

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

June 21, 2016



Communications accountability report emphasizes sharing success stories

Palliser's communications team emphasizes the division's goals and shares student and staff success stories in a variety of ways.

In sharing the annual accountability report, Communications Officer Dawn Sugimoto and Communications Specialist Craig Albrecht described highlights from their work this past year, including being part of both the high school and elementary student leadership events, and representing Palliser provincially through work with the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta.

The division's website is a key communication tool, and featured more than 200 new content items and 70 photo galleries. Same-day updates were provided to staff and the public on key issues, including development of a new board policy on Safe and Caring Learning Environment and an organizational review. The team provides media relations, graphic design services and video production.

The board thanked Sugimoto and Albrecht for their work in the division.

Student services support students' academic and wellness needs

Palliser's range of supports for students' academic and wellness needs have improved individual results, provided new tools for teachers, and literally saved lives.

The team, led by Associate Superintendent Education Services Pat Rivard and Director of Learning Laurie Wilson, shared their annual Student Services Accountability Report with the board, showcasing services that include Palliser's Academic Wrap-Around team, collaborative efforts, early learning and counselling services.

The Academic Wrap-Around team brings together experts in literacy, inclusive education and technology integration to work with a classroom teacher and school principal to support an individual student. Wilson said the strategies suggested by the team are intended to benefit that single student but inevitably help others in the classroom. This year there were 147 referrals to the team.

Technology Integration Specialist Jason Kwasny, who is

part of the team, says many teachers know about various tech tools but may need support implementing them. Technology has played a part in about a third of the wrap-arounds.

Wilson said the team's goal is to leave teachers with more tools in their teaching tool box. The team offers strategies then follows up six or eight weeks after the initial visit to see if they are working or if others may be needed to help the student.

Another highlight this year saw Palliser's Low German Mennonite Liaison Worker Dan Doerksen become the first person in southern Alberta to receive a translator's identification number with Alberta Transportation. This means he can translate for Low German-speaking people who are trying to get a driver's licence. Low German is not a written language and had not previously been recognized by Alberta Transportation. This is part of Doerksen's ongoing support to families in Palliser.

Due to the division's large geographic size, Palliser is a partner in three Regional Collaborative Service Delivery groups that co-ordinate health and other supports for students with complex needs. Palliser has been able to share best practices from one RCSD to another for the benefit of students from across the division, Rivard said.

Wilson and Rivard had high praise for Palliser's team of family school liaison counsellors. Palliser has 11 full-time counsellors across the division carrying a case load of 544 students. In addition to one-on-one support, they led 220 group presentations in support of students' emotional and mental well-being.

Counsellors are part of the Violent Threat Risk Assessment process. There were 42 VTRAs in the division last year and 76 suicide risk assessments. Wilson said she's confident the team's work has saved students from harm based on these interventions.

Rivard said he's met with Alberta Health Services to advocate for more help in this area.

This year, Palliser also offered training to Grade 9 and 10 teachers on mental health, creating a network of "go-to" teachers. Their role is not to serve as counsellor but just to be a listening ear or a referral to other help available to students.

Wilson said a collaborative approach to service delivery for occupational and physical therapy, mental health

and speech supports is also paying dividends in Palliser's elementary schools. The school team meets to determine which students require a referral to a specialist. Referrals have been reduced, and the classroom teacher is often able to give the student the supports he/she needs.

Palliser's Behaviour Support Specialist Karen Braun also works with teachers across the division to help them manage student behavioural issues. The division continues to train teachers and support staff on Supporting Individual through Value Attachments (SIVA), so adults can identify how the student communicates, what might trigger inappropriate behaviour and how to address them respectfully and safely.

Braun's work with classroom teachers also helps increase student engagement in class, follow-up surveys found, Wilson said.

Co-ordinating Principal of Early Learning Nathan Sillito shared his work providing early interventions to students in Palliser's early learning and kindergarten programs, particularly those children with speech or other needs. He said if therapists are required to support unique needs, they share information with the classroom teacher, learning support teacher and educational assistant working with that child.

