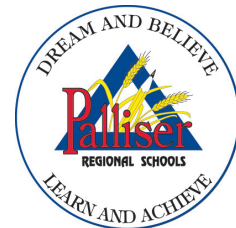


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

March 26, 2013



## Vulcan Prairieview students perform “Footloose” for visiting trustees

Palliser’s Board of Trustees hit the road for its regular meeting of March 26<sup>th</sup>, conducting business from a classroom at Vulcan Prairieview Elementary School.

The school serves about 230 students from kindergarten through Grade 6.

During the visit, trustees were treated to a rousing and energetic rendition of the song “Footloose,” by Grade 5-6 students, complete with choreographed dance moves.

The Board completes its four school visits for the year on April 16<sup>th</sup> when the trustees hold their regular monthly meeting at Huntsville School in Iron Springs.



Grade 2 student, passed away on March 25<sup>th</sup> following a long illness.

## Palliser representatives share expertise at national, international conferences

Trustees Joe Watson, Colleen Deitz and Jean Mrak shared information they gathered during the National Congress on Rural Education in Saskatoon. Deitz found especially interesting two sessions about virtual schools and flipped classrooms, different ways of providing programming that have proven successful in Saskatchewan’s rural and remote schools.

The conference featured two sessions led by Palliser staff. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin and Director of Learning Dan Ryder shared Palliser’s school review process, and Transportation Services Supervisor David Shaw and Communications Officer Dawn Sugimoto shared information about the Think of Us on the Bus safety campaign.

Chair Don Zech, who attended the Effective Schools Conference in Phoenix, Ariz., in early March, recommended that conference to other trustees. The conference is the only one offered by Effective Schools, an organization led in the United States by Dr. Larry Lezotte and headed in Canada by Wayne Hulley. Effective Schools research is the basis for Palliser’s school review process.

Zech said the highlight for him occurred during a session on common core curriculum in the U.S. The scheduled session was not relevant to the 80 or so Canadians in attendance. The Canadian delegates gathered in a separate meeting room and Hulley asked Palliser representatives to share how the division uses Effective School research in its school reviews.

The impromptu session was well received and Superintendent Kevin Gietz said Palliser has now been invited to formally present at next year’s conference.



**DON ZECH**



## Condolences expressed to family of Dorothy Dalglish student

Picture Butte and area Trustee Joe Watson expressed condolences to the family of a young student who attended Dorothy Dalglish School. Ashley Dunsbergen, a

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

## **Board gives support to the draft framework agreement with teachers**

Trustees discussed the draft framework agreement reached between the Alberta government and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Trustees expressed frustration with the process of how the agreement was reached. In the past, boards were represented in the talks by the Alberta School Boards' Association, but this agreement was reached without the boards being represented.

Trustees also expressed concerns about the impact of the agreement's limit on instructional time to 907 hours per school year for full-time teachers; the creation of an Exceptions Committee to hear disputes of decisions that had previously been matters of local autonomy; the possible additional strain on administration resources to address disputes taken to the Exceptions Committee and to conduct an internal review of teacher workload with an initial report due Oct. 31, 2013; and the creation of additional costs to the system at a time when the division's per-pupil grant funding has been frozen.

The trustees weighed their concerns against the positive prospect of sustained labour stability for the four years covered by the agreement, a freeze on teachers' salaries for the first three years of the deal and a commitment from the Minister to cover a two-per-cent increase to teachers in 2015-2016. The Board also took into consideration that Palliser teachers voted in favour of the terms at their own meeting March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Trustee Joe Watson requested a recorded vote on the motion to accept the framework agreement. He was opposed to accepting the deal. The motion to accept the framework passed 5-1.

Information about the Board's decision and a link to the draft framework agreement can be found on Palliser's website at [http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/News.php?news\\_id=4614](http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/News.php?news_id=4614)

## **Brant Christian review finds its strength is a family-like caring community**

Co-ordinating Principal of School Development Cynthia Gietz was welcomed to the meeting to present data collected during the school review of Brant Christian School. The review team visited Brant Christian School on Dec. 4, 2012.

The review included online surveys of students, staff and parents/guardians, focus group meetings with students and parents, and individual interviews with staff, as well as classroom observations by members of the review team.

The review data found strong appreciation across

all surveyed groups of the school's family-like caring atmosphere. The school's other areas of strength are its faith-based education component and its increased focus on academics.

Areas of improvement that emerged from the review were a desire for more options and more extra-curricular and sports activities and the cleanliness and care of the building.

The results of the review will be presented to school staff at a workshop where they can celebrate the school's successes, interpret the data and determine their own action plans for responding to what they've learned from the review.

Gietz said working on the school review process and writing the report have been great professional development for her. She had previously gone through a review as a school principal.

## **Upper Canada School District officials to visit Palliser Regional Schools**

The Board will have special guests in attendance for part of its next meeting April 16<sup>th</sup> at Huntsville School.

Representatives of Upper Canada School District, one of the largest public school boards in Ontario, will be visiting Palliser Regional Schools. The relationship between Palliser and Upper Canada School District was facilitated by Wayne Hulley from Effective Schools Canada. UCSD had expressed an interest in working with another Canadian school jurisdiction to discuss challenges of meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

Upper Canada School District has about 18,000 students in the area surrounding Ottawa. It's expected a team of four people will be visiting Palliser schools April 15-16, attending part of the Board meeting, observing a school review of Arrowwood Community School, and touring a number of Palliser schools.

