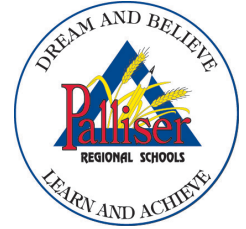


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, June 18, 2013



## Board holds final meeting of 2012-2013

The Board of Palliser Regional Schools held its final regular meeting of the 2012-2013 school year on June 18 at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge. The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Aug. 20 at Palliser Centre.

## Board Chair named to regulations committee on home schooling

Palliser Regional Schools' Board Chair Don Zech has been appointed to represent the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta on a provincial committee reviewing regulations related to home schooling in Alberta.

Several committees have been struck to review regulations in preparation for Alberta's new Education Act coming into force. The act was passed and received Royal Assent Dec. 10, 2012 but it won't come into force until the regulatory framework is established. Regulations carry the same force and effect as legislation.

The PSBAA has representatives serving on six provincial committees related to the Education Act.

## Board continues work on digital resource for incoming trustees

The Board's governance committee, chaired by Vice-Chair Robert Strauss, continues its work on a resource to assist future trustees. The committee, which began its work last year, has created a secure website with links to important documents such as Palliser's policies and provincial legislation. The committee also recommended a review of Board policy, which was



Don ZECH



Robert STRAUSS

conducted in February 2013.

Strauss requested other trustees review the online tool and offer input. The resource is intended to assist any new trustees who may be elected in the next school board election in October 2013.

The Board had circulated a number of its draft policies featuring changes discussed during the Board policy review to its Administrators' Association and Palliser Local No. 19 of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Following discussion, the Board passed amendments to the following policies based on the trustees' own review and feedback from key stakeholders:

- Policy 1 – Division Foundational Statements
- Policy 2 – Role of the Board
- Appendix 2A – Board Annual Work Plan
- Policy 3 – Role of the Trustee
- Appendix 3A – Services and Materials Provided to Trustees
- Policy 4 – Trustee Code of Ethics
- Appendix 4A – Trustee Code of Ethics Sanctions
- Policy 5 – Role of the Board Chair
- Policy 6 – Role of the Vice Chair
- Policy 7 – Board Operations
- Policy 8 – Committees of the Board
- Policy 9 – Board Representatives
- Policy 10 – Policy Making
- Policy 11 – Board Delegation of Authority
- Policy 12 – Role of the Superintendent/CEO
- Appendix 12A – Superintendent/CEO Evaluation Process Criteria and Timelines
- Appendix 12B – Performance Assessment Guide
- Appendix 12C – Interview Guide – CEO Leadership Practices
- Policy 14 – Hearings on Teacher Matters
- Policy 15 – School Closures
- Policy 16 – Recruitment and Selection of Personnel
- Policy 18 – Student Achievement
- Policy 17 – School-Based Decision-Making was deleted. The policy was no longer appropriate given Palliser's move away from site-based management to more centralized services.
- Policy 22 – Alternative Programs was created. This is a new policy reflecting the addition of faith-based alternative programs in Palliser. These

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

programs were not part of Palliser when the policy manual was created.

All the policies have been updated and posted on Palliser's website [here](#).

## Board adopts new goals for the new school year at annual self-evaluation

The Board conducted its annual self-evaluation June 7. The process included the board establishing the following areas of emphasis for the 2013-2014 school year:

- Develop new trustee orientation session
- Continue Board development plan
- Define critical aspects for 2013/14 and then move forward
- Continue to build the relationship with the leadership team

The Board approved its self-evaluation report and authorized the Board Chair to monitor the priorities and suggestions agreed to in that report and bring items forward to the Board for consideration as deemed appropriate.

## Board recognizes Palliser staff

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger thanked the Board for the staff recognition evening held June 17 in Lethbridge. The dinner acknowledges Palliser employees and organizations which have received special recognition at the local, provincial or national level. The special guests are accompanied by their school principal or immediate supervisor.