Rivard also shared data collected from students who participated in the high school student leadership conferences that showed their perceived growth in leadership. The event also attracted 99 more students to leadership roles in their schools.

Rivard concluded the report with thanks to Wilson, who plans to retire in 2016-2017.

"I've had the privilege of working with you for five years," he said. "You have left a legacy with our kids. I'm forever grateful for what you've taught me."

Board makes minor additions to Safe and Caring policy based on feedback

The board made minor changes to its Policy 17, Safe and Caring Learning Environment, based on feedback from Alberta Education.

The policy was passed in April following an opportunity for input from stakeholders. School jurisdictions around the province were required to submit their policies to Alberta Education to ensure they reflected the School Act and human rights legislation.

The spirit and intent of the original policy was unchanged.

The tweaking added specific reference to Section 16.1(1) of the School Act, which ensures support be made available to a student or students who want to create a club or activity that promotes "a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects

diversity and fosters a sense of belonging." Such a club might promote understanding of different cultures or faiths, for example.

The other change was to make associated administrative procedures related to safe schools part of the policy, rather than just references. These specific APs will require board-approval for any changes. Normally, such procedures are approved by the superintendent.

The policy can be viewed online [here](#).

New child advocacy centre receives financial boost from province

A new child advocacy centre in Lethbridge for southern Alberta's young victims of abuse received a boost this month. Human Services Minister Irfan Sabir announced \$1.7 million through the Family and Community Safety Program to support child advocacy centres across the province, including one serving Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

Associate Superintendent Pat Rivard said the announcement was made at a Calgary event where the documentary "Swift Current" was shown. That film tells the story of Sheldon Kennedy, a former professional hockey player who was a victim of sexual abuse by his junior hockey coach.

Kennedy is now one of Canada's leading advocates for victims of child abuse. The Sheldon Kennedy Advocacy Centre in Calgary unites policy, mental health, and other community services to stop child abuse and provide support for victims and their families.

The Southern Alberta Child Advocacy Centre Committee, of which Palliser is a partner, recently hired a co-ordinator to help bring this multi-agency service to Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

Other emerging centres which will benefit from the new funding will be in Fort McMurray, Lloydminster and Red Deer.

Work continues to reduce surpluses in school-generated funds

Some Palliser schools continue to fundraise despite having significant school-generated funds in the bank.

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun provided the board an update on SGF funds to April 30. Overall, there's been a reduction of \$100,000 since the same time last year, but that's largely the result of spending at three schools. Other schools increased the amount of money in their SGF accounts. Overall there's \$820,000 sitting in Palliser school accounts that was raised by the schools themselves.

Palliser's auditors have voiced concern about the amount of money being collected in schools, warning any

fees or fundraising should be specific to a purpose and money should be spent on that purpose for the benefit of students in the current year. Fundraising shouldn't be held for general purposes and money banked for needs that may occur in the future.

Braun said he'll discuss SGF funds with schools that continue to collect more funds than they need, and he'll be asking principals to develop plans for how they'll use the money for students' benefit.

Grant will support FNMI education

Palliser will receive a Building Collaboration and Capacity in Education grant to support First Nations students, said Associate Superintendent Education Services Pat Rivard. The grant of about \$40,000 over three years will support the purchase of literacy materials for students, conference participation and cultural supports for schools. Rivard said additional details will be shared as they are confirmed. He thanked Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun and Director of Learning Laurie Wilson for their work on the grant application.

Board adopts balanced budget of \$93.1 million for 2016-2017 year

Palliser is projecting a balanced budget of about \$93.1 million in 2016-2017.

Enrolment is projected to drop by 22 students to 8,085 from early learning through Grade 12. Both high school and early learning enrolment will be down, compared to this year.

Certificated staff is expected to decline by 2.1 full-time equivalent teachers over the division. Non-certificated staff is expected to rise by 1.8 full-time equivalents. The staffing numbers are based on the needs of specific schools, including their enrolment and an assessment of special needs.

