

Edmonton Northeast Christian School Council Minutes – January 15, 2024

Chair: Binoy P Vice Chair: Jenn B Secretary: Raegan S

Members present: Rebecca V, Grace P, Kim S, Jessica K, Katie W, Laura M, Jen S, Rod S, Rhonda W, Brandie D, Charlene B, Ashley R, Jackie A, Todd L, Chelsea V, Ronke O, Angel S, Denise G

School Administration: Karla LW, Sibin A, Sherri W

1. **Meeting was called to order** by the chair at 7:05pm, followed by an opening prayer by Jenn B.
2. **Acknowledge members present**
 - A sign-in sheet was passed around to attendees which everyone at the meeting was requested to sign.
3. **Approval of Agenda**
 - Motioned by Laura M, seconded by Rhonda W
4. **Approval of previous minutes of school council meeting held on:**
 - November 30, 2023 - motioned by Jess K, seconded by Laura M
5. **School Admin Debrief**
 - The principal provided her admin report in advance of the meeting via SchoolZone and took questions.
 - A member mentioned that the spin bikes purchased with school council funds were too small for junior high students and there was inquiry about if bigger bikes could be purchased from the School Council fund.
 - The principal shared that grades 3 and 5 classes were the first priority due to an urgent need prompted by student growth. She added that the cost of the bikes would normally come out of the regular school budget.
 - An assistant principal shared that registration for K-6 was open for Prime Time currently and that it would start on February 1. She added that if any parents wanted to make a donation of healthy snacks or to give of their time to volunteer, that would be appreciated.
 - The chair shared that the balance of the school council account was \$4,393.01 and that the school council executive was set to meet with the Society to get more information about the funds.
 - A concern was expressed that sex was discussed in grade 4 in the 2022-23 school year and that it had happened again in 2023-24 despite sex not being part of the grade 4 curriculum or the curricular outcomes. School administration's position on addressing the issue was requested in writing.
 - A parent brought concerns of sexual health curriculum through the admin debrief - Welcome back to teachers.
 - The principal said specific issues could be addressed privately and that curricular outcomes were available online for parents to view. She stated that the curricular outcomes that parents could exclude their children from were in bold.
 - A question was raised about the meaning of terms used in the grade 4 health unit: 'choices' and 'relationships'. The principal said she would provide the requested information on schoolzone so all parents could see it.
 - A Point of Order was called by the chair to allow a parent, who had been interrupted, to speak provided a specific teacher or student was not identified.

- The chair asked that section 55 of the *Education Act* be reviewed as the school council needed to be able to run the meeting in a way that allowed it to properly advise school administration.
- The principal asked that a safe and welcoming environment be maintained in the meeting. The principal voiced concern of naming a teacher in a scenario.
- A parent requested the chair remain unbiased in leading the meeting.
- A parent offered different view on why choices/responsibilities is necessary.
- A parent noted that people have different views of Christianity.
- Another parent mentioned that as a school, the documentation said that there would be collaboration between the parent community and the school, and that there needed to be continuity between the home and the school environments. It was felt that the school was choosing to represent one position within the community to the exclusion of being respectful of families with more traditional views.
- An additional parent expressed that the catechism on the Society website seemed consistent with a traditional view of Christianity and that was what parents expected of Christian education.
- The principal felt that information sessions put on by the Society were clear about the school's position and helped parents make a decision about where to send their child. She expressed that there were multiple schooling options including homeschooling, private schools and public schools, and that private schools were unaffordable for most parents. She added that all board policies had to be followed within ECNS.
- One parent said the school had to take into account EPSB and Society policies.
- Another parent shared that it would be good for school council to be a place where parents could verbalize their concerns, including their Christian perspectives. It was added that there was a desire to hear from school administration that the school was a special kind of EPSB because there was a partnership with a Christian society.
- One attendee mentioned that it was helpful to hear parent concerns to assist in determining if ECNS was the right school for them. It was added that it was not shared during the application or interview process, that the school held liberal Christian views. The parent expressed that there were things occurring in the school that did not appear to be rooted in Scripture.
- One parent contributed that ECNS was a multid denominational school and that the purpose of Christian Education was to grapple with what it meant to be an image bearer, not to have a particular doctrinal stance on a topic.
- One parent felt that LGBTQ materials were posted throughout the school to promote the LGBTQ community and that within Christianity, it was generally not accepted as okay. It was added that parents were not trying to exclude anyone but that there was a difference between inclusivity and promotion. It was felt that one could be inclusive without promoting, and still be respectful to both sides.
- Another attendee felt that the signage was about inclusivity, and not promoting LGBTQ.
- One parent mentioned that posters representing the parent's minority racial background were not in the school.
- An attendee added that teachers did not come to the classroom with an agenda. The attendee said that students could grapple with issues without the teacher saying students were right or wrong.
- One parent reminded attendees that Partners in Prayer occurred every Tuesday afternoon in the school.
- Another parent expressed that their child was told by a teacher that homosexuality was fine; but stressed that children should instead be redirected to their parents when questions come up in the classroom. The parent felt that issues needed to be shared in an age-appropriate way and that it was unfair to give young children options and expect they had the skills to weigh them.

- An attendee said that when a teacher was asked for their opinion they could say what they thought without saying that their opinion was the only perspective.
- The principal said she told staff that when contentious issues come up in class, that children should be directed back to their families or pastors.

6. Parent Engagement Survey Update

- The purpose of the survey was given as an approach to increasing current parent engagement so the school council could perform its advisory duties.
- Copies of the draft survey were available as handouts at the meeting.
- The executive mentioned they had approached ASCA to see if they could work together to roll out the survey and that some of the ASCA grant money would be needed to go that route. Some of the potential challenges included: not being able to ask open-ended questions and translation of the survey into the desired languages of Filipino, Oromo and Tigrinya.
- It was added by a member that discussion still needed to happen with school administration about how to disseminate the survey and how the contact information of parents would be provided.
- Translators for all of the desired languages had been found.
- The draft survey had been reviewed by a third party who had experience with survey design at a university level.
- An assistant principal and another attendee noted that answers needed to be actionable.
- The principal expressed that anything sent to parents would need to be approved by school administration.
- Some attendees had feedback about the survey and survey questions. They were requested to send feedback to the school council's email address.
- The chair noted that the outcome of the survey was to provide advisory support to school administration so there was a conflict in terms of school administration being involved with survey development.
- There was a question about other surveys that had been done and if information from those surveys could be used. The chair mentioned that section 35 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* only allowed bodies to use data for the purposes for which the data was collected and so data from other surveys would not be available to use.
- The principal felt that including open-ended questions could lead to a breach of FOIP and that the data should be collected and analyzed by a third party. She added that funding could be requested from the Society.
- There was a motion that was made by one parent to not proceed with the survey.

7. Bullying Protocol

- The chair asked for a motion to cover off the bullying protocol at the next meeting - motioned by Todd L, seconded by Grace P and motion was carried by simple majority.

8. Any Other Business

- A motion was put forward regarding the principal's funding request for spin bikes, and the chair mentioned more information would be available at the next meeting about the funding availability and related structure.

9. Communication of Next Meeting

- The chair put forward possible dates for the next meeting as Monday, February 12 or Thursday, February 15 and attendees generally indicated the Mondays worked better than Thursdays.
- The chair set Monday, February 12 as the tentative date for the next council meeting.

10. Closing in Prayer

- The meeting was closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:45pm.