Palliser officials hope to visit Upper Canada at a later date, with a particular interest in UCSD's Small School Summit and Lead Teacher Development group.

## **Grade 9 Social Studies PAT rescheduled**

Superintendent Kevin Gietz publicly thanked Alberta Education's Neil Fenske, executive director, Assessment Sector, for his assistance in department approval of rescheduling the Grade 9 Social Studies Provincial Achievement Test from June 27, 2013 to June 20, 2013 for all schools in Palliser. The earlier date will give Palliser staff the time required to mark the test and reflect the results in students' final report cards. That time would not have been available if students wrote the exam on June 27<sup>th</sup>, which is the final day for students before summer break.

## Five beginning teachers nominated for consideration for Edwin Parr Award

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger said five teachers from across Palliser have been nominated to be the division's nominee for the Alberta School Boards Association Zone 6 Edwin Parr Award. A panel of trustees whose schools do not have a nominee up for consideration will meet to review the nominations and to determine Palliser's nominee for the Zone award.

The Edwin Parr Award acknowledges first-year K-12 teachers who demonstrate outstanding knowledge and skills in their work with students.

The Edwin Parr Award ceremony in Zone 6 is scheduled for May 9<sup>th</sup> in Taber.

## Schools play key role in emergency management when crisis strikes

The Board welcomed Mark Murphy, Emergency Management Officer Southern Alberta, to the meeting to make a presentation on public safety efforts during large scale emergencies.

Murphy said emergency response requires collaboration on the part of many community agencies, including school jurisdictions.

"There are lots of different players in the community," he said. "Our goal is to get them talking so they understand what their role is in the event of a disaster."

Schools hold a population of children that can't just pick up and go in the event of an emergency. There are mobility issues, he said. As well, schools are often used as a reception centres for residents of neighbouring areas that may be under evacuation orders. School buildings may also serve as operation centres.

Ideally, the school will have a representative at the municipal emergency response exercises.

Once the response phase of an emergency is over, the school also has a key role in the recovery phase, Murphy said. The community needs to take steps to return to normalcy, and a key part of that is getting students back to school so they can resume that routine.

The Board thanked Murphy for his presentation and expressed a desire to work closely with local authorities to ensure seamless and co-ordinated emergency management services in the communities served by Palliser.

## More individual school calendars approved for next year and 2014-2015

The Board continued its review of draft school calendars from individual schools for 2013-2014 as well as 2014-2015.

The Board reviewed and approved the 2013-2014 school year calendar for Master's Academy, Glenmore Christian Academy's elementary and intermediate schools, and Trinity Christian School. It also approved 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school year calendars for Coalhurst Elementary School, Dorothy Dalglish School and Picture Butte High School and Outreach School.

These calendars will be added to Palliser's website under the Schools tab.



## Board increases budget for bus purchase

By motion, the Board voted to increase the budget allotment for the purchase of new school buses from \$500,000 originally set aside in the budget for this purchase to \$525,000. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin said the division had hoped to buy five new buses with the \$500,000 budget. For \$525,000, the division will be able to purchase six buses.

Palliser had deferred school bus purchases for three years of tight budgets so the new buses will be welcome additions to the aging fleet.

## Discussion continues on education issues related to LGM community

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard provided the Board an update on a meeting of representatives from four southern Alberta school divisions and Alberta Education to discuss issues related to educating Low German-speaking Mennonite students. Palliser joined counterparts from Horizon, Prairie Rose and Grassland School divisions at the most recent meeting March 25.

The group toured John Davidson School, one of two alternative programs in Palliser devoted to serving students from the LGM community.

Topics of discussion included concerns about home schooling in homes where English may not be spoken, child



labour and ways to encourage students to stay in school.

## **Advisory committee recommends unblocking access to Facebook**

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard discussed recommendations from Palliser's Technology Advisory Committee and Technology Services Department to unblock Facebook and remove the requirement for a password to access Palliser's Guest wireless network.

Rivard said Facebook can be a great educational tool when used properly. By unblocking the social network, Palliser staff will be better able to monitor how the site is being used. This may discourage students from using Facebook negatively.

The removal of a password to access Palliser's Guest wireless network will enable students and staff to use their own wireless devices with less hassle. Rivard said Palliser's security system will still work so any worrisome behaviour on the wireless system can still be tracked internally.

The changes will not take effect until a communication plan about the changes can be developed and shared with Palliser's school administrators.

## **Budget analysis suggests \$2.2-million less revenue for Palliser next year**

Corporate Treasurer Michelle Gibb presented trustees

with an analysis of the impact of the March 7<sup>th</sup> provincial budget announcement on Palliser operations.

The analysis reflects estimates based on enrolment projections for 2013-2014.

Overall, Palliser expects to operate in 2013-2014 with about \$2.2-million less revenue than this year. The estimate assumes a zero-per-cent increase in salaries for teachers and support staff and zero-per-cent spending increases related to a collective agreement with the Alberta Teachers' Association which has yet to be negotiated.

While some grants are expected to increase next year, notably Inclusive Education Funding and Class Size Funding for kindergarten to Grade 3 students, other grants will decrease or be eliminated. Funding for Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) and a fuel contingency grant have been eliminated, and Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal and Plant Operations and Maintenance funding have been decreased significantly.

The complete analysis of the budget impact on Palliser can be found on the division's website at [http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/News.php?news\\_id=4610](http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/News.php?news_id=4610)

## **Next meeting April 16 at Huntsville School**

The next meeting of the Board will be held at 9 a.m., Tuesday, April 16 at Huntsville School in Iron Springs.

