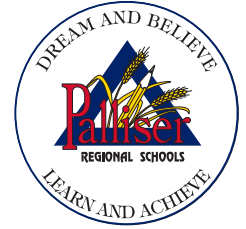


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

June 9, 2015



Last regular meeting before the break

The Board of Trustees held its last regularly scheduled meeting of this school year on June 9. Superintendent Kevin Gietz was absent. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard served as acting superintendent. The board's next regular meeting is scheduled for Aug. 25 at Central Office in Lethbridge.

Given the number of weeks between regularly scheduled meetings, this meeting was recessed rather than adjourned to give the board flexibility to resume the meeting on short notice to address emergent issues. The meeting was resumed June 26 and the agenda items that day are covered in this highlights package.

Board appreciates student voice

Palliser trustees shared examples of the power of student voice in the division.

The first example was during "A Community Conversation 2015," a gathering of Palliser stakeholders in Vulcan May 28. Each school with junior high and high school grades was asked to bring at least one student from grades 7-9 and grades 10-12 to participate in the event, joining parents, teachers, support staff and community members. Feedback from the event and the trustees' own experience working in the small group discussions focused heavily on the importance of student participation at the meeting.

Vice-Chair Don Zech said he's received excellent feedback from the stakeholder event and the student at his table group was impressive.

"The Community Conversation was a high spot for me for the year," he said.

The other example of student voice occurred during an Alberta Education-organized familiarization tour by international student agents. The tour visited Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale recently, and students led the tour of their school. Trustee Debbie Laturnus said the students did an incredible job. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said the agents on the tour said the student participation stood out on their tour.

Chair Colleen Deitz said the board would like an opportunity to meet with a Palliser student advisory committee to ensure student voice is heard at the

governance level. A student advisory committee is beginning to take shape out of the group of student leaders identified during this spring's inaugural Palliser Student Leadership Conference.

The student group recently met to begin brainstorming ideas for the next student leadership conference.

HCA strength a caring, small-school feel

Heritage Christian Academy may be the largest school by enrolment in Palliser but to parents, students and staff, it has a small school, family-like atmosphere.

That was one of the themes to emerge from the school review of Heritage Christian Academy conducted Feb. 12.

The school serves about 650 students from kindergarten through Grade 12.

Director of Learning Cynthia Gietz said the review data included survey results from 73 per cent of parents, and nearly every student and staff member.

She said an analysis of the data collected through surveys, focus group meetings and individual interviews with teachers found key strengths are the safe and caring environment that is faith-infused. The staff are caring of students, not only of their school life, but of the whole child.

Another theme was the strength of the Heritage music program, which has been recognized internationally.

Areas of refinement found in the review included a need for more supports for students, teaching in ways that will help students learn and more or better non-athletic options for students. Gietz said stakeholders also raised a number of issues related to infrastructure, such as the building and the parking lot, but those areas are not within Palliser control. The school building is owned and operated by a society, which is responsible for the facilities.

Students voiced a desire for more input on decisions affecting them and more communication about daily activities available through the school.

Feedback overwhelmingly positive to Palliser stakeholder meeting

Acting Superintendent Pat Rivard shared feedback collected at the end of "A Community Conversation 2015," a gathering of stakeholders from across Palliser on May 28.

More than 80 per cent of the nearly 200 participants completed the feedback form, offering their comments on the day. Ninety-six per cent of respondents said if Palliser had another meeting like this, they would recommend it to people they know.

The board was provided all the comments made by participants. Themes from the comments included the need for more student participants, an appreciation for the diversity of Palliser and the value of collaboration through small group sharing.

The meeting was a showcase of Palliser diversity with representatives from the division's 17 Hutterite colonies, the Low German-speaking Mennonite community, faith-based schools and communities from Coaldale to Calgary.

Some participants asked if the meeting could be held more frequently. This division-wide stakeholder meeting was the first in three years and built on information derived from the 2012 event.

The trustees discussed the possibility of holding a division-wide meeting annually or every second year.

The full report on the stakeholder meeting will follow an analysis of the data collected from the 25 table groups.

Wellness work in schools sustainable and often led by students

Wellness initiatives across Palliser were tailored to individual school communities, are sustainable and were often student-led, said the facilitator of this year's wellness efforts.

Shannon Collier, vice-principal of Coalhurst High School, facilitated wellness efforts during the final year of a three-year grant. The Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund was a joint initiative of the University of Alberta School of Public Health, Alberta Health and Alberta Education.

