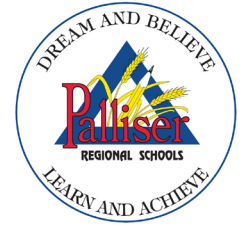


Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, May 15, 2012



Thank you to Lakeside Colony for the wonderful hospitality

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its regular May meeting at Lakeside Colony, a Hutterian colony located south of Coaldale, near Chin Lakes.

The meeting was held in the colony church to avoid disrupting school where several students were writing provincial achievement tests in the morning. This is the first time the board has held one of its meetings at a colony.



The Palliser delegation joined the colony members for a lunch that featured vegetables fresh from the garden, roasted chicken and fresh-baked pie. Trustees were then treated to musical performances by students and other members of the colony community.

Chairman Don Zech expressed gratitude to the colony members for their hospitality. Palliser has 16 colony schools across the division.

Moment of silence for Donovan family

Chairman Don Zech asked for a moment of silence in honour of the Donovan family and others who lost loved ones in the mid-air collision of two aircraft over Saskatchewan May 12.

Eleven-year-old Wade Donovan, a Grade 6 student at Vulcan Prairieview Elementary, his father Eric, and pilot Denny Loree were killed in the crash.

The loss has hit the communities of Mossleigh and Vulcan particularly hard. Palliser had counsellors available at the school to assist students and staff as they come to terms with the loss.

Superintendent Kevin Gietz said he heard recently of other families in Palliser dealing with the loss of a parent. As Palliser grows, these situations will be occurring more frequently, he said, and we need to be aware that we have families dealing with very difficult situations.

Sharing of good news around Palliser

The Board shared a number of good news items at the meeting.

Barons was one of just a handful of communities across Canada to receive a 50-50 grant from Let Them Be Kids, a non-profit organization. The school community has been raising money for a playground for years, and this grant will see the project through to construction on June 23. Powered by volunteers, the playground will be built in a day. To volunteer, visit <http://baronsltbk.blogspot.ca/>. Chairman Don Zech, who attended the grant announcement celebration in April, said he appreciated that the village council members were in attendance and offered their support for the build.

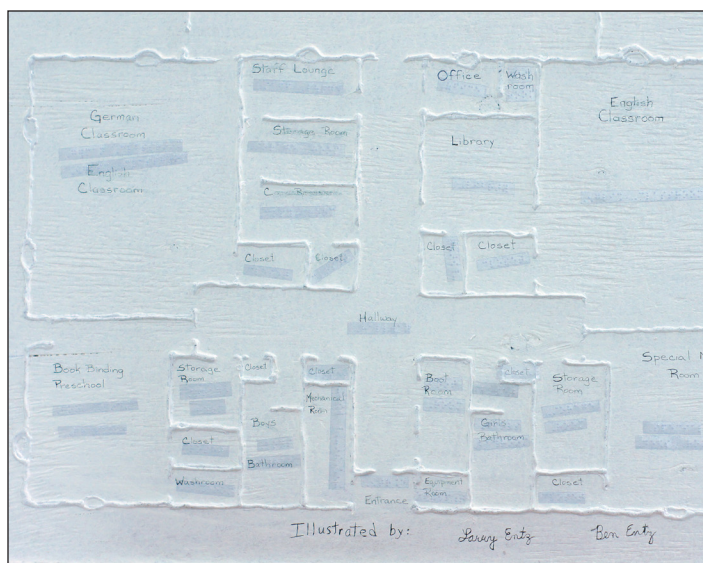
The Grade 3 choir at Master's Academy was recommended to perform for a panel of renowned adjudicators at the 2012 Alberta Music Festival in Edmonton May 10-12. The invitation acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the teacher and students. The Grade 3 choir is led by Cheri Peters. In a change this year, the Grade 3 choir selected to represent the Calgary Kiwanis Music Festival provincially was invited to provide a recording of a performance for adjudication, rather than appearing in person.

Palliser also received a report from Scott Hickling, representing the school council at Calgary Christian School, about the Alberta School Councils' Association annual meeting, held in Edmonton April 20-22. Palliser Regional Schools encourages members of its school council to attend the ASCA meeting and sponsors one person from one Palliser school council to attend. This year, Hickling's trip was sponsored, and he shared with the Board a report on some of the ideas presented at the meeting. A copy of his report will also be shared with Palliser's Administrators' Association for the benefit of school councils across the division. Recently, Hickling and the Calgary Christian school council were presented an Award of Merit from the Alberta School Councils' Association for its efforts this past year.

Trustees also expressed appreciation to the staff and students at Menno Simons Christian School in Calgary for the outstanding production of Music Man April 26-28. Trustees Joe Watson and Esther Willms shared how impressed they were with the professional quality of the

entire production. The school council also received kudos from Willms for its efforts to show appreciation to Menno Simons teachers. The council had activities every day of the week, including a breakfast one morning, sending supper home with staff one night, and a presentation of gift cards.

Zech, Willms and Trustee Jean Mrak also shared how impressed they were with the open house at the new school at Rock Lake Colony. Students at the colony had created a textured map of the new school building for a colony student who has impaired vision. Zech expressed appreciation to Alberta Education as well. Larry Albrecht from Alberta Ed's zone office attended the school open house.



School calendar approvals continue

The Board continued to review draft school calendars submitted by schools for the 2012-13 school year. As the calendars are approved, they are posted on the Palliser website under the Schools tab.

