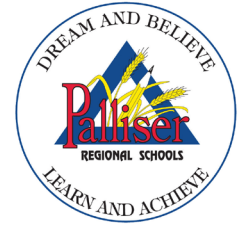


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

June 19, 2012



Final regular meeting of the school year

The Board of Trustees held its final regular meeting of the 2011-2012 school year on June 19, 2012. The Board made a point of concluding the meeting by 3 p.m. so Superintendent Kevin Gietz and Chair Don Zech could attend a meeting of their counterparts from across Zone 6 with new Education Minister Jeff Johnson in Lethbridge.

The minister was on a two-day tour around the province to meet representatives from all the school districts and divisions.



Don Zech

A Community Conversation was an open forum. Each school community was asked to ensure a delegation in attendance of school council representatives, parents, students (from junior and senior high levels) and teaching and support staff.

Trustees discussed a desire to continue with a divisionwide stakeholders' meeting annually.

Palliser high schools get attention for their improvement record

Superintendent Kevin Gietz circulated to trustees copies of a Calgary Herald report on the latest Fraser Institute rankings of high schools across Alberta.

The newspaper's June 17 issue included a story about Palliser Regional Schools. A reporter and photographer visited Picture Butte High School and Coalhurst High School, two high schools that have steadily improved in the annual rankings.

Of Palliser's seven high schools included in the report, six are in the Top 50.

Gietz said he appreciates that the Fraser report is controversial because the rankings are based on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams. However, he said it is measurable data and worth noting.

Picture Butte High School was tied for 16th; Coalhurst High and County Central High in Vulcan were tied at 24th; Calgary Christian School was 29th; Master's College, also in Calgary, was 35th; Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale was 50th; and Heritage Christian Academy in Calgary was 64th.

Stakeholders' meeting report received

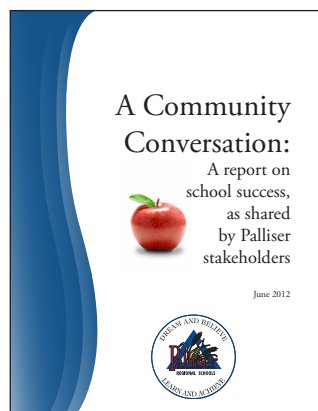
The Board of Trustees received the report summarizing A Community Conversation, a stakeholders' meeting held May 14, 2012. The public meeting brought together students, staff, parents and community members from across Palliser Regional Schools. This was the first divisionwide stakeholders' meeting bringing together voices from Coaldale to Calgary.

The report is posted on the front page of Palliser's website in the "Resources" section. Click [here](#) for the link.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz and the trustees shared the overwhelmingly positive feedback they've heard from people who participated in the conversation. People commented on how important it was to bring together stakeholders from across Palliser in a common gathering.

Trustees also shared the importance of Palliser taking action based on the report.

Gietz said reports such as this are used as planning tools by Palliser administration. He said another example is the report summarizing the Speak Out forums with Grade 9 students from across Palliser.



Palliser serves as banker board for Chinook Student Health Partnership

Palliser has agreed to continue as the banker board for the Chinook Student Health Partnership for 2012-2013.

This will generate \$20,000 in revenue as this was the agreed upon fee between Palliser and the Management Committee.

Board hears update on Vulcan's plans to go boldly where it hasn't gone before

The Board welcomed Leslie Warren, economic

development officer for the Vulcan Business Development Society, to the meeting to offer a report on the Vulcan Innovation Project: Sustaining Rural Development Through Technology, and the Vulcan Business Development Branding Initiative.

Palliser Regional Schools was one of many partners in the innovation project. Grant funding for the project from the Rural Alberta Development Fund ends this month.

The project has worked with partners, such as Lethbridge College, to offer credit and non-credit course in Vulcan by videoconferencing, has increased capacity in the community by offering training on digital media and has encouraged development of renewable energy opportunities.

“There’s more work to do, but it’s coming,” she said.

Recently, a green screen was installed at the Trek Station in Vulcan so fans of Star Trek can purchase a picture of themselves standing on the bridge of the Enterprise, the vessel known worldwide from TV and movies.

She said work continues on a mobile app for iPhones that will give visitors access to coupons to local businesses as well as a science and history tour around the region.

A memorandum of understanding between Lethbridge College, Vulcan Business Development Society and Vulcan County Adult Learning lays the groundwork for the creation of a virtual campus. She said this will mean more opportunities for students of Palliser in Vulcan County.

The society has also been part of a separate project to address the declining population of Vulcan and Vulcan County, by creating a unique brand for the communities that will attract residents and business.

The Vulcan Brand Innovation Team has an 11-member committee chaired by County Central High School Principal Ken Garinger.

The goal is to build Vulcan’s reputation as “the most technologically advanced small town in Canada.”

The brand initiative identified five pillars: agriculture, health, environment, education and home.

She said by bringing new technologies to the community, residents can have all the benefits of living in a small community while still accessing the world through technology.

Trustees expressed appreciation to Leslie for the work she’s done in the community to move this idea along.

Huntsville principal shares response to school review

The Board welcomed Sherrie Nickel, principal of Huntsville School, as she presented her response to the school review, conducted in November 2011.

Nickel discussed areas for improvement identified by the review and described the school’s plans to address



them.