Collier said she worked with staff in 28 schools across Palliser, making use of technology to collaborate without need for travel.

This year, each school named a health champion for their community. Collier shared resources with the champions using Palliser's Google tools for collaboration. By January, each school submitted proposals and action plans along with requests for funding.

Each school approached wellness in its own way. One school started a gardening program, teaching students how to grow their own food. Another adopted a pedometer challenge, with students taking on staff to see who could log the most steps over a period of time. One school started a running club, which caught on not only with students but with the community at large, as a private donor came forward to make improvements to the school's ball diamond. At Coalhurst High, students led the push for

physical activity. They volunteered at a seniors' conference, making healthy smoothies for seniors in attendance.

"It's contagious when you get people excited about wellness," Collier said.

Collier said she's proud of Palliser's approach. Rather than trying to regulate wellness from the top down, such as a division-wide ban of candy, each school community was left to determine its own needs and priorities.

"We looked at how to teach kids to be leaders in this and they've taken ownership over wellness," she said.

Collier left a pedometer with each of the trustees and encouraged them to take on a challenge and share photos of their personal progress with students.

Full range of services support students

Palliser offers a range of services to support students' needs, whether academic, behavioural, social or emotional, and the diversity of those supports was shared with the board in an annual accountability report.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard and Director of Learning Laurie Wilson presented the annual Student Services Accountability Report, with highlights including the success of the Academic Wrap Around team.

From September 2014 to March 2015, the team served 85 students from 18 schools across the division. The team is made up of Wilson, Literacy Coach Bev Smith, Technology Integration Specialist Jason Kwasny who meet with the school principal, classroom teacher(s) and learning support teacher, if one is involved. They review information about a specific student who may be either struggling or needing enrichment, and the team brainstorms strategies that may compliment the student's particular strengths.

The team from Central Office follows up with the school-based team six to eight weeks later to discuss whether strategies are working or if other support is needed.

Wilson said some students who are being referred to Wrap Around have severe learning needs, indicating the classroom teacher's commitment to them and their success. For a video of Academic Wrap Around in action, please click [here](#).

Other highlights:

- Palliser's Collaborative Practice model worked in 14 schools this year. The model brings together therapists, specialists and teachers to address student behaviours and special needs. The division's Behaviour Specialist Karen Braun is a key member of the team. She also works individually to support students, working with 47 students from September to March. Her behaviour cases

include students dealing with autism, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, anxiety and other issues.

- Rivard and Wilson led Violent Threat Risk Assessment training to 42 people in April 2015, about half of whom were from outside Palliser.
- The pair presented at the National Congress on Rural Education in Saskatoon this spring on Palliser's model of inclusive education and the resulting improvement to student achievement.
- Palliser held its first Student Leadership Conference, attended by 149 students from across the division, and featuring student presenters from eight Palliser high schools.
- Palliser served 333 students who have severe learning needs, and 556 who are considered mild/moderate.
- The division implemented a new software solution for documenting Individual Program Plans (IPPs), creating a one-stop shop for student data including Fountas and Pinnell assessments.
- Palliser provides support to key demographics, including the division's First Nations students in Milo and Arrowwood, who had access to a wellness coach this year; and 655 Low German-speaking Mennonite students, whose families have access to Liaison Worker Dan Doerksen, who offers translation services, accompanies parents to specialized assessments, and helped provide families with health classes in partnership with Alberta Health Services.
- The division provided Supporting Individuals Through Valued Attachments (SIVA) training to 81 employees this year, including bus drivers, school administrators, educational assistants and family school liaison counsellors.

Rivard said he's especially proud of the division's nine family school liaison counsellors who served 691 students so far in the year by providing individual or group counselling to students struggling with social or emotional needs. The counsellors are also involved with violent threat risk assessments and suicide risk assessments. He said they not only support students and staff, but they support each other.

The board expressed thanks to the entire team supporting students across Palliser.

Palliser induction program a hit with first-year teacher from Champion

A first-year teacher from Champion School met with the board to share his experiences as part of the Teacher Induction Program in Palliser (TIPP). The program offers support to beginning teachers in their first three years in

the profession.

Will Wood, who teaches Grade 5/6, said the program had an almost immediate impact on his teaching, by helping him establish effective routines, expectations and procedures. He said the program also helped with his planning and assessment practices. He and his students "talk the same language" about learning and students understand what they're expected to know by the end of each lesson.