This year's invited guests were:

- Kathy Perley, Champion School, recipient of a Diamond Jubilee Medal
- Stephen Ward, Heritage Christian Academy, nominated for the Edwin Parr Award
- Dawn Ronne, Coalhurst Elementary School, Excellence in Teaching Award Semi-Finalist and nominated for a Council of School Leadership, Distinguished Leadership Award
- Jodie Gateman, County Central High School school council chair, Alberta School Council's Association Parent of Distinction Award Winner
- Kevin Gietz, Superintendent of Palliser Regional Schools, nominated for the SolutionsTree Redefining Excellence Award and the Alberta Congress Board Distinguished Workplace Leader Award
- Jennifer Mcinnes, Heritage Christian Academy, nominated for the Edwin Parr Award
- Sherrie Nickel, Huntsville School, winner of the Council of School Leadership, Distinguished Leadership Award

- Terry Hanna, Kate Andrews High School, inducted to the Lethbridge Sports Hall of Fame
- Justin Harper, Noble Central School, nominated for the Edwin Parr Award
- Isabelle Plomp, Palliser Early Intervention Specialist, finalist for the 2013 Alberta Human Services' Early Learning and Child Care Professional Awards of Excellence
- County Central High School, nominated for the Betty Grigg Inclusive Education Award from the Lethbridge Association for Community Living
- Natasha Quinton, Coalhurst High School, selected as Palliser's nominee for the Edwin Parr Award
- Ken Van Cleave, Sunnyside School, winner of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA) Teacher Award
- Desiree Lamb, Noble Central School, nominee for the Governor General's History for Excellence in Teaching Award
- Hank Beeksma, Calgary Christian High School, nominated for the Prime Minister's Award of Teaching Excellence
- Danielle Groeneveld, Calgary Christian Elementary School, nominated for the Edwin Parr Award
- Jadan Barthel, Calgary Christian High School, nominated for the Prime Minister's Award of Teaching Excellence

## Work on staff, admin evaluations and hiring for next year continues

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger updated the Board on key processes underway in Palliser including evaluations and staffing decisions.

This year, Garinger's office co-ordinated evaluations of 16 principals and vice-principals. The administrators provide evidence that they are meeting Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders.

Garinger, with support from a number of other Central Office administrators, also evaluated 25 teachers who were seeking permanent certification.

Meanwhile, school administrators conducted evaluations of 120 support staff and submitted that documentation to the Human Resources office. Support staff evaluations are intended to be done every three years.



**Kevin GARINGER**

Garinger said he continues to work with school administrators and staff to address staffing next year. The Board's budget for 2013-2014 projected a reduction of 12.5 full-time equivalent teachers and 11.2 FTE support staff. In 2012-2013, Palliser had 438.3 FTE teachers and 383.2 FTE support staff.

Some of the reductions to support staff reflect a reduction to instructional hours at schools, related to the tight budget and the new cap on teaching hours for full-time teachers, as outlined in the framework agreement negotiated between the Alberta Government and Alberta Teachers' Association. For the first time this year the Board set a maximum number of instructional hours for schools.

Garinger said Palliser's staffing projections may change as new students register and those adjustments will continue in September once the division determines actual enrolment.

## **Division expects 20 new teachers at beginning teacher induction days**

Palliser expects to welcome more than 20 teachers to its beginning teacher induction program Aug. 18-20. Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger said the participating teachers will receive days off in lieu for the time they spend in the induction program in August. The program matches new teachers with experienced mentors. Palliser offers supports to beginning teachers through their first three years in Palliser.

Garinger invited the Board to join the new teachers' group for lunch on Aug. 20, which coincides with the trustees' next board meeting.

## **Board agrees to bus on Palliser days off at the field trip rate**

The Board discussed a request from Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division for busing students to Catholic schools in Picture Butte and Coaldale in 2013-2014 on days when Palliser schools are not in session.

Students at St. Joseph's in Coaldale and St. Catherine's in Picture Butte travel on Palliser buses to school under a co-operative arrangement between the two divisions. In most years, the schools adhere to a common calendar for busing purposes. Next year, there are conflicts on several days, and Holy Spirit had asked Palliser to transport students on those dates at no additional cost.

