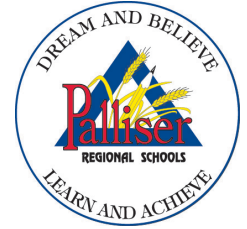


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, April 16, 2013



Board welcomes Upper Canada delegation to Palliser

A delegation of four representatives from Upper Canada District School Board joined the Palliser Board for a portion of their regular meeting Tuesday, April 16.

Upper Canada Director of Education and CEO David K. Thomas thanked the Board for the hospitality in Palliser. Members of the team attended a school review in Arrowwood Community School, visited a Hutterian Colony school, and met with administrators at Heritage Christian Academy, Coalhurst Elementary and Calgary Christian Elementary during their two-day visit.

Thomas said he believes this is the first professional learning community relationship that spans the provinces in Canada, and he hopes this is just the first of many exchanges as the two divisions learn from each other.

"Any time you spend time talking, if you're ready and open to learn, you will become a better person. . ." he said.

The relationship between Palliser and Upper Canada was encouraged by Wayne Hulley, the president of Canadian Effective Schools. Hulley, who is recognized

across North America for his work on school improvement, said he saw commonalities in the work occurring in the two jurisdictions.

Upper Canada District School Board is a geographically large and diverse jurisdiction that serves about 28,000 students, including adult learners.

For more on the professional learning community being forged between Palliser and UCSD, please click on [this link](#).

Master's College review find strengths in teaching and technology

The Board welcomed Palliser Co-ordinating Principal of School Development Cynthia Gietz to the meeting to report the findings of the Master's College school review. The review team conducted its on-site review Feb. 6, 2013, touring the school, interviewing staff and conducting focus group meetings with parents and students. Online surveys were also administered to all students, teachers, support staff and parents/guardians.

Master's College is a Grade 7-12 faith-based alternative program in Calgary. It serves about 240 students and shares a campus with Master's Academy, a K-6 school with nearly 400 students.

Gietz said the review identified key areas of strength at Master's College: effective teaching; caring and passionate staff; and effective use of technology.

The review also identified as areas of improvement: increase in options and non-athletic extracurricular clubs; facility improvements, specifically a library and additional space; and more direct and focused instruction.

The data revealed a significant difference in the level of satisfaction among Grade 7-9 students, compared to 10-12 students, something administration and staff at the school will want to investigate further.

Among parents, 97 per cent rated the school as effective or very effective. Among Grade 10-12 students, 90 per cent rated the school effective or very effective. Among Grade 7-9 students, 70 per cent rated their school as effective or very effective.

"The responses from the Grade 7 to 9 students indicates there are some issues the staff will have to dig into," Gietz said.



From left, Upper Canada School District Director of Education and CEO David Thomas, Planning and Research Officer Phil Dawes and Accountability and Alignment Officer Terry Davies listen to presentations by students of Huntsville School during their tour of Palliser.

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



A student from Huntsville School reads to Palliser Superintendent Kevin Gietz, left, and Board Chair Don Zech. The school adopted a literacy focus this year.

Huntsville students have been “Seuss-ified,” focus on literacy

With the Board holding its meeting at Huntsville School in Iron Springs, trustees were treated to presentations by students who shared the work they’ve done during their Dr. Seuss-inspired literacy effort.

All the students in the K-9 school worked toward a literacy goal using the works of Dr. Seuss as a basis. Acting Principal Joel Wetmore said younger students worked on alliteration or creating rhymes, while older students examined “The Lorax” and identified environmental issues that resonate with the children’s book originally published in 1971.

The majority of students at the school are Low German-speaking Mennonite students who are learning English as a second language.

Students shared the posters they created about environmental issues and read some of their written work to Palliser trustees and visiting administrators from Upper Canada School District.

No new or increased school fees

Trustees discussed Palliser’s school and technology fee structure and voted to maintain the existing fees.

That means Palliser will continue to waive school fees for all students from Grades 1-6 while still giving elementary schools the estimated \$145,000 in funding that would have been generated had the money been collected from parents. Palliser’s board began waiving the \$39 fee for Grade 1-6 students following the BSE crisis in the southern Alberta cattle industry in Spring 2003.

A \$49 fee for Grade 7-9 students and a \$59 fee for Grade 10-12 students will continue to be collected. The fees have not been increased for several years.

A \$25 technology fee is also charged to Grade 1-12

students, excluding those enrolled at Hutterian colony schools and alternative programs for Low German-speaking Mennonite students. At these schools, use of technology is significantly curtailed, if used at all.