To improve communication with staff, Nickel said she now provides a mid-week memo of happenings around the school and upcoming events. Assemblies are held Monday mornings to recognize students

and staff, and students are appointed to “families” made up of students from preschool to Grade 9 to build relationships throughout the school. The “families” take part in monthly activities. Older students help younger ones, and the staff get to know all of the school’s 115 students.

Nickel said the review found kids said they felt safe at school, yet a number said they were also being bullied. In response, Nickel created a “Make Our School Better” box in which students can anonymously leave a note. Instead of focusing on bullying behaviours, Nickel said she’s asking students to improve school pride to give their efforts a more positive focus.

The review found concerns expressed about a lack of exposure to other teachers’ learning activities and a lack of resources. Nickel said in response she’s planning to embed collaborative time into future schedules.

The school also initiated more extracurricular activities, including junior high boys basketball and a running club.

A survey of Grade 5-8 girls found they want an opportunity to play volleyball and do singing so the school hopes to add those activities in the fall.

The school also started a coffee club for parents this year, thanks to a wellness grant it received. Nickel said moms come in once a month with younger children in tow to discuss nutrition or other topics.

“It’s an opportunity for moms to talk and be together,” Nickel said. Following the sessions, moms were surveyed and one said she’d like to try volleyball, too, so that will be pursued in the fall.

“It’s really exciting just getting them in the building and feeling comfortable there,” Nickel said.

She said the review also celebrated the school’s strengths which included: family group activities; continuous improvement is expected; staff is committed to school goals; they care about students; there is respect at all levels; students are responsible for their own learning; the school provides effective programming; students get help when they need it; and families’ faith is honoured.

““It’s a great place to be, a really, really great place,” Nickel said.

Collaborative Practices pilot project a success at Jennie Emery Elementary

The Board welcomed Director of Learning Laurie Wilson, Jennie Emery Elementary Principal Dave Fender, Learning Support Teacher Laverne Bryant and Grade 1 teacher Chris Pytlarz to present on the Collaborative Practices Pilot Project.

The project, part of Alberta Education's Inclusive Education effort, brought together a team of experts to address individual student learning needs at Jennie Emery. The team included an occupational therapist, speech therapist, behaviour support specialist, family school liaison counsellor, the learning support teacher, classroom teacher, principal and Palliser's director of learning responsible for wraparound services.

Principal Fender said he was cautiously optimistic about the team approach, but he was "blown away" by the expertise at the table and the impact on students.

"It was amazing some of the differences we saw happening," he said.

The team met twice a month with teachers who'd volunteered to come forward for assistance.

The teacher would share what strategies they'd tried and the team would discuss suggestions. The team would also observe the student in the classroom.

Bryant would co-ordinate the meetings and assist in followup, including summarizing each meeting and listing key points and who was responsible for what.

Pytlarz, a Grade 1 teacher at the Coaldale school, said her class had a number of students with severe behaviour issues.

"Sitting with the experts, having experts give you ideas, was fantastic," she said. The strategies shared with one teacher were shared with other teachers as well and when a strategy worked in one classroom, it often found its way to other classes as well.

She said success with an individual student would impact the whole class, and strategies identified to assist one individual with a specific need often proved beneficial to all students.

"This is the most successful project I've ever been involved with," said Wilson, who works in Central Office. "Teachers are one of the reasons this was so successful. It's not going to be a success unless they're willing to come to the table."

She said the cost to the division is very small because the experts on the team would be working in the schools regardless of the model for delivery of their services.

The Board and Administration thanked the administration and staff at Jennie Emery and Wilson for their work on the project.

Career Transitions continues to look for financial support

Kevin Garinger, Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) gave the Board an update on Career Transitions, a regional service of which Palliser is a part.

The program, which operates out of Palliser Centre, has been in jeopardy since its government funding was cut.

School jurisdictions in southern Alberta continue to look at how to generate funding to support Career Transitions which helps expose students to a variety of career options.

The program organizes Skills Competitions, Take Your Kids to Work Day, Cardboard Boat Races and other events.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said with occupations changing so quickly, the service is valuable.

"It exposes student to careers in trades," he said. "Jobs are changing so quickly now, too, that continual update is important."

It's official: Trinity Christian School joins Palliser Regional Schools

The Board passed a motion to include Trinity Christian School as an alternative program in Palliser commencing the 2012-2013 school year. The Board and the society at Trinity had reached an agreement earlier in June.

The Board also passed a motion to add a new colony school to Palliser in 2012-2013. Sky Light Colony School will be located east of Vulcan and is a branch off of New Dale Colony, whose school is also operated by Palliser. That will bring to 17 the total colony schools in Palliser.

Stay and Play at Sunnyside School

Trustee Esther Willms shared how pleased parents at Sunnyside School are with the plan to offer a Stay and Play Program there in 2012-2013.

The program is operated by Barons-Eureka-Warner Family and Community Support Services and the provincial Parent Link Centre, at no cost to Palliser or the school.

The program invites moms, dads, grandparents and other caregivers to drop in with their children from infants to age 5 to share stories, songs, rhymes, and other play.

The Stay and Play program will be offered on Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the kindergarten room.

Kevin Garinger credited the work of Sunnyside Principal Les Greeno for his work with FCSS to bring the program to the school.

Sunnyside School is located just a few kilometres northeast of Lethbridge.