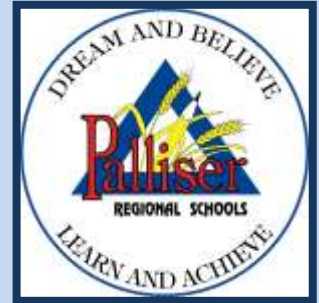


From the Chair ...

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held Tuesday, March 23, 2010



- The board of trustees held its regular meeting at Sunnyside School as it continued a series of monthly meetings on the road. The day began with a breakfast for staff. Sunnyside was one of four Palliser schools to win a breakfast on Central Office at opening day celebrations in August. Trustees were treated to student-led tours of the school as well as performances of music and poetry.
- During the meeting, the trustees and senior administrators engaged in the same Start-Stop-Continue process that the public was asked to do during the budget consultation meetings held in early March in Calgary, Coaldale, Picture Butte and Vulcan. The process involves brainstorming ideas for what Palliser should stop, start and continue doing in the coming year. An analysis of the ideas from the public meetings will be discussed by the board as it deliberates on its budget priorities. The results of the budget consultations will be posted on the Palliser website and sent to all the meeting participants. The trustees discussed how important the process is and how interesting and diverse the ideas were emerging from the session.
- The board amended its policy regarding the School-Year Calendar (Policy 20) to eliminate two clauses that stated the commencement date for students will be the first day following Labour Day and that a fixed Easter vacation will begin on Good Friday and continue the following week. Both clauses were eliminated to give the system flexibility in establishing its calendar.
- The board also amended Policy 12, The Role of the Superintendent/CEO, to reflect changes recommended by the consultant from the Alberta School Board Association, who has been working with Palliser on the policy.
- The board passed the 2010-2011 divisional calendar with a Christmas break that begins on Monday, Dec. 20, 2010. Classes will resume on Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. One draft considered had the Christmas break start mid-week closer to Dec. 25th, but the trustees heard high school parents prefer an early return in January to give students a couple extra days in class before Diploma Examinations begin in the second week of January. The new calendar also reduced to one from two the number of division-wide collaboration days held in Vulcan in August before students start classes in the fall. The change reflects feedback from staff who said they wanted to be their schools for an extra day before classes start on Monday, Aug. 30. The divisional calendar, however, is only a guide for schools. Individual Palliser schools submit their own calendars for approval reflecting their own schedules, PD days and spring break days. The individual school calendars will be reviewed and submitted to the board for approval later this spring.
- Associate Superintendent of Learning Services Barbara Gammon provided the board the annual Special Education Accountability Report. Across the Palliser jurisdiction, in kindergarten and approved preschools, programming and services are provided to 108 children with severe disabilities approved for program unit funding and 107 children identified with mild and moderate disabilities. In Grades 1-12, Palliser has identified 220 students with severe disabilities, 577 students with mild or moderate disabilities and 43 students as gifted and talented. The board also received the results of

the 2009-2010 Student Services Parent Survey. This survey has been completed biannually since 2002 and has involved all parents who have a child identified as mild, moderate, severe or gifted, according to Alberta Education's coding criteria. According to the survey overall results, 85 per cent of parents said they were satisfied with the learning support services their child was receiving in the school; 82 per cent were satisfied with access to educational/learning support services for their child; 86 per cent were satisfied with their child's progress and achievement; 82 per cent were satisfied with the school's effective co-ordination of agencies or specialists providing services to the child; 82 per cent of parents were satisfied their child was receiving the right kind of services; 92 per cent were satisfied they knew who to call if they wanted to discuss services being provided for the child; 92 per cent were satisfied with their opportunity to be involved in the development of the child's Individual Program Plan; and 79 per cent were satisfied with the joint initiatives with other partners such as the Student Health Initiative and Family School Liaison Programs, to help meet the learning needs of students. The survey had a response rate of 48 per cent, the highest response rate since Palliser began surveying parents on special education.

- Barbara Gammon also provided an analysis of Palliser's high school completion rate. For the first time, Alberta Education provided school jurisdictions the names of people it considered dropouts in 2007-08. With the help of Palliser principals, Gammon found 29 per cent of Palliser's "dropouts" had moved out of province and could not be tracked; another 12 per cent had moved out of district and their status was not known. Nine per cent had found employment and left school. The findings also revealed a number of people Alberta Education labeled as "leavers" had actually completed high school through college or outreach programs, went into apprenticeship programs or went on to military college. Gammon pointed out even with those high school completers counted as leavers, Palliser's dropout rate is quite low, compared to the provincial average.
- The next board meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, April 27th. That meeting will be held at Heritage Christian Academy, 2003 McKnight Blvd. NE, Calgary.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools