

# **FORT SASKATCHEWAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**

## **School Council Meeting Minutes**

**January 9, 2025, 5:30pm**

### **Upcoming Dates:**

**PJ/Pancakes Day January 15 and 16 (for kinder class)**

**Parent Teacher Interviews March 12/13, 2025**

**Attendance:** Kerry Churchill, Leanna Bechtel, Kari Siewart, Maureen Keith, Ralph Sorochan, Matt Matheson, Ryan Marshall, Angela Fairall, Nadine Lennox, Stephanie VanBoom, Amanda Darley, Katie Vanginhoven

**Regrets:** Cortney Phillips

### **1. Approval of November 7, 2024 School Council Meeting Minutes -**

- Leanna motions to approve, Amanda seconds the motion.

### **2. Admin Report - Matt Matheson**

#### **Christmas Concert**

Absolutely wonderful to together with parents, grandparents, and all the kids

It was a wonderful opportunity for students and staff to celebrate together what the Christmas season is all about.

Awesome work by all the students performing.

Ms. Eggert and Mrs. Demkiw did a great job organizing and bringing everything together

Have had great feedback from families about what an amazing evening it was!

#### **Pajama & Pancake Day**

Pancakes and PJ's - January 15 for KA-9, January 16 for KB

Looking forward to having parents in the building to help us out with this

Kids are going to LOVE it!!

#### **Personal Mobile Device Policy**

As we chatted about at last meeting, in alignment with the ministerial order on personal

mobile devices from June, the school has developed a personal mobile device plan.

While personal devices offer potential opportunities for communication, information access and enhanced opportunities for instruction, personal mobile devices can also be a source of distraction that can negatively impact children's and student's mental health, engagement and learning.

Looking for an interesting read → Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness

Personal mobile device (PMD) is defined as any personal electronic device that can be used to communicate with or access the internet, such as a cellphone, tablet, laptop or smartwatch.

Elementary students shall not access a PMD at school unless documentation is provided to the principal or designate that confirms the use is for a diagnosed health or medical condition, or an identified special learning need. Students will not have access to their PMD during any break periods – for example, recess, class breaks and lunch breaks.

We are looking at a variety of ways to store PMD for students who don't have lockers in the school. For now, if you notice students with them on, please ask them to keep them at home.

Junior High students shall not access a PMD during instructional times unless: 1) documentation is provided to the principal or designate that confirms the use is for a diagnosed health or medical condition 2) documentation is provided to the principal or designate that confirms the use if for an identified special learning need. 3) given permission by the teacher for a specific educational task or purpose. Examples of specific educational uses are: I. II. III. Doing a school project (ex. editing videos) Completing an interactive quiz Other activities at teacher discretion Students in Junior High can access their PMD during break periods – for example, before and after school, class breaks and lunch breaks.

All devices brought to school are to be stored in lockers and either powered off or in silent mode. In addition, lockers should be locked. PMDs shall not be on the student during class time unless documentation has been provided to the principal or designate that confirms the use is for a diagnosed health or medical condition, or an identified special learning need.

Disciplinary practice:

First Infraction The device will be taken away, stored in a secure location in the office, and the student can pick it up at the end of the day.

Second Infraction The device will be taken away, stored in a secure location in the office, and the student's parent must come to pick it up at the end of the day.

Third or more Infraction The principal, in collaboration with parents and teachers, will

determine the appropriate next steps to ensure the optimization of students' mental health, engagement, and learning.

NOTE: The principal or teacher will consider individual circumstances and may move further down the progressive disciplinary practice as required. This approach is designed to teach responsibility and ensure that devices are not a distraction to learning.

## **School Calendar**

I want to share some important updates about our school calendar for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years. After months of research, community feedback, and careful consideration, the Board of Trustees is adopting a new calendar structure designed to support better student outcomes.

At the December 19 Board meeting, trustees approved the 2025-26 and 2026-27 Division calendar that includes a one-hour early dismissal for students every Wednesday to be used for staff collaboration. The 2025-26 Division calendar is available publicly on the Division website for any families who are planning for the coming school year.

Research shows that when teachers have regular, structured opportunities to collaborate, they improve their teaching practices, which directly benefits student learning. Educational experts emphasize that collective teacher efficacy—teachers working together effectively—can accelerate student achievement by more than three years' worth of progress in a single year.

With this in mind, the division has been exploring options to embed collaboration time into the school week. Feedback was collected from over 5,800 parents, caregivers, and staff through surveys, and while opinions varied, the consistent message was the value of predictability and minimal disruption to school routines.

Based on this input, the decision was made to adopt a one-hour early dismissal every Wednesday. This approach offers several key advantages over the current calendar and others being considered:

It ensures frequent, ongoing collaboration time for staff, which is proven to improve student outcomes.

It aligns closely with many existing schedules and minimizes disruption to routines.