Arrowwood School update

Chairman Don Zech commended Superintendent Kevin Gietz and Vice-Chair Colleen Deitz, the representative for the Milo-Arrowwood area, for their efforts to deal with the aftermath of a devastating fire at Arrowwood School April 20. Both have been working closely with school staff, students and people in the community to keep students in school despite the blaze.

Although the school has been closed since the fire, the students and staff have continued working in the Arrowwood Community Centre. They only missed two days of classes as a result.

Work continues on relocating portable classrooms

donated to Palliser by Calgary Catholic School District to house students and staff until the school can be restored. Construction on the school will take months, with initial estimates that the work could be completed by Nov. 1, 2012.

Gietz said although the fire has been difficult and is a crisis he wouldn't wish on anyone, the response from people and organizations near and far has been overwhelmingly positive and has helped tremendously.

The Village of Arrowwood has a population of under 200. The school serves about 80 students from Grades 1-9 and houses a private kindergarten for about another 20 children.

Trinity Christian School expresses interest in joining Palliser Schools

Trinity Christian School in Calgary has expressed an interest in joining Palliser as a faith-based alternative program.

The society that runs the private school has been discussing the possibility with its members and parents. On May 9, representatives of Palliser were invited to a parent meeting to answer questions about the division.

The discussion is not the first of its kind for the private school. In 2008, the society members voted in favour of remaining an independent school. A new vote will be held May 16th about the prospect of joining Palliser. If passed, Trinity's request would still require the approval of Palliser's Board of Trustees.

Palliser operates seven faith-based alternative programs in Calgary.

Trinity is expected to have 355 students from kindergarten to Grade 9 next year.

Work continues with Master's Society

A committee of Palliser trustees and Central Office administration has scheduled a meeting May 28th with representatives of the society at Master's Academy and College. In December 2011, Master's Educational Society served notice of termination of the master agreement that led to Master's Academy and College operating as an alternative program in Palliser. That notice set into motion an 18-month process that could see Master's ceasing to be a program in Palliser by July 1, 2013. The two organizations continue to meet to discuss outstanding issues in hopes of maintaining the existing partnership.

Stakeholders' meeting a hit

Trustees shared their thoughts about the stakeholders' meeting held in Vulcan on the afternoon of May 14. The

event, "A Community Conversation," brought trustees, staff, community members and students together for a discussion about the factors that contribute to school success. This was the first time stakeholders from across Palliser engaged in a single meeting, rather than in regional sessions.

"The stakeholders' meeting was a great sharing experience," said Trustee Esther Willms.

Vice-Chair Colleen Deitz said she appreciated having students involved in the discussion, particularly when parents and teachers were offering what they think is needed at their schools, and the student had completely different ideas.

A report on the day will be prepared and made public.

Heritage Christian Academy school review results presented

The Board welcomed Director of Learning Dan Ryder to the meeting to share the findings of the Heritage Christian Academy school review and discuss changes to the review questions for next year.

Ryder said more specific questions about bullying will be added to reviews next year. The trustees had raised questions about the data collected about bullying when looking over a school review report at April's meeting.

As a multiple choice question, students will be asked to respond to the statement: "I have been treated well by other students this year. (Not been threatened/teased repeatedly this year.)" An open-ended question would also be added: "Describe how you have been treated by other students. Is bullying a problem in this school?"

The review of Heritage Christian Academy was conducted Feb. 9, 2012 as Central Office administrators, and administrators and teachers from other Palliser schools descended on the north Calgary school for interviews with staff, focus group meetings with parents and students, and classroom observations.

The review of Heritage Christian Academy found the school's strengths include: a caring staff; responsive and caring leadership; a pervasive Christian atmosphere; and a safe and caring school culture.

Areas of improvement include facility improvements; more diversity in electives and options; and improvements to meeting students' needs, whether through inclusion or a consistent discipline policy.

Heritage Christian Academy serves about 540 students from kindergarten through Grade 12.

More changes to the modernization plan

The Board amended its three-year capital plan to make

modernization of Noble Central School the top priority. The multi-level school is not wheelchair accessible.

Priority 2 is modernization of Coalhurst High School; Priority 3 is enclosure of the courtyard at Kate Andrews High School to provide a lunch area/cafeteria; Priority 4 is renovation of the front entrance area of County Central High School to provide a lunch area/cafeteria; and Priority 5 is expansion of the gymnasium at Champion School.

Special meeting to discuss budget May 29

The trustees scheduled a special board meeting on the morning of May 29 to discuss the budget for 2012-2013.

Changes coming to preschool programs

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger presented the Board a report on preschool licensing. He said Palliser created preschool programs to meet the needs of funded children (those identified as having special needs who can benefit from early intervention). These preschool programs are licensed and governed by the Human Services department, not by Alberta Education.

The licensing process is labour intensive and changes frequently. As a result, many school jurisdictions are dissolving their preschool programs, in favour of operating early childhood programs that would then be governed by Alberta Education. According to the School Act, a school division can offer early childhood services for children under the age of six to prepare them for learning in school.

The primary difference between a preschool versus an early childhood education program would be eligibility for subsidies for parents.

Garinger said right now, the families of 39 of 174 preschool children are eligible for subsidies. Subsidies account for \$11,000 in revenue to Palliser. That loss in revenue would be more than offset by projected savings in manpower now spent on the licensing and inspection process. While parents could no longer apply for subsidy, Palliser could waive the program fee for families who can't afford it, Garinger said.

He said children who have special needs or are learning English as a second language are already funded for programming, and that would not change.

The Board passed a motion to move forward with Early Childhood programs, replacing the current licensed preschool programs in Palliser.



KEVIN GARINGER