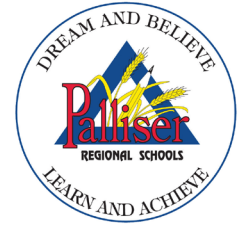


# Highlights of the Board of Trustees meeting

Tuesday, March 20, 2012



## Trustees visit Milo School

The Board of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular meeting at Milo School on March 20, 2012.

The meeting is one of four the trustees will hold in schools this year.

Milo School is a Grade 1-9 school nestled in the rolling hills north east of Vulcan. About 50 students attend the school, located in a village of about 120 people.

The Board's visit to Milo included student presentations of song, a monologue and an original work of non-fiction. The Board also welcomed Kim Booth's Grade 5-6 students who are studying local government. The students observed part of the meeting before the trustees took a brief recess in order to answer student questions about the roles and responsibilities of a school trustee.

The Board will continue its school visits in April. The next regular meeting of the Board will be April 17, 2012, at Coalhurst Elementary School.



Milo student Krisha Edwards smiles while listening to Brandon Hilchey's monologue about what it's like to take a driver's licence exam. Both students made presentations to trustees during the Board's visit to Milo School.

## Trustees take in Speak Out forums

In the monthly roundtable, during which trustees share their activities from the past month, trustees Joe Watson (Picture Butte area) and Jean Mrak (Coaldale) discussed their attendance at Speak Out forums with students in

March.

This is the third year Palliser staff have held Speak Out forums across Palliser, giving Grade 9 students the opportunity to discuss what factors in their school contribute to their learning, what factors hinder learning and what students and adults can do to improve education.

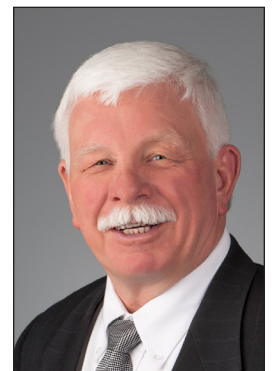
The forums use resources created by the Alberta Education Student Engagement Initiative. The information Palliser collects from Grade 9 students is forwarded to Alberta Education but is also shared within Palliser to bring student voice to decision-making.

Trustee Watson attended forums at Huntsville School in Iron Springs and Picture Butte High School, while Mrak attended Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale.

The trustees said students commented on the number of distractions in the classroom as hindering their learning.



JEAN MRAK



JOE WATSON

## Basketball alive and well in Palliser

Trustees shared good news from around the division, including Picture Butte High School's boys and girls basketball teams winning bronze at 2A Provincials. At the boys tournament, the top three teams were all from southern Alberta. Heritage Christian Academy's boys basketball team, the Hawks, also won bronze at 1A provincials. The Board also expressed congratulations to Master's Academy in Calgary, which was ranked in the Top 10 elementary schools in the province by the Fraser Institute's annual school rankings.

## School bus safety campaign

Superintendent Kevin Gietz reported to the Board that Palliser has initiated a multi-stakeholder committee to organize a school bus safety campaign. The committee was struck in the wake of several close calls involving Palliser

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

buses and students in January. The initial meeting brought together Palliser representatives, local law enforcement agencies and the Office of Traffic Safety. Work will continue this spring in hopes of creating a public education campaign this fall.

Trustee Robert Strauss agreed to represent the Board on this committee.

As part of the effort, Palliser Regional Schools students from Grade 8 to 12, who are old enough to be drivers or soon-to-be drivers, have been invited to share their ideas, slogans, videos or other suggestions for the public education campaign on bus safety. Those who enter an idea will be entered in a draw for an iPad. Deadline to enter is 5 p.m., April 18. Students interested in entering should visit their school office for details.



**ROBERT STRAUSS**

## Stakeholder meeting to be held

The Board discussed plans to hold a meeting with stakeholders, including parents, students and community members. Superintendent Kevin Gietz said the board may want to consider a new format for meetings this year. In past, the meetings have been held in spring in advance of Palliser's preliminary budget. The meetings were an opportunity for the Board and administration to share budget implications and then discuss what stakeholders consider priorities for spending.