It provides predictability for families and allows us to partner with community organizations to support after-school childcare needs.

NOTE: Instructional time (time students are being taught by teachers) remains the same. (Bell schedule will change slightly; details to follow)

We believe this change supports our goal of fostering growth and success for every student.

December Board Highlights - has more detailed information around the calendar and schedule

Collaborative Response (what we will be doing on some of the Early Dismissal days)

Looking forward to the extra early dismissal times which will provide a great deal more time for teachers to work together and collaborate to improve student learning and their educational experiences.

One of the primary drivers of student achievement is the collective efficacy of teachers in a school and when teachers collaborate, they critically reflect on their practices, share insights, and challenge one another, leading to improved teaching practices and student outcomes

With this in mind, having time for teachers to collaborate is critical to improving student learning.

We have been doing this already, (mostly at the end of staff meetings and on PD days) but the new calendar will allow us to do even more to improve the growth of our students.

### **PowerSchool Data Breach**

Yesterday, Elk Island Public Schools was advised of a widespread data breach of PowerSchool client information, which has impacted school divisions worldwide--including students and staff.

The Division is working with the vendor to determine the extent of the data accessed and the number of people affected. In the meantime, we've been assured the data accessed during this cybersecurity incident did not include individuals' financial or banking information.

There has been no disruption to the daily operations of schools or classroom instruction.

Information Technologies is working behind the scenes and the Division will share information with families as soon as it becomes available.

QUESTIONS: forward questions to Information Technologies. Use the helpdesk to put those questions in and they will create FAQs as needed.

### **Fees**

Current Year Fees: <https://www.fortchristian.ca/download/451789>

### **Fee Structure**

Four types of fees:

- Activity (Field trips, transportation, admission, accommodation, and other charges for field trips or special events usually associated with curriculum.

- Course (options courses: shop, foods, etc.)
- Extracurricular (sports, drama, clubs)
- Non-Curricular (missions trip, Ottawa Prayer trip)

### **Composition of fees**

- Volleyball  
[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NrhW9xg6RyDunp7XvLD12keb66eyr7oS/edit?usp=share\\_link&ouid=104733920892250792275&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NrhW9xg6RyDunp7XvLD12keb66eyr7oS/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=104733920892250792275&rtpof=true&sd=true)
- Similar breakdown for Construction, etc. (wood, nails, glue, etc.), foods, etc.

Discussion on anticipated changes in fees → costs in general are going up across the board and so fees will increase as well (all fees increasing by 2%)

Field trip fees (Activity fee) - we increased these fees for the current school year and are not proposing any additional increases for next year beyond the 2%.

Feedback on Fees from those in attendance

Specific priorities to ask about:

- Optional courses and associated fees
- Field trips and associated fees
- Extracurricular activities
- Other (for example, Mission Trip (\$1000-ish, Ottawa Prayer Trip)
- Non-curricular goods and services (for example, yearbooks)

### **Options**

Here are the options that we currently have:

- Community Action and Awareness 9 (Missions)
- Recreation Fitness 7, Recreational Fitness 8/9
- Wildlife 7, Wildlife 8/9
- Drama 7, Drama 8/9
- Foods 7, Foods 8, Foods 9
- Construction Technologies 7, Construction Technologies 8/9
- Fitness and Wellness 8/9 (Sports Medicine)

- Graphic Arts 8/9
- Art 7/8/9
- Learning Strategies 7/8
- Communication Arts & Media Relations 7/8/9 (Film Studies)
- Worship Arts/Leadership 7/8/9
- Textile Arts and Technologies 7/8/9 (Fashion Studies)
- Robotics 7/8/9

What options are your children enjoying most?

Which options would you like to add?

The school will determine the proposed fees for next year and share this information at the March School Council meeting along with any rationale for changes to the fees.

They are then sent to Finance, and then the Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer for approval.

### **3. Trustee Report - Ralph Sorochan**

1) **APPRECIATION** – Thanks to everyone for coming out this evening!

2) **POWERSCHOOL SECURITY BREACH** - Yesterday, Elk Island Public Schools was advised of a

widespread data breach of PowerSchool client information, which has impacted school divisions

worldwide--including students and staff. The Division is working with the vendor to determine

the extent of the data accessed and the number of people affected. In the meantime, we've

been assured the data accessed during this cybersecurity incident did not include individuals'

financial or banking information. There has been no disruption to the daily operations of schools

or classroom instruction. Additional specific details will be shared as they become available. We

appreciate your patience as we work through this issue.

3) **AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: 2024** - The Board approved the Audited

## Financial

Statements for Aug. 31, 2024. MNP LLP, a national accounting firm, audited the statements and

overall, the Division ended the 2023-24 school year with an operating surplus of \$3.2 million—

revenues and expenses were greater than budgeted because of increased enrolment, changes in

grant funding and a one-time sale of non-capital assets. Click here to access the Audited

Financial Statements.

