

Monday, September 29, 2025

ÉSCH/CHHS School Council Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Mike Kukurudza, Jeneal Vargo, Pat Grisonich, Erin Vossler, Cheryl Stromsmoe, Becky Poirier, Karen Saffran, Cara Bourgeois, and Audrey Goodwin.

1. Welcome and Call to Order by Karen at 19:02

- Land Acknowledgment
- Roundtable self-introduction of Principal, council members, parents/guardians, and school board trustee.
- School Council Role
 - Provides a platform for parents/guardians/students to connect with the school, share their voice, and build relationships.
 - Allows parents/guardians/students to be involved in school decisions and provide input.
 - Provides a direct line of communication between parents/guardians/students and the school, allowing parents/guardians/students to be informed, to voice concerns, and learn about school initiatives.
 - Parents/guardians/students are encouraged to attend meetings. Virtual option is available and works well.
 - The principal emphasizes transparency and a willingness to address any questions or concerns parents may have about the school or district.

2. Review of Agenda

- Attendees reviewed the agenda.
 - Karen called for approval of the agenda, Erin approved, Jeneal seconded.
- This meeting serves as the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the group, marking the start of the 2025-2026 school year.

3. Reports

- [Chair's Annual Report](#): summary of 2024-2025 school year
 - Included past School Council Executive, meetings that were held, activities the council organized to increase parent/guardian/student and teacher involvement, provincial grant utilization.
- Financial Report
 - Report is pending, due by the end of the month.
 - Council receives ~ \$1/student/year, resulting in between \$2000 - \$3000 to spend each year.
 - Contribution to French Cultural celebration - Cabane à Sucre
 - Teachers received \$5/teacher to spend at ÉSCH/CHHS cafeteria for International Teacher's Day
 - Previous years - gym score board was purchased
 - Council does not have to fundraise.
- Principal's Report
 - Enrolment
 - Last year 1131 students, this year ~ 1200 students, increase of approximately 70 students, due to an influx of new families and students transferring from other schools. The high school has enrolled 50 international students as part of a plan to increase overall student numbers.
 - High school - 580 students. Junior high - just over 600 students.
 - Culture
 - Lots of work over past years to have clear expectations with respect to vaping, drugs, fights.
 - Overall, the school year has started positively with students engaged and excited to be there. There has been a positive atmosphere with fewer behavioural issues and a focus on student respect and kindness. An

assembly will be held on Wednesday where students will be encouraged to share their gratitude and suggestions for improvement within the school.

Issues

- Include the boys' bathroom cleanliness, with students vandalizing and making a mess, and vaping in the bathrooms. These issues are difficult to address without direct evidence or student support in reporting it.

Strike

- 89.5% voted to reject the Memorandum of Agreement, meaning a strike is possible October 6 or earlier if there is a government lock out. Negotiations will continue and hopefully it will not come to that.
- In the event of a strike, building access will be removed for teachers and administrators. Communication between teachers and students/parents/guardians is not permitted. Support staff (custodial, educational assistants) will still be working.
- This is unprecedented as it is the first time all the teachers have negotiated collectively in the province; in the past it has been within districts. Will have impact to the economy as many parents will be unable to work.
- Here is a [resource package](#) that may be helpful
- Email from [Medicine Hat Public School Division](#)

School Goals

I. Focused on Assessment and Reporting

- Concerns of how to interpret the four-point scale on report cards. Parents want to know if they need to intervene or if their child is performing well. Teachers' inconsistent updating of grade books and lack of clear communication about student progress. Working on finding ways to connect with over 2,000 families, including split families, guardians, and child services workers, to ensure everyone is informed.

II. Responsibility Centred Discipline

- Want students to have 3 skills
 - Responsibility, perseverance, and communication.
- Teachers will focus on skills that students are potentially missing in order to support them instead of resorting to discipline. Also includes holistic student support which involves investigating the root causes of student behaviour, including emotional and environmental factors, to provide comprehensive support.