The Board also discussed and dismissed the possibility of instituting a fee for 2013-2014 for all students who are transported daily on Palliser buses. The Board directed administration to engage families of Palliser’s bus students in a discussion of the possibility of a bus fee and further investigate the impact such a fee would have on families, enrolment and the transportation budget.

Grants for student transportation fall well short of what it costs to operate Palliser’s transportation department. In 2013-2014, the deficit will be even more acute with the elimination of the provincial fuel contingency grant. That grant represented \$325,000 in revenue.

Currently, the only bus students charged a fee for busing are in the Town of Coaldale. These in-town students are not eligible for transportation funding because of their proximity to their school. Through an agreement reached between Palliser and the Town of Coaldale, in the interest of student safety, K-8 students in Coaldale can pay to be bused in town. The fee is collected by the municipality. The annual fee for 2013-2014 has been set at \$210 per student.

Budget deliberations continue

The Board approved a series of budget reductions and assumptions and greenlighted two key initiatives as it works toward a 2013-2014 budget.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said the preliminary budget work done by administration reflects the impact on Palliser of both the provincial budget announcement and the memorandum of agreement forged between the province and the Alberta Teachers’ Association. The terms of that agreement were accepted by Palliser’s teachers and later by trustees. However, the deal continues to work its way through boards and ATA locals across the province who have until mid-May to make their own decisions on its merits.

Gietz reviewed the terms of the agreement, which, if put in force, will oblige boards to ensure full-time teachers work no more than 907 instructional hours per year by 2014-2015. Divisions will have to complete an analysis of workload with an eye toward that 907-hour goal as early as Fall 2013.

He also reviewed the impact of the provincial budget on Palliser operations. As presented to the Board at its March meeting, Palliser expects to have \$2.2 million less revenue in 2013-2014, compared to 2012-2013 with the elimination of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISi) and the fuel contingency grant, significant reductions to funding to operate school

buildings, and a 20 per cent cut in funding to maintain buildings, among other changes.

Gietz said Palliser administrators have been reviewing budgets department by department to identify areas where savings can be found. He identified \$2.198 million in proposed reductions to address reductions in funding as announced in the provincial budget. A detailed analysis of the impact of the budget announcement on Palliser operations can be found online:

http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/News.php?news_id=4610

He said about 80 per cent of Palliser's budget is spent on employees so the budget will affect staffing. The bulk of the 11.5 FTE teaching positions to be reduced can be achieved through a reduction in preparation time.

Learning assistant hours will also be reduced, with some reduction resulting from the loss of instructional hours.

For the first time, the Board established a maximum number of instructional hours in schools: 1,015 hours for Grades 10-12 and 965 for Grades 1-9. The trustees said the limit on teachers' instructional hours, as outlined in the framework agreement, coupled with budget reductions, mean Palliser can't afford the staffing for more hours.

Gietz also outlined two significant initiatives for 2013-2014. First, he recommended an expansion of Palliser's literacy initiative, which had been funded in 2012-2013 through AISI, a program eliminated in the budget announcement. This year, Palliser had one full-time learning coach working with teachers across the division to expand expertise in teaching reading and writing skills at all grade levels. Gietz recommended the addition of a second full-time learning coach. Second, he recommended the establishment of a cyber school offering courses by videoconference or online. He said these courses will be essential to Palliser's many small high schools and in light of budget reductions for using Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) in schools.

The startup and staffing costs for a new cyber school could come from revenue generation from credit courses offered entirely through Palliser, rather than through ADLC at reduced credit funding.

Palliser has experience offering courses by videoconference between schools in the division, and has had a part-time "anytime, anywhere" learning coach, supported with AISI funding, creating online resources for teachers.

The Board approved the spending reductions and budget assumptions as presented. (A page of detailed reductions and assumptions is attached.)

With that direction, administration expects to present the Board a balanced 2013-2014 budget at the Board's next regular meeting, May 21, 2013.

Congratulations to Edwin Parr nominee

The Board congratulated Natasha Quinton, a teacher at Coalhurst High School, on being named Palliser's nominee for the Alberta School Boards Association Zone 6 Edwin Parr Award, recognizing outstanding beginning teachers.

Trustees also commended Danielle Groeneveld at Calgary Christian Elementary School; Jennifer McInnes and Stephen Ward at Heritage Christian Academy; and Justin Harper at Noble Central School, who were also nominated for this honour.

The Zone 6 Edwin Parr winner will be announced at a celebration in Taber May 8.

