



Palliser Looking Back, Looking Forward

A review of what we heard from you in 2012 and what we've done since

On May 14, 2012, the Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools convened a gathering of 176 students, staff, parents and public from across the division for “A Community Conversation” focused on student success. Over the course of the afternoon, participants identified the Top 10 factors that contributed to their own school success stories. What follows is a summary of the factors and what Palliser has done to build success in these areas. The full report on the May 2012 event can be found online here or call 403-328-4111 to request a copy.

- 1. Dedicated Staff:** Palliser has outstanding teachers and support staff who care and support students and their learning. Supports include three years of mentorship and induction for new teachers, ongoing professional development opportunities, including division-wide collaboration days for teachers.
- 2. Safe and Caring Environments:** Every Palliser school commits one of its annual school goals to an effort that will enhance the safe and caring atmosphere of a school, through character education, leadership initiatives or other efforts.
- 3. Programming opportunities (academic, non-academic, on-campus, off-campus):** Since 2012, Palliser has continued to expand opportunities for students. Examples include the creation of Palliser Beyond Borders, offering online learning opportunities; an international student program; and expanded use of the mobile CTS trailers.
- 4. Vision:** Palliser’s literacy program was in infancy in 2012 when “A Community Conversation” was held. Today literacy is a shared priority across Palliser, in all schools, at all grades.
- 5. Communication/relationships:** The power of meaningful connections among students, staff and parents is an ongoing priority in our schools and division. Our trustees attend school council meetings, which are one of the best ways to connect board, school administration, staff and parents. Since 2012, schools and Palliser have adopted many tools to improve communication, including social media, text services and mobile apps.
- 6. At sixth spot, we had a tie between the following:**
 - Access to resources:** Access to resources to meet student needs can be a challenge in changing economic conditions. Palliser has committed resources to initiatives such as its Academic Wrap-Around team, which brings together Central Office professionals and classroom teachers to discuss individual students who need additional support for success. Palliser also continues to encourage schools with surplus school-generated funds (those fundraised in the community) and surplus board-allocated funds (education grants) to develop plans to use those funds to benefit current students and support school priorities.
 - Open heart, open minds/A can-do spirit:** Palliser staff and school communities regularly demonstrate a can-do spirit and especially a never-give-up attitude toward students. The literacy program is a prime example. Struggling readers are supported to improve literacy skills not just in their early years, but at all grades.

7. **Inclusiveness:** Palliser’s model of working to meet individual student needs and its emphasis on providing safe and caring schools provides a sense of belonging that 2012 participants said was needed for success.
8. **At eighth spot, we had a tie between the following:**
 - Volunteer Input/Community Engagement:** Meaningful and authentic partnerships are one of the hallmarks of an effective school. Palliser schools are constantly looking for new ways to invite the community in and to be part of school success. This goes back to the safe, caring and inclusive culture of our schools.
 - Volunteer initiative service/Service/Giving back:** Students across Palliser regularly have opportunity to experience the benefits of service to causes that may be local, national or international. This connects with the division’s emphasis on safe and caring schools and character education.
9. **Parent support and engagement:** Following the 2012 “Community Conversation,” Palliser organized a first gathering of school councils in hopes of establishing a council of school councils. The Board of Trustees recently recommitted to this concept. Further, schools and the division have adopted a number of new tools to encourage engagement and dialogue, whether through text, email, school or social media websites. Palliser encourages school council participation by sponsoring every council’s membership in the Alberta School Councils Association.
10. **Student collaboration/engagement:** Palliser believes the student voice is vital to the continued success of our schools and our division. Student focus groups and student surveys are key elements in Palliser’s school review process, and the Superintendent has spoken often of the valuable insights he gains from meeting with students. In 2015, Palliser held its first Student Leadership Conference, an opportunity for students from across Palliser to share their leadership experiences. Work has begun on planning to build on this leadership event. Since 2012, three schools have adopted the Leader in Me program and others are considering or working toward the same. Our schools also pursue collaboration through buddy programs between schools, building community through mentorship opportunities.

These were the key factors for school success identified in 2012, and a summary of what we did to grow in these areas.

Are these factors still the most relevant to our schools and their continued success?

Are there factors missing from this list?

Let’s talk on May 28, 2015.