The Board passed a motion agreeing to transport Holy Spirit students on days when Palliser students are not in school, charging Palliser's field trip busing rate.

## **Board expresses concern about Picture Butte bylaws related to busing**



**Joe WATSON**

The trustees' also discussed their concern with Picture Butte's bylaw that states school buses can't use their red flashing lights and stop arms in town. Trustees believe use of the flashing lights and stop arm would improve safety for students in the community. Only three municipalities served by Palliser have bylaws restricting the use of flashing red lights.

## **Coalhurst Elementary maximizes human resources, improves communication**

The Board welcomed Coalhurst Elementary School's administrative team, Principal Dawn Ronne and Vice-Principal Jason Prebushewski, to the meeting to share their action plan in response to the school review conducted in November 2012.

Ronne and Prebushewski opened their presentation with a promise: "We will always strive to improve in all areas of education. We understand the importance of measuring successes and areas of growth through the use of data and will always make every effort to continuously grow."

Prebushewski said school staff went through the findings of the review and identified two main themes: communications and resources.

Ronne said the staff took a look at the various ways it communicates with parents, including its use of Synvoice Technologies, an automated phone system. The school will use the system more consistently to share information about upcoming fundraisers and events. The messages can also be tailored to parents/guardians of students in specific classrooms, so with the school secretary's help, class information can be shared using the system.



**Dawn RONNE**

The Board will write to the Town of Picture Butte to raise concerns about the town's new bylaw establishing five common pickup points for all bus students in the community.

Trustee Joe Watson said he has concerns about safety at the pickup points, particularly in winter weather, and because several school buses will be arriving at these pickup points at the same time.



Ronne said the staff also reviewed its newsletter in an attempt to remove teacher jargon. "We decided all the information had to be meaningful and in parent friendly language." The school created a QR code and placed it around the school. When scanned on a mobile QR reader, the code takes parents directly to an online copy of the newsletter.

Prebushewski said staff also discussed ways to improve classroom newsletters and the importance of random phone calls home from the teacher.

Ronne said many parents pick up their children from school, so the school has asked parents to gather in the school atrium to wait for their children at the end of the day. That's now become a great time for staff to engage with parents on a regular basis.

The school also now has a chart of learning assistants and the students they're assigned to work with. If the student is away, staff can see at a glance that the learning assistant is available to work in another classroom. The process is building capacity in the school as assistants work to support a broad variety of students with special needs.

Ronne said the review found staff felt there weren't enough human resources to meet special needs and the needs of students who are gifted or at-risk. To maximize human resources, teachers scrutinized the timetable to identify blocks of time when students with special needs could be in the classroom without their assistant. An example might be a 15-minute block for story time. For that block of time, the assistant could work in a different classroom with another student. The change improved service to students without adding any additional staffing costs, Ronne said.

The review also found some teachers and learning assistants felt the school was lacking other resources. The school has now pooled its existing resources, once scattered through the library and individual classrooms, and created a literacy resource room, complete with staff meeting space. The move has put resources front and centre and at teachers' fingertips.

Prebushewski said the review also contained a number of areas of celebration, including the sense "staff teach love," and students say bullying is not an issue.

The Board congratulated the Coalhurst Elementary team for their efforts.

Trustees and Superintendent Kevin Gietz also took the opportunity to present Ronne a token of appreciation for her being named a semi-finalist for the Excellence in Teaching Award this year and her nomination for the Council of School Administrators Distinguished Leadership Award.

Ronne publicly thanked Prebushewski for his work. He leaves his post at Coalhurst Elementary next year to serve as vice-principal of R.I. Baker Middle School in Coaldale.

## **Brant Christian delivers solid academic results in a family-like atmosphere**

The Board welcomed Principal Rob Cowie from Brant Christian School to the meeting to share his school's response to the school review conducted in December 2012.