4) **AUDITOR REAPPOINTMENT** - The Board approved reappointing MNP LLP, a national accounting

firm, as the Division's external auditor for EIPS' year-end financial statements for Aug. 31, 2025.

5) **EIPS 2024-25 FALL BUDGET** - The Board approved the EIPS 2024-25 Fall Budget Report for the

period of Sept. 1, 2024 to Aug. 31, 2025. The Board originally approved the 2024-25 operating

budget on June 6, 2024. Every fall, the budget is updated to account for current information

regarding enrolment numbers, revenue changes, actual carry forward amounts, expenses and

planned reserve spending. Overall, the EIPS 2024-25 budget provides stability for schools and

maintains essential services (see pg. 189, "2024-25 Fall Budget").

Highlights from the Fall Budget Report:

- budget priorities – complexity in classrooms, curriculum and resource development, the mental health strategic plan, collegiate and career pathways, equity, staff retention, and artificial intelligence and digital tools considerations
- budget principles – equitable distribution of funds and programs and transparent and understandable changes to allocations
- operating budget – \$213.15 million, which includes a \$2.11-million draw from operating

reserves and \$390,000 from asset retirement obligation amortization

- student enrolment – 17,949, as of Sept. 27, 2024
- employees (full-time equivalent) – 1,367, as of Sept. 30, 2024
- compensation – salary grid movement and benefit increases have been factored into standard costs for schools, and inflationary salary costs are related to grid movement and benefit costs for departments
- operating reserves projection – \$10.59 million, as of Aug. 31, 2025
- capital reserves projection – \$210,000, as of Aug. 31, 2025
- instructional spending – 78% of the total budget, equating to \$9,518 per student
- system administration spending – \$4.51 million, 2.1%, of total expenses

NOTE: System administration spending is within the \$6.55 million provided by Alberta Education. EIPS will distribute the surplus funds for instructional costs, as allowed in the Funding Manual for School Authorities 2024-25 School Year.

**6) UNAUDITED FINANCIAL REPORT: SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2024** - The Board received for

information EIPS' Unaudited Financial Report for Sept. 1, 2024 to Nov. 30, 2024—prepared by

Financial Services. As of November 30, revenues exceeded expenses, resulting in an operating

surplus of \$639,000. The operational revenue for the three months is \$51.28 million, which

represents 25 per cent of the budget. Similarly, total expenses are \$50.64 million, also representing 25 per cent of the budget. The primary reason for the surplus is timing differences,

meaning expenditures are not incurred evenly over the year. EIPS expects these to resolve

themselves by the end of the school year—after all expenses are incurred (see pg. 75, “Unaudited Financial Report for Sept. 1, 2024 to Nov. 30, 2024”).

**7) SCHOOL FEE PARAMETERS: 2025-26** - The Board approved the school fee parameters for the



2025-26 school year. For the upcoming school year, fees can increase by two per cent—in 2024-

25, the allowable increase was five per cent. Highlights of the 2025-26 school fee parameters

include:

Optional-courses fees, Noon-supervision fees, Activity fees, Extracurricular fees, Noncurricular travel fees, Non-curricular goods and services fees – two per cent

allowable increase

Schools must set all fees at a cost-recovery rate. If fees are over-charged by more than \$10 a

student, schools must refund that amount to the student. Additionally, if any fees exceed the

listed parameters, the school must submit an explanation for EIPS' Superintendent and Secretary/Treasurer to review. With the fee parameters now approved, schools can begin establishing their

2025-26 School Fees Schedule.

8) **DIVISION CALENDAR** - The Board approved the Division calendars for the next two school years—

2025-26 and 2026-27. For the most part, the calendars resemble previous years. However, a

change was made to early dismissal days. In previous years, early dismissal days occurred on the

first Wednesday of every month—students are released from school one hour early to allow for

staff meetings and collaboration. Going forward, early dismissal days will now occur weekly, every

Wednesday. On these days, after students are released, school staff will take part in structured

collaborative learning opportunities to ultimately enhance student achievement. Before making

the calendar change, the Division surveyed the school community—the weekly early dismissal

aligns with feedback heard and, also, the Division's needs (see pg. 36, "2025-26 and 2026-27

Division Calendars”).

Calendar highlights include:

2025-26 2026-27

- first day of school – Aug. 28, 2025
- November break – November 10-14
- Christmas break – December 22 to January 2
- second semester starts – January 29
- Teachers’ Convention – February 5-6
- spring break – March 23-27
- last day of classes – June 23, 2026
- first day of school – Aug. 31, 2026
- November break – November 9-13
- Christmas break – December 21 to January 1
- second semester starts – February 1
- Teachers’ Convention – February 4-5
- spring