are known, administration can review the utilization rates in each of the Coaldale schools and consider options for addressing the space shortage at Jennie Emery Elementary School, which houses a before- and after- school program, early learning and kindergarten through Grade 4.

The elementary school has a utilization rate of 92 per cent, based on a formula of enrolment compared to instructional space, and there is no more space on the property for additional modular classrooms. Once a school reaches 85 per cent utilization, Alberta Education considers it full.

R.I. Baker Middle School, serving Grades 5-8, has a utilization rate of 68 per cent and Kate Andrews High School, for Grade 9-12, is at 61 per cent.

Braun said a public consultation process will occur before any changes are made for the 2017-2018 school year.

Kate Andrews review finds diverse activities, caring staff among strengths

Director of Learning Cynthia Gietz shared the findings from a school review conducted at Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale. Central Office administrators, principals and vice-principals from other Palliser schools, and a member of Palliser's lead teacher cohort visited the school in November.

The review process included classroom observations, teacher interviews, surveys of staff, students and parents, and focus group meetings with support staff, parents and students.

Gietz said the review identified effective teachers as a strength, with students noting help available outside of class time and for students with learning difficulties. Staff and students have a positive, caring relationship that enhances learning, and the school offers a broad range of extra-curricular activities from athletics and fine arts, student leadership and other clubs.

Areas of refinements included a desire for teaching tailored to different learning styles; consistent expectations for student behaviour; and more communication between school and home and with staff.

Kate Andrews is a Grade 9-12 school in Coaldale serving about 340 students.

Gietz said the data will be shared with school staff who can then review it in small groups and determine how the feedback can help shape the school.

Student literacy levels improving

Palliser is making headway toward its goal of ensuring 95 per cent of Grade 3 students will be reading at expected level in March 2019.

Director of Learning Cynthia Gietz said assessment data collected this spring found there was an increase in the percentage of students reading at expected level in Grades 2-6, compared to the initial benchmark assessment in fall. Among Grade 1 students, 61 per cent were reading at or above expected level at the start of the school year and again in the spring. Of 586 Grade 3 students assessed this spring, 76 per cent are reading at or above expected level.

Benchmark assessments are conducted in the fall on students up to Grade 6, so teachers know each student's reading level and can base their instruction on that. The assessments in early spring confirm whether instruction has been effective and if not, teachers have time to tweak instruction before the end of the school year.

Beyond Grade 6, only students not yet reading at a Grade 7 level continue to be assessed this way. Several Palliser high schools have adopted the Ontario Comprehension Assessment tool as a way to continue to support literacy for secondary students.

For students not yet reading at grade level, additional supports are available such as consultation with the division's academic wrap-around team which includes experts in literacy, technology and inclusion. They suggest strategies to the classroom teacher based on the individual student's learning style and needs.

Gietz said the report does not include students at the two campuses of Calgary Islamic School, which joined Palliser in August. About 70 teachers at the two campuses have been trained on Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessments, and training was offered twice during the year for any teachers wanting a refresher or new to the system.

She said Palliser's technology team have been working to move all historical student literacy data into Dossier, a program which will house all student assessment information. Once that data is in the system, Palliser will be able to more accurately track individual student literacy progress over time. The system should also reduce data entry errors.

Changes to Central Office will save \$50,000 in salary, benefits

The board adopted a new organization chart reflecting a change in central office to reduce from three associate superintendents to two, and adding two director-level positions to replace the associate and a supervisor of Islamic studies. The change in positions will save Palliser about \$50,000 a year in salary and benefits.

Palliser Beyond Borders teachers develop Sports Analytics course

A group of Palliser Beyond Borders teachers have designed a five-credit course on Sports Analytics which the board approved for submission to Alberta Education. If approved by the department, the locally developed course can be offered to students in Palliser and across Alberta.

The course focuses on statistical analysis of sports, an approach captured in the book and subsequent movie, "Moneyball."

"It's incredible what they've designed," said Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard.

Palliser Beyond Borders is an online, outreach and international program serving Palliser and students from outside the division.

Palliser expects staffing adjustments due to projected enrolment decline next year

Palliser will produce a balanced budget for 2016-2017 despite a projected decline in enrolment and no grant increases for incremental pay increases to staff or the impact of the new carbon tax.

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun said enrolment is projected to decline by 45 students. As a result, teaching staff will be reduced by 2.75 full-time equivalent positions. That's a 0.5 per cent decrease in certificated staff. Non-certificated staff is expected to be reduced by 3.18 full-time equivalents based on projected student support needs. The actual impact on staff will be mitigated by retirements with seven teachers and three support staff having announced their intent to retire.

The budget also spreads out the investment in evergreening technology over four years, instead of three.

Cost pressures factored into budgeting for next year include: no funding increase to cover increases to teachers moving up the salary grid, an expense of about \$700,000; estimated inflation of one per cent, unfunded; carbon tax of about \$20,000 on bus fuel and another \$50,000 on natural gas and electricity.

Braun said the division expects to have revenues of about \$92 million next year.

As part of the budget discussion, the board maintained instructional supplies and material fees at current rates. For elementary schools, the board continues to waive the \$39 fee. Fees of \$59 for Grade 7-9 students and \$69 for Grades 10-12 will continue to be collected, along with a \$35 technology fee for all students 1-12. Principals can waive the fees for families in financial hardship.

Braun said he will continue to fine-tune the budget as the June 30th deadline for submission nears.

"This is a work in progress," he said.

Stakeholders gather to reimagine future of Huntsville School facility

Palliser and its stakeholders joined Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure representatives, architects and cost consultants at a value scoping session over the course of two days at Huntsville School in Iron Springs. Secretary-

Treasurer Wayne Braun said the school is one of 50 projects on the so-called provincial sunshine list, of capital projects considered a priority but not yet funded.

Braun said about 20 people took part including trustees, administrators, and a parent from the small school. Participants worked in four different groups and devised four different approaches for how to improve the school, whether through modernization or building new. A fifth option was also presented after costing estimates were done.

Huntsville School serves about 110 students from early learning through Grade 9. The junior high program is an alternative program for Low German-speaking Mennonite students.

Acting Superintendent appointed

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools passed a resolution Tuesday to appoint Dr. Garry Andrews as acting superintendent effective immediately.

Andrews is no stranger to Palliser having served as superintendent from 2004 to 2007. Since his retirement, he has continued to work as an educational consultant and has served as acting superintendent for Elk Island Catholic and Medicine Hat Catholic School boards.

Andrews has more than 30 years of experience in education, including teaching in secondary and post-secondary institutions and two decades in CEO/superintendent roles.

He is filling in for Kevin Gietz, who is taking a temporary leave. Gietz has served as Superintendent of Palliser Regional Schools since 2007, when he succeeded Andrews. Gietz joined Palliser in 2005 as an associate superintendent working as part of Andrews' team.

The board's motion appointing Andrews is for a term ending July 4 or until Gietz returns.

No further details of the leave will be made public in keeping with privacy legislation.

The next regular board meeting is June 21, 2016.