Brant Christian School, located in the hamlet of Brant northwest of Vulcan, is a faith-based school that serves about 115 students from kindergarten through Grade 12.

Cowie began by sharing the school's May 2013 Accountability Pillar from Alberta Education.

"I've never in 35 years been part of a report card like this one," Cowie said. "We're very blessed at Brant Christian School."

Positives emerging from the review data included high approval of the school's academic focus, its safe, caring and family-like atmosphere and its positive relationship with the society that supports the faith programming at the school and other partners.

The review found a lack of awareness of the school's annual goals. Cowie said copies of the goals will be posted conspicuously at the school, as well as in newsletters and on the website.

In response the review, the school will also be working to improve awareness of school rules and discipline policies. For example, some parents

and students reported being uncertain of the school's dress code and rules regarding use of student-owned devices.

Cowie said another issue at the school is attendance. Brant had been a four-day school for many years and many families now expect their children to have Fridays off. He said he's begun booking popular activities on Fridays to encourage improved attendance.

He said although student awareness of learning outcomes is high and students benefit from considerable individual attention, parents may be less familiar. The school will begin posting learning outcomes in newsletters, on the website and will be encouraging more teachers to use the website as a communication tool with parents.

One of the key successes identified in the school review was the creation of school "families." These cross-graded pods bring students of various ages together, encouraging mentorship and leadership. The program, called Fruit of the Spirit, has proven popular, offering regular fun activities that are spiritually based.

The Board thanked Cowie for his presentation and his



team's work at the school.

## **One final school calendar approval**

The Board reviewed and approved the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school calendar for Noble Central School in Nobleford. All the school calendars will be posted online.

## **Early positive results for academic wrap-around pilot project**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard shared positive early results from a pilot project that brings a collaborative approach to addressing the academic needs of individual students.

Similar to the wraparound project employed at three test schools for students with identified special needs, this program brings together a variety of experts to examine the academic needs of individual students, particularly in the area of literacy.

Rivard said the program has had one dramatic success story already, and the approaches adopted for one student had an impact on others in the class.

## **Discussion begins on new ways to deliver programming across Palliser**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard updated the Board on Palliser's transition from Alberta Distance Learning Centre programming to Palliser programming provided through videoconferencing or other online delivery.



**Pat RIVARD**

Alison Hancox, who has been hired as principal of Palliser's yet-unnamed cyber school for 2013-2014, attended the meeting with several high school principals from across the division. Rivard said principals said their students' immediate needs this fall

will be met through the transitional contract Palliser has with ADLC. In the longer term, the group discussed how to personalize the school experience to meet individual student needs.

The move away from ADLC programming was prompted by a dramatic reduction in funding available to divisions whose students receiving programming in school using Alberta Distance Learning resources.

## **Palliser offers Violent Threat Risk Assessment training to RCMP**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said personnel from 15 RCMP detachments across southern Alberta have registered to attend Violent Threat Risk Assessment training being offered by Palliser June 27-28. This is a followup to the introduction to VTRA Palliser organized for local law enforcement and other agencies in February, led by internally recognized expert Kevin Cameron.

## **Board approves \$5,000 expense to assist with move to new accounting standards**

The Board approved spending \$5,000 to retain accounting firm KPMG to assist Palliser with the conversion to Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards. KPMG already serves as Palliser's independent auditor. This will involve a restatement of 2011-2012 financial statements to align them with the new accounting standards.

## **Palliser to continue as banker board for county learning council**

Palliser has renewed its agreement to serve as the banker board for the County of Lethbridge Community Learning Council in Coaldale. The agreement extends to Dec. 31, 2014.

The new agreement was changed slightly from past agreements to reflect a change of location for the council. Once housed in a Palliser building, the council now operates from the Coaldale library so references to the provision of space were removed.

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**NEXT MEETING: AUG. 20, 2013 AT PALLISER CENTRE, LETHBRIDGE  
PALLISER EXTENDS WISHES FOR A HAPPY, HEALTHY SUMMER TO ALL  
OF ITS STUDENTS, STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES.**