Mission, Vision and Commitments update

- Revamping and refreshing the school's mission, vision, and commitments, aiming for clarity and alignment in decision-making.
- In final edits stage, will be brought to next meeting for review, edits, additions, then approval. Document will be published.
- Document will be the foundation for decision making going forward.

Athletics

- Volleyball and football are up and running.
- Volleyball has had a very successful start to the year - reflection of the Academies fostering skill development.

Fine Arts

- Junior High Musical will be Beetlejuice. Lots of interest, talent and excitement for this production. High School will have a musical as well.
- Band Program has already performed.

Parent Teacher interviews

- Scheduled for October 8th and 9th, with potential rescheduling in case of a strike.

Investment

- \$3000 camera system HUDL, games are recorded, students can pull their footage and compile their own highlight reels for post-secondary recruiters.

Affordable Programming

- School fees are approved by Board of Trustees. Goal is always to keep them as low as possible.
- Some fees decreased because of using facilities closer to the school.
- Transportation costs from Southland have increased. In the process of negotiating to obtain better pricing.

Financial Assistance

- Principal highlights the school's commitment to providing accessible programming, ensuring affordability for all families. Also mentions programs available to support families struggling with program fees, emphasizing the school's dedication to inclusivity.

Adaptive Sports

- Discussion about the availability of adaptive sports and recreational activities for individuals with disabilities, including basketball, sledge hockey, and biking.
- Emphasis on the importance of creating inclusive environments for children with special needs, particularly in sports and recreational activities, to foster a sense of belonging and social interaction.
- Encouragement for families to reach out for support and resources if they have questions or concerns about their child's participation in sports or recreational activities.

• Trustee's Report

- Provided by Pat Grisonich
 - Background: Pat is a former principal of the school, currently a Public School Boards' Association of Alberta director, and the Vice Chair of Medicine Hat Public School Division Board of Trustees.
 - The division office is looking at how the strike will impact schools, stating that while schools will be closed, essential staff will remain. He expresses strong support for teachers and hopes for a positive resolution to the strike.

- Highlights that the school constantly strives for improvement in teaching methods and overall operations and that attendance and parent engagement are common challenges faced by schools. Reiterates that input from parents is valued.

4. Elections

- Dissolution of the 2024-2025 Executive
- Election of 2025-2026 Executive
 - Chair: Karen Saffran was nominated, all in favour.
 - Vice-Chair: Erin Vossler was nominated, all in favour.
 - Secretary: Cara Bourgeois was nominated, all in favour.
 - Wellness Champion: Becky Poirier was nominated, all in favour.
 - Member at Large: Jeneal Vargo was nominated, all in favour.

5. Business

- Meeting Dates
 - October 27, November 24, January 26, February 23, March 30, April 27, and May 25 were proposed meeting dates. Note: October 27 cannot take place if teachers are on strike.
- Meeting Time Change
 - Meetings will occur from 18:30 - 19:30 to accommodate members' schedules.
- Parent Engagement Initiatives
 - Ideas to get more parents/guardians/students involved in council
 - Special Topics/speakers
 - Interest in how AI is used in education, and how the schools are handling it.
 - Discussing the importance of preparing students for future careers, including those that don't yet exist, and encouraging them to think about how they can contribute to solving societal problems.

- Interest in Scholarship/Bursaries. What is available to students, criteria to meet, and how to raise awareness among students/parents/guardians.
- Discussed financial incentive for attending Council meetings
 - Proposed that attendees receive a gift certificate for ÉSCH/CHHS cafeteria.
- Potential reason for low attendance:
 - Parents might be busy with their kids' activities and already invested in other commitments.
 - While the group is welcoming, past negative experiences with parent council might deter people.

Other information

[Engaging with Politicians During Election Cycles: A Guide for Alberta School Councils' Members and Families](#)

6. Adjourn

- Meeting was adjourned by Karen Saffran at 20:03.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2025.