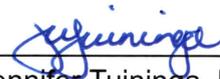


**ANNUAL BOARD EVALUATION 2019-2020  
Summary Report**

**Pembina Hills School Division  
Board of Trustees**



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Jennifer Tuininga, Board Chair  
August 26, 2020

## **Evaluation Process**

The board evaluation provides a time for reflection and continuous improvement. Individual trustees filled in a seventy two question survey and results were compiled to form a board overview of the responses. The superintendent and senior administrative team also provided feedback to the board on their working relationship.

### **1. Accountability for Student Learning and Wellness**

With regards to this area and the questions around the expectations, trustees agreed or strongly agreed to all questions. The exception was the question:

“The board reaches out to involve key stakeholders in the development of its Three-Year Education Plan and Reporting documents in order to achieve its goals and fulfill its vision.” Five trustees agreed, one was neutral. Some trustees feel this is an area that the board can continue to grow in and explore meaningful ways to engage communities and stakeholders regarding education.

The board takes student learning and wellness very seriously. The board frequently reviews data that applies to accountability for student learning in an effort to live up to its mandate and accountability measures, regardless of the external circumstances.

### **2. Community Assurance**

During this past school year the board undertook a review of the electoral wards of the division. This involved consultations with school councils, an online survey, and information communicated broadly through social media, local papers and schools. The intent was to engage communities in the process and to encourage feedback on a potential change to the structure of the wards.

Pembina Hills conducts an annual satisfaction survey in which parents/guardians, students and staff are able to provide feedback on school and division operations. In the past this survey was done by phone/online methods, this year was the first year it was conducted electronically as a cost savings measure. The results of the satisfaction surveys provide valuable information considered by the board, senior administration and principals in planning for the next school year.

Members of the board met with local MLA(s) in person and by tele-conference regarding a transportation regulation on the speed limit that buses travel, and in advocating for continued funding for Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC).

Trustees report at school council meetings and host Council of School Councils meetings twice a year. Other ways that trustees communicate include contributions through school newsletters, additional meetings, and social media. The May Council of School Councils meeting was held through Google meet with very good attendance from all areas of the division.

Trustees also represent the board on various committees both internal and external. The board belongs to the Alberta School Boards Association and the Rural Caucus of Alberta School Boards. The board takes the opportunity to participate in meetings and surveys circulated by Alberta Education.

The board is very effective and strives to involve the community by engaging them in education issues that directly affect their children. Information is available through a variety of platforms, with the board news, agendas and minutes posted on the Pembina Hills website.

The board needs to continue to build understanding about the needs of the whole school division, not just individual schools - to offer strong programs, create solutions, encourage people to value education, and work with schools towards sustainability. As money tightens hard decisions will need to be made.

### **3. Accountability to Provincial Government**

The board and senior administration has been diligent in its accountability to the province. However, there have been short timelines of response, and data requests by the government which have increased workload and frustration. Decisions during the pandemic flowed through Alberta Health and Alberta Education to the division, often simultaneously with a public announcement.

The board has approved all of its reworked policies this year in alignment with the Education Act.

### **4. Fiscal Accountability**

The board continues to monitor division dollars carefully, putting students' and school's needs as the priority for budgeting. This was demonstrated by reducing expenses and being diligent in ensuring that the board maximizes the money that goes into classrooms. The board will continue to develop strong processes to monitor the division's finances.

### **5. Board/Superintendent Relations**

The superintendent presents matters in a factual way, and provides the board with the data and background information required to make informed decisions. His willingness to answer any operational questions and collect data enhances the board's ability to ensure best practices are in place for the division.

There is mutual respect and trust between the board, superintendent and senior administration. Superintendent Garbutt has exhibited strong leadership during the year through senior administration changes, bargaining, COVID-19, Vista Virtual School budgeting, and the cutting of ADLC's funding.

Trustees work well together and trust one another to put students first with collective decision making. The board and superintendent work well together in the best interest of students and the division as a whole, looking after the needs of all school sites.

## **6. Board Development**

The board continues to try and make informed decisions that are in the best interest of the division. The varied background experience of trustees provides the board with a good mix of opinions and knowledge. Trustees respect one another, share information and can agree to disagree. Virtual meetings and the reduction of school board/provincial 'in person' events due to COVID-19 has made it difficult to interact with others on the board on a personal level and at times has reduced discussion. The board has managed to maintain a spirit of congeniality and goodwill while carrying out the tasks of governing the school division. Through the last three and a half months trustees have continued to attend and report on committee meetings.

The board work plan is used as a tool to guide the activities of the board on a monthly basis and includes reporting and assurance requirements.

## **7. Policy**

The Policy Committee has reviewed and rewritten all of the board policies this year and aligned them with the Education Act. At times the board asked the committee to research or reconsider wording to ensure alignment with Pembina Hills practice. Strong policy is important for effective governance.

## **8. Political Advocacy**

This past year the education landscape has been constantly changing. There have been many large scale shifts including a fall budget, the Education Act, the Choice in Education Act, and a new funding framework. Every effort is made by the board to contact and/or meet with local community organization representatives, MLA(s), neighboring school divisions and provincial organizations associated with education depending on the issue being advocated for. The board is grateful to its municipal partners for their support. A great deal of advocacy has been done around ADLC's service agreement, but despite this ADLC will close at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The board is in communication with its provincial associations, government and Alberta Education on a regular basis through emails, meetings and phone calls.

## **Final Comments**

The board accomplished the goals set out in the 2019-2020 areas of focus:

1. Align policies and procedures with the new Education Act, the upcoming Choice in Education Act, and build relationships with the new government
2. Work with Alberta Education to secure a service agreement for Alberta Distance Learning Centre
3. Work within the forthcoming provincial budget, and the reality of shrinking reserves and declining enrolment
4. Begin a review of the electoral wards of the division

*Areas of focus for the 2020-2021 school year:*

1. School trustee elections will be held in October 2021: the board will develop support materials that communicate the importance of the role of local school trustees, and distribute these resources in communities while actively recruiting suitable candidates.
2. The board will work with Alberta Education to conclude the operations of Alberta Distance Learning Centre as of August 31, 2021.
3. The board will strive to balance the learning needs of students, staffing levels, and changing health and safety measures due to COVID-19, as well as possible schooling scenarios during the coming year.

**Concluding Statement**

The board continues to take its governance role seriously and make informed decisions in the best interest of the students, staff and communities of Pembina Hills. Expressing the role and value of a board of trustees will continue to be important with the upcoming municipal elections.

The PHSD board has been “forced” to tread some very uncharted waters due to government decisions and directives that directly affect the quality and substance of the educational programs that are offered to its students. Through these difficult times, the board has made a consistent effort to uphold the statement that defines the school division —“Together We Learn.”