Three-year capital plan adopted

The Board adopted a new three-year capital plan with one additional project added as the division's third priority.

A partial modernization of Huntsville School was added to this capital project wish list behind the top priorities of modernization of Noble Central and Coalhurst High.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard, who is responsible for Palliser facilities, said water issues have emerged at Huntsville School prompting the addition of the project to the list.

A fourth priority is a renovation to Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale to enclose a courtyard to create a lunch area and cafeteria. The fifth priority is a new gymnasium for Champion School. The final priority identified on the plan is renovation of County Central High School in Vulcan to change the front entrance area to provide a lunch area/cafeteria.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said he doesn't expect Palliser's priorities to be identified as provincial priorities given the more urgent need for facilities in other parts of the province.

The plan also lists lease funding as a priority, in particular continued lease funding to Brant Christian School, Menno Simons Christian School and Heritage Christian Academy and the provision of new lease funding for Glenmore Christian Academy, Master's Academy and College, Calgary Christian Elementary and Secondary Schools and Trinity Christian School.

School year calendars approved

The Board approved the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 calendars for Arrowwood Community School and the 2013-2014 calendar for Master's Academy. Trustees noted schools may need to adjust their bell schedules to ensure they are within Palliser's new limit on hours of instruction.

NEXT MEETING: May 21, 2013 at Palliser Centre, Lethbridge

2013-2014 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

MAINTAINING KEY PRIORITIES

Palliser will continue to focus resources on initiatives that contribute to excellent results and continued improvement:

- Safe and caring schools
- Assessment for learning

- School goals
- School reviews
- Collaborative professional development
- Instructional leadership
- Induction and mentorship

programs to support beginning teachers and administrators

- Lead teacher cohort
- Literacy
- Small class sizes at all grade levels

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

11.5 FTE teaching staff

\$1 million

It's estimated 7.0 of 11.5 FTE can be achieved through a reduction to teacher preparation time. In the 2012-2013 school year, Palliser has about 438 full-time equivalent teachers.

Learning assistant hours

\$450,000

Some of this reduction will be the consequence of fewer instructional hours. A new limit on the **maximum** instructional hours will be in effect for 2013-2014: 1,015 hours for Grades 10-12; 965 hours for Grades 1-9. Palliser's **minimum** required hours of instruction remain unchanged at 1,010 hours for Grades 10-12; 960 for 1-9. Kindergarten program hours of instruction may range from 480 to 482.5 hours for the year. Alberta Education's minimum requirement for hours of instruction remain unchanged at 1,000 hours for Grades 10-12 and 950 for Grades 1-9.

Facilities

\$447,000

Reflects the provincial budget reductions to Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal and Plant Operations and Maintenance funding.

Technology

\$78,000

Department has identified a budgeted expense that can be eliminated without affecting current service levels.

Transportation

\$164,000

Department has identified a budgeted expense that can be eliminated without affecting current service levels.

Curriculum

\$59,000

Anticipated savings in textbook purchases

Total

\$2.198 million

NEW INITIATIVES

Expand efforts that promise optimum potential for student success:

- Literacy, through the addition of a second full-time literacy coach.
- Creation of a cyber school and online delivery of courses. Startup and staff costs could come from **\$350,000** in revenue potential if we were to generate credits ourselves, at full Credit Enrolment Unit funding, rather than paying Alberta Distance Learning Centre to provide courses and earning only 44% of CEU funding. The reduced CEU funding for ADLC courses taken in Palliser schools was announced in the provincial budget. The estimate of potential revenue is based on Palliser's actual number of CEUs generated through ADLC in 2011-2012.
- Incentive programs to encourage students to receive high school credit. Potential revenue versus cost not known.
- Pilot project between County Central/Vulcan Outreach and Glenmore Christian Academy Grade 9 students to generate CALM credit in the summer after the students have completed Grade 9. Estimated revenue potential of **\$40,000**.

Projected Operating Surplus 2012-13: **\$39,300**

Accumulated Operating Surplus 2012-13: **\$2.582 million**

Budgeted Operating Surplus 2013-14: **\$11,300**

Budgeted Accumulated Surplus 2013-14: **\$2.477 million**

Budget includes **\$550,000** for new buses and **\$400,000** for an anticipated investment in business software

ASSUMPTIONS: No increase to CUPE, ATA or support staff. Both CUPE and ATA contracts have yet to be negotiated. Assumes framework agreement with ATA is ratified and in effect.

Palliser admin cap for 2013-2014

Admin spending is budgeted at 3.3%, below the new provincial cap of 3.6%.