The budget does not include any salary increases for staff, aside from incremental increases to pay based on additional years of service, also known as grid movement. Those incremental increases to teachers and support staff will total \$765,000.

The budget is based on average annual teacher compensation of \$107,000 in salary and benefits.

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun said Palliser will continue to make a priority of meeting provincial class size guidelines at all grades.

Palliser's instructional and material fees have not changed from \$59 per junior high student and \$69 per high school student. The board continues to commit \$39 per Grade 1-6 student but does not pass on that fee to parents. A technology fee of \$35 per Grade 1-12 student is also collected and is unchanged from this year.

The budget shows an estimated \$417,000 will be collected at faith-based alternative schools to meet instructional and supply needs directly related to the faith program at those schools. This is the first year the provincial budget document requires a breakdown of such fees.

The budget includes plans for five new school buses, one new vehicle and three replacement vehicles in the division's fleet. The fleet is assigned to staff who support schools across the division, including Central Office administrators, specialists in technology integration, literacy and behaviour, a colony principal and itinerant teacher and others whose work travel makes a fleet vehicle more economical.

The budget aligns with the board's three-year education plan and its emphasis on literacy, safe and caring schools and other goals.

Capital reserves will be reduced by \$150,000 in 2015-2016 and another \$150,000 is budgeted in 2016-2017. In current year, capital reserves are being used to connect Calgary Islamic School Omar Bin Al-Khattab campus to Supernet and continue implementation of human resources, payroll and finance services software. In 2016-2017, budgeted capital reserve spending will include connecting Akram Jomaa campus to Supernet and some Central Office building work.

Palliser's plant operations and maintenance funding decreased this year, as two Calgary schools (Heritage Christian Academy and Menno Simons Christian School) will no longer receive any lease funding in 2016-2017. The other Calgary schools have never received lease support despite years of lobbying by Palliser.

Palliser's administrative spending remains within the provincial cap of 3.6 per cent.

Busy summer of work in schools ahead

Palliser's facilities staff have a busy summer ahead of infrastructure maintenance renewal (IMR) work.

Palliser has just over \$2 million to spend, with \$300,000 carried forward from last year.

Projects will include:

- Door replacements and millwork at Arrowwood Community School;
- Barons School gym floor refinishing and fire alarm upgrade;
- Carmangay Outreach and Champion School exterior door replacement;
- Coalhurst Elementary first of two phases of parking lot improvements to improve staff parking and move school buses drop-off and pick-up off the street and closer to the school;
- Coalhurst High School furnace replacement;

- County Central High fire alarm panel upgrade and new flooring in the shop area;
- Dorothy Dalglish window coverings;
- John Davidson School classroom flooring and creation of a library space;
- Kate Andrews High gym floor refinishing;
- Milo Community School blinds and lighting changes;
- R.I. Baker Middle School fire door replacement and flooring in the office area;
- and Sunnyside School first phase of window replacement.

Facilities in Palliser’s faith-based schools are the responsibility of the division’s society partners.

Palliser considers future of vacant space at County Central High School

Palliser will reach out to Lethbridge College to find out its plan for space the college had been using at County Central High School.

The space, with a separate entrance, had been used by

the college as part of a dual credit initiative.

The space could be used by Vulcan Outreach, which is in leased space a few blocks from the high school.

Originally, outreach schools were seen as an educational option for students who had behavioural issues that could not be managed in a traditional high school setting. Outreaches were usually located in a location separate from the high school. Over time, that has changed and many students now take courses in both the high school and the outreach to meet their scheduling needs.

Trustee Don Zech said outreach programs have evolved since his time in school administration. He recently attended a graduation ceremony at one of Palliser’s outreach programs and met several student who juggle jobs and studies.

For many, having the outreach share a campus with the high school would be convenient.

The board asked administration to investigate with the college about future dual credit possibilities before any decision on the space at County Central.

**Next board meeting and annual organization meeting: August 23, 2016.
Have a great summer!**