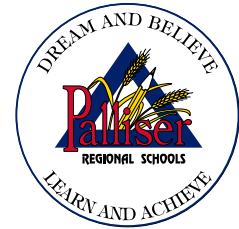


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

September 8, 2015



Colleen Deitz returns as board chair; Robert Strauss as board vice-chair

The Board of Trustees held its annual organizational meeting Tuesday, Sept. 8, in advance of its regular meeting. In addition to the election of chair and vice-chair, the trustees established committee appointments and meeting dates.

By acclamation, Colleen Deitz was returned as chair and Robert Strauss becomes vice-chair for the first time.

Deitz, a 17-year veteran of the board, has served as chair since October 2013. Prior to that, she served as vice-chair for 11 years.

Strauss, who joined the board in 2002, takes over as vice-chair from Don Zech. Zech was board chair for nine years, and had served as vice-chair since October 2013. He recently was honoured for 40 years of service to Palliser in the capacity of teacher, principal, Central Office administrator and trustee.

The board established the following committee appointments:

Alberta School Boards Association, representing the board at ASBA Zone 6 meetings: Colleen Deitz, with Esther Willms as alternate

Public School Boards' Association: Don Zech, with Craig Whitehead as alternate

County of Vulcan Adult Learning Council: Colleen Deitz

County of Lethbridge Community Learning Council: Debbie Laternus

Palliser C2 Committee which examines teacher workload and efficacy issues and includes trustees, Central Office administrators and teacher representatives: Debbie Laternus, Colleen Deitz and Robert Strauss

Coaldale Community Services Committee: Debbie Laternus

Vulcan and District Recreation Board: Robert Strauss

Audit Committee: Colleen Deitz, Debbie Laternus and Craig Whitehead

Board Teacher Advisory Committee: Colleen Deitz, Craig Whitehead and Don Zech

Labour Relations Negotiating Committee: Colleen Deitz, Craig Whitehead and Debbie Laternus

Facilities Committee: Robert Strauss, Craig Whitehead and Esther Willms

Technology Advisory Committee: Robert Strauss and



Colleen Deitz



Robert Strauss

Craig Whitehead

Wall of Fame Committee: Colleen Deitz, Esther Willms, Don Zech

The board set its regular meeting dates for: Oct. 19; Nov. 24; Dec. 8; Jan. 12; Feb. 9; March 8; April 12; May 24; June 21; and Aug. 23.

The trustees discussed how best to meet and engage with society boards at its faith-based schools in Calgary and Brant and directed Associate Superintendent (Education Services) to consult with society boards and come back with a recommendation on a new meeting structure and schedule.

The board appointed KPMG as its independent auditor to oversee the 2014-2015 audit.

Division enrolment on target; hats off to Transportation Services staff

The board moved into its regular meeting with a discussion about how the new school year started.

Early enrolment numbers were almost exactly what the division had projected, with just over 8,100 students in early learning through Grade 12 attending Palliser schools.

Chair Colleen Deitz commended Transportation Services Supervisor Dave Shaw for his efforts, including entering about 60 new students the day before the first day of school. She said she hadn't received any complaints about bus service in her rural area. "It used to consume my first week," she said. "It's been amazing."

The Board also extended thanks to media and business

partners supporting this year's Think of Us on the Bus safety campaign. Now in its fourth year, the public and student education program started with help from a provincial grant. Since then, all costs have been carried by Palliser. This year, the messages were being supported by the newspapers Sunny South News and Lethbridge Herald. Two Lethbridge radio stations, CJOC and The Bridge, were running ads for three weeks thanks to support from Minute Muffler in Lethbridge.

Last year, Palliser bus drivers reported 53 incidents of motorists passing a school bus stopped with its red lights flashing and its stop arm extended. If caught, the motorist could face a ticket of \$544. That's fewer than the 56 incidents in 2013-2014 and 77 in 2012-2013, the first year of the campaign.

Communications Officer to receive media award from Public School Boards' Assoc.

The board congratulated Palliser Communications Officer Dawn Sugimoto, who has been selected to receive the Public School Boards' Association 2015 Media Award for Special Contribution to Public School Education. The board nominated Sugimoto for the award.

The award will be presented at the Public School Boards' Association annual general meeting in Edmonton on Oct. 23.

The board has also been invited to make a presentation at the PSBAA meeting. The topic is generative governance.

Opening Day, Wall of Fame event well received by Palliser staff

Palliser staff provided overwhelmingly positive feedback to the Opening Day Celebration held in Vulcan on Aug. 27. Just over 300 Palliser staff completed an online survey about the event that includes long service awards and the Wall of Fame induction honouring former students.