This year, however, the jurisdiction will have little concrete information about the budget to share because the jurisdiction has not yet entered negotiations with the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees. The current contract expires at the end of August.

With no idea what labour costs will be for 2012-13, Gietz suggested trustees may want to hold a different kind of meeting with stakeholders. The discussion would focus more on school successes and identifying the key factors that contributed to those successes.

Instead of regional meetings, the Board supported the idea of a single meeting that would bring stakeholders from across Palliser together in one place at one time.

Administrators will be encouraged to identify parents, students and staff to attend this meeting to represent



**KEVIN GIETZ**

specific schools, and the doors would be open to the public to attend.

The board directed administration to begin planning this community conversation forum for later this spring.

## A lesson in Anytime, Anywhere Learning

Trustees welcomed Mike Davis to the meeting. Davis is working part-time in Palliser's AISI program (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) as an Anytime Anywhere Learning coach. Prior to joining AISI, Davis was a teacher in a number of schools across Palliser.

His focus this year has been creating online resources that can be used as self-paced lessons. Students can login to access videotaped, digitized lessons created by Davis, listen through headsets, and work at their own pace. Davis has created lessons related to Scratch animation software, Audacity audio editing and recording software, and robotics.

"You may be really quick at it," Davis said. "You may need to rewind and go through the lesson again."

The resources can also be accessed through the Internet at home so students can review information as needed.

Davis said teachers can also use the lessons before introducing the material to students. He heard from one Palliser teacher who accessed Davis's resources from home. The information captured the attention of the teacher's own children, who were soon going through the lessons as well.

Davis said by recording lessons and posting them for students, teachers can overcome perennial challenges, such as student absences and how to help them catch up on material they missed.

As a classroom teacher, Davis said he began experimenting with recording lessons as a teacher at R.I. Baker Middle School, and he discovered how the digital resources could free up his time to offer individualized assistance to students who needed it.

"The results were amazing," he said. "As a senior teacher, I couldn't believe it. . . Students came in, picked up a headset and microphone, went to the computers and went to work. They were intrinsically motivated."

Davis's time could then be devoted to assisting those who needed it and evaluating individual students.

Once the units are created, they can be used repeatedly from year to year by any teacher in Palliser. The robotics units, for example, mean a school no longer needs to have a resident robotics expert on staff, Davis said.

"I see this as a win-win for teachers and students," Davis said. "Both gain. I believe that."

Online lessons are not a replacement for a teacher in the classroom.

“What happens in the classroom is magic, it really is, but this is a tool.”

The Board thanked Davis for his continued efforts.

## Vulcan Prairieview review presented

The Board welcomed Director of Learning Dan Ryder, who presented a summary of data collected at the school review of Vulcan Prairieview School on Jan. 19, 2012.

The review included focus group meetings with students and parents, interviews of staff, a tour of the school, and classroom observations by visiting principals from other Palliser schools.

Surveys were conducted with parents, students and staff as well, with an overall response rate of 74 per cent.

The collected data indicated the school’s strengths are its high standards for learning, school leadership and communication.

Ryder said the school staff deserves a pat on the back for their focus on assessment for learning. Learner outcomes are clearly communicated to students prior to instruction, and teachers use common language with students and parents.

The review identified areas for improvement or concern were bullying, multi-aged grades and a desire for French language instruction.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz encouraged parents and school administration to discuss the desire for second language instruction. Parents need to make their wish for the program known to their school principal. Elsewhere in Palliser students are learning Blackfoot, Mandarin, Spanish and French.

Overall, the school was ranked effective or very effective by a large majority of both parents, teachers, support staff and students.

The data is to be shared with school administration and staff who can celebrate successes and make improvements where necessary.

## Effective Schools Conference

Superintendent Kevin Gietz and Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin provided the Board a report on the 30th annual Effective Schools Conference in Scottsdale, Ariz. Gietz and Backlin and

a team of administrators whose schools were recently reviewed attended.

Palliser uses Effective Schools research in its school review process.

The conference featured a number of high profile

speakers, including Marcia Tate, who led a workshop in Coaldale earlier this year; Michael Fullan, co-author of “Realization: The Change Imperative for Deepening District-Wide Reform,” which is the subject of a book study by Palliser’s administrators this year; and Thomas Guskey, a renowned expert on fair grading practices, assessment for learning and evaluation of professional development.