He said Palliser's optimal learning model (I do, we do, you do) that begins with the teacher demonstrating a strategy, then leading the class together through the strategy until the individual student has mastered independent use of the strategy "changed my life for a while." He said the model has become his template for sequencing student learning.

Wood said he's integrated literacy skills in all subject areas with help from Palliser Literacy Coach Bev Smith. In math, for example, students were challenged to write a poem or riddle during a unit on integers or to create a picture book to express numbers.

"It would not be that way in my classroom if it wasn't for TIPP1," he said.

Board Chair Colleen Deitz thanked Wood for his work in Champion and for sharing the value of the induction program.

Palliser investigates interest in French Immersion program

Palliser will begin to investigate the creation of a French Immersion program at Jennie Emery Elementary School in Coaldale. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said the desire for second language programming came from the parent community. He said Palliser will begin a discussion to determine the level of interest in running a dual track program that has both English and French streams offered in the same building. Rivard said space at the Coaldale elementary school would be an issue. Two modular classrooms were added to the site last year. If there's enough interest, a French Immersion class could start in kindergarten, with a grade of immersion added each year thereafter.

Balanced budget of nearly \$80 million approved

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun presented the 2015-2016 budget document for approval.

The document projects a balanced budget with revenues and expenses of \$79.83 million.

The budget reflects staffing reductions of about 15 full-time equivalent teachers and about 16,000 hours in support staff areas. There will be no change to Palliser's

instructional supplies and material or technology fees. The technology fee is \$35 per student grades 1 through 12; instructional supplies and materials fee is \$59 per student grades 7 through 9 and \$69 per student grades 10 through 12. The fee of \$39 per student grades 1-6 will continue to be waived by the board, saving parents the fee, but giving the school the equivalent revenue which is allocated from Palliser's operating funds.

For more information on the budget, please click [here](#). To download a copy of the budget document submitted to Alberta Education, click [here](#).

Enrolment growth at John Davidson requires additional classroom space

The board reviewed plans to provide additional classroom space for students at John Davidson School in Coaldale. The school is an alternative program serving students from the Low German-speaking Mennonite community. It shares a building with PASS+, an outreach high school.

The school had about 125 students from early learning through Grade 9 in 2014-2015. For next year, an additional classroom will be created for John Davidson students, and investigation will begin on leasing space for PASS+ if additional space is needed for John Davidson students.

Modernization planning proceeds

The modernization of Noble Central School will likely go to tender in August if all goes well, said Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun.

Braun said drawings of the project at 60 per cent completion were submitted for an updated cost estimate. If approved, the project would move to 90 per cent drawings. The earliest work would begin on site would be September 2015. A formal request will need to be made to the Village of Nobleford for student access to the community centre for use for indoor physical education. The school gym will be a staging area as other parts of the building are modernized.

Palliser approved for Calgary outreach

The board resumed its regular meeting of June 9 on

June 26 to deal with emergent issues.

The board received notification from Alberta Education that Palliser's application to create an outreach program in Calgary has been approved. Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Stan Hielema will begin investigating a site to host the program. Previous applications for this program had been denied.

The approval to operate a new outreach to meet the learning needs of Calgary students seeking a faith-based program is effective the 2015/2016 school year.

Outreach programs generally provide high school programming for students who need an alternative to a traditional high school setting. They may have jobs and require flexibility in their school schedules, they may have health issues that make attendance at a traditional school difficult, or they may have left their regular high school program because of behavioural issues.

All staff to receive 2% increase

The board approved a two-per-cent salary increase for all certificated non-union Palliser staff and all Palliser non-union support staff, in keeping with the salary increase to be received by teaching staff through their Alberta Teachers' Association contract for the 2015-2016 school year. Members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Palliser also will receive two per cent in keeping with their contract. The salary increases were factored in to the Palliser budget for next year.

Approval in principle to work toward master agreement with Calgary school

The board approved in principle the development of a framework for a master agreement with the Calgary Islamic School. If a master agreement can be reached between Palliser and the private school's operator, the school could join Palliser for the 2015-2016 school year as a faith-based alternative program.

The board recessed the meeting on June 26, rather than adjourn, should there be emergent issues over the summer requiring the board to meet. The next regular meeting of the board is scheduled for Aug. 25.

Have a great summer! See you in 2015-2016!