About 90 per cent of the feedback was positive. This was the largest opening day gathering in Palliser history with staff from the Calgary Islamic School joining for the first time. This was also the first time a Palliser Ambassador Award was given with the inaugural recipient being Dan Doerksen, the division's Low German Mennonite Worker.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz thanked Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard for his excellent job hosting the event.

He said one issue with the day is the size of the staff has outgrown the Cultural Recreational Centre in Vulcan. Other comments suggested five-year service awards be acknowledged at the school level rather than at the division-wide gathering. Trustees discussed a desire to acknowledge all long-service recipients at a shared event.

Palliser will work on new assessment tool to take place of Grade 3 PAT, SLA

Palliser administration will be looking to develop an assessment tool to take the place of the Grade 3 Provincial Achievement Tests and the Student Learning Assessments. The PATs were discontinued with the introduction of the SLAs. Palliser teachers participated in the Grade 3 SLAs for the past two years and found the assessments were not benefiting student learning, said Superintendent Kevin Gietz. Palliser surveyed Grade 3 teachers in both years and found teachers would have preferred to administer the PATs rather than the SLAs based on their experience.

When Alberta Education announced this year's Grade 3 SLAs would be optional, Palliser announced its intent not to administer the assessments in any of its schools this fall.

"We're extremely comfortable with the feedback we received," Gietz said.

He said Palliser will develop its own assessment tool for use in Grade 3. Otherwise, students will be in Grade 6 before any standardized assessment occurs. He will invite Palliser principals to participate in a committee taking on this task, and has invited a representative from Alberta Education to be part of the process.

Division to meet two MLAs to discuss Low German Mennonite programs

Palliser Regional Schools will play host to two southern Alberta members of the legislative assembly in October.

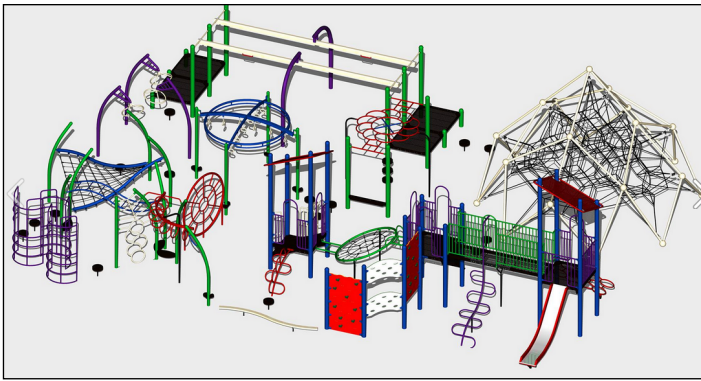
Cardston Taber Warner MLA Grant Hunter and Little Bow MLA Dave Schneider had a representative contact Palliser seeking to learn more about the division's programs for Low German-speaking Mennonite students. Palliser operates alternative program at John Davidson School in Coaldale, Barons School and Carmangay Outreach and a junior high at Huntsville School specifically for LGM families. The schools teach the regular Alberta curriculum in English in an atmosphere that respects the Mennonite faith and culture.

Board Chair Colleen Deitz welcomed the opportunity to share information about Palliser's programs and its efforts to provide all students with the best educational experiences possible.

Jennie Emery action plan hinges on implementing Leader in Me

Jennie Emery Elementary School in Coaldale is a strong school that will grow even stronger with its new Leader in Me focus, said its principal.

Sherrie Nickel and Vice-Principal Kristi Van Doesberg met with the board to share the actions they implemented in response to a school review of Jennie Emery school



Jennie Emery Elementary School's playground build days are Sept. 24-26. Volunteers are welcome and needed!

conducted last October.

The review celebrated the school's caring and committee staff, literacy focus and collaborative environment.

Areas of refinement identified by the review data included more support for students with mild or moderate learning needs, more communication with parents and more playground equipment.

The data collected during the school review included classroom observations, interviews with teachers, focus group meetings with support staff, students and parents and surveys of staff, students and parents. Jennie Emery Elementary serves about 460 students in early learning programs through Grade 4. The school also is home to a before- and after-school program.

Nickel said since the review occurred, the school has begun implementing a Leader in Me program. Based on Franklin Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, this school program encourages every student to be a leader.

Staff at Jennie Emery completed 7 Habits training, led by Palliser Central Office staff, last spring. Work continued in late spring and August to facilitate a culture of leadership at the school. A session later this week would help create a year-long action plan. Already, the school has a quick start guide to help ensure students learn the habits.

To improve communication, the school revamped student agendas, customizing them to specific grades. Inside, students can find "I can" statements about each of the outcome in the four core subjects. The process expressed the program of studies in a kid-friendly way.

The school's goals will be posted in the foyer and each class's mission statement will be clearly displayed. Teachers have begun sending weekly memos to parents, sending postcards home before the start of school, and calling home just to touch base at the start of the year.