For a second year in a row, the Palliser team had a private session with Dr. Larry Lezotte and Wayne Hulley, who lead

Effective Schools organizations in the U.S. and Canada, respectively. Both were again quite interested in how Palliser uses their work in the division’s school review process, and both shared their own thoughts on the process.

Palliser’s attendance at the conference was paid for out of the division’s AISI (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) budget. AISI money is enveloped and cannot be spent on instruction.

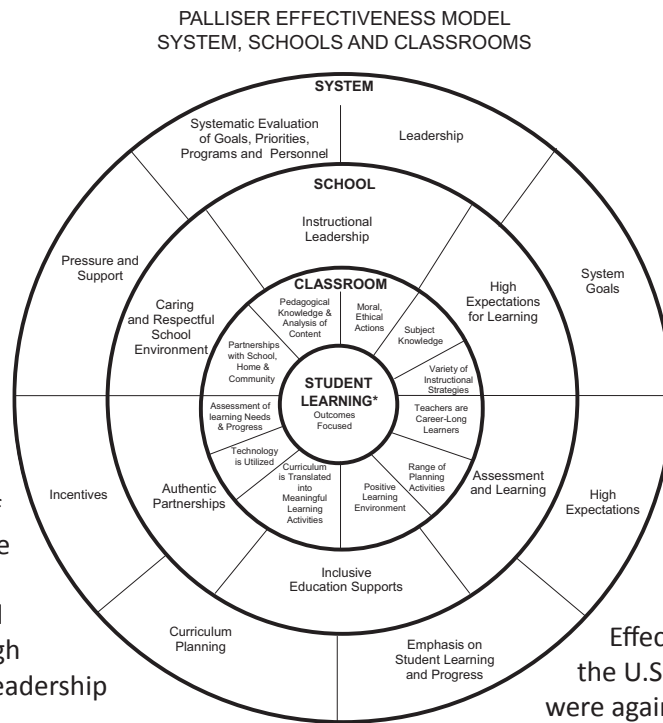
## Private school approaches Palliser

Palliser Regional Schools has been approached by a private school about joining the division as an alternative program. Because the matter has contract, legal and staffing repercussions, the item was moved to in-camera. No decision was made.

The Board’s two-year moratorium on new alternative programs ended in May 2010. Palliser has eight former private schools now operating as alternative programs in the public school system. They are: Calgary Christian School (both elementary and secondary), Glenmore Christian Academy, Heritage Christian Academy, Master’s Academy and College and Menno Simons Christian School in Calgary as well as Brant Christian School in Brant.

## Palliser updates capital plan

The Board approved its Three-Year Capital Plan, 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, for submission to Alberta Education.



The priorities are:

- Priority #1 – Secure modular units for Jennie Emery Elementary School and Picture Butte High School
- Priority #2 – Enclose the courtyard area at Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale to provide a lunch area/cafeteria
- Priority #3– Renovate the front entrance area at County Central High School in Vulcan to provide a lunch area/cafeteria
- Priority #4 – Modernize Noble Central School
- Priority #5 – Modernize Coalhurst High School
- Priority #6 – Expand the gymnasium at Champion School to provide for a full gymnasium.

The plan continues to identify lease funding as an ongoing priority. Brant Christian, Menno Simons and Heritage Christian receive lease funding. Glenmore Christian Academy, Master's Academy and College and Calgary Christian School do not.

## **Special meeting date set**

Trustees unanimously agreed to hold a special board meeting at noon Monday, March 26, 2012 to review the draft Siksika tuition agreement. The latest draft agreement was received by administration on the morning of the regular board meeting, not allowing enough time for a proper review.

## **Audit services to go to tender**

The Board rescinded a motion from January 2012 that recommended Palliser proceed with a request for proposals for auditing services. Subsequent advice from the division's lawyer was that it would be in Palliser's interest to use a tendering process instead. The Board accepted the advice and directed its audit committee to review the audit tender before it's issued.

**Next meeting is Tuesday, April 17, 2012 at Coalhurst Elementary School**