To facilitate collaboration and team building, the school held an orientation for all new staff in late August. New teachers and support staff were matched with experienced

mentors on staff.

Fundraising for new playground equipment has benefited from outstanding parent and community support. The build starts Sept. 24, and the Town of Coaldale has told its employees they can volunteer at the build on Sept. 24 and 25 and still be paid their regular wages.

Chair Colleen Deitz thanked Nickel and Van Doesberg for their work and support of students.

Palliser and Master's society agree on mediation and a mediator

Palliser will reach out to an experienced hand as it seeks mediation to resolve outstanding issues between the division and the Master's Academy Educational Society.

In discussing a possible mediation process, as outlined in the master agreement between the board and society, Master's suggested contacting Dr. Garry Andrews, a former Palliser superintendent familiar with the alternative program schools.

The board directed administration to contact Dr. Andrews.

The society and the board have been discussing ongoing issues related to the master agreement that brought the former private school into Palliser in 2008-09.

Calgary Islamic School parents meet with Palliser to talk programs, services

Parents at Calgary Islamic School have responded positively to Palliser taking on the two campuses as faith-based alternative programs.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Stan Hielema said parents are quite supportive of Palliser and passionate about their schools.

Palliser held a parent meeting at the Akram Jomaa campus Sept. 3 to talk about Palliser and its programs. The meeting was very well attended, and Hielema said Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Ken Garinger did an excellent job of leading the meeting.

A group of parents has been protesting at the schools on Fridays. Their issue is the fees being paid to Palliser's partner the Muslim Community Foundation of Calgary. Those fees cover transportation and building needs for which the schools receive no provincial funding. The foundation shared a wish list of capital building improvements for both campuses.

New committee to tackle myriad of school calendars in Palliser

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Stan Hielema is leading a committee of Palliser school principals

looking to bring consistency to school calendars across the division.

Currently, the division establishes a calendar outlining first and last days of school, four division-wide professional development days and a Christmas break that should be common to all schools. Variations occur with religious holidays unique to Hutterite and Low German Mennonite Schools, four-day weeks at some schools, and week-long breaks that move with Easter or stay constant at the last week of March.

The committee's goal is to reduce the number of differences found in calendars across Palliser to reduce confusion for parents and staff.

The board also reviewed a draft 2017-2018 calendar which will be shared with school principals for input and discussion with school councils. The 2016-2017 division calendar was also accepted. It has students starting school on Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2016, right after Labour Day. The first day of Christmas break would be Friday, Dec. 23, with students returning on Monday, Jan. 9. The last day of school for students would be Wednesday, June 28.

The 2016-2017 divisional calendar will now be shared with schools so they can begin planning their school-specific calendars.

The board began working on calendars two years in advance a few years ago in order to help parents better plan their own vacation needs.

Palliser project demonstrates summer reading loss is real but not inevitable

A small-scale research project in Palliser this summer showed both the negative impact of the "summer slide" on reading ability when reading stops for a few weeks but also the positive impact of focused reading time daily.

Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Pat Rivard said Director of Learning Laurie Wilson conducted a summer reading program in the community of Coalhurst this summer. She had parents of four students commit to having their students attend the reading program Tuesday through Friday for three weeks from the start of August.

Wilson compared the students' reading levels as measured through the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark

assessment conducted by their schools before the summer break with their assessment score at the start of August and again at the end of the reading program.

Two of the four students had lost ground in reading between the end of June and start of August. At the end of the reading program, all four students regained the ground they lost over the summer.

Wilson had the students read individually with her for 30 minutes, spend 15 to 20 minutes in group read aloud time and then spend 30 minutes individually working on the literacy activity of their choice.

Rivard said the experiment demonstrated how important it is to encourage daily reading over the summer break. He said the literacy team will be looking for ways to engage partners in the community to help support this important work.

Engineers propose bus lane, storm water improvements for Coalhurst Elementary

Palliser Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun and Facilities Services Supervisor Darren Stocker showed the board a proposal from MPE Engineering Ltd. to improve parking and bus safety at Coalhurst Elementary School.

There is a drainage problem in front of the school where there is a small parking lot. Buses dropping off students park at the side of the street, and the community does not allow the use of flashing red lights, meaning traffic can be travelling by as students load and unload.

The engineering firm proposed the creation of a 38-stall lot and an off-street bus loop to the west of the current, small parking lot. That small lot would continue to be used for handicap parking and short-term visitors.

A green space west of the new parking lot would help move water to a storm drain.

Stocker said the improved safety for students getting on and off the school bus would trump the loss of some of the field to a parking lot.

Stocker was to attend a Coalhurst Elementary school council meeting later in the day to share the engineering firm's proposal.

Next meeting: October 19, 2015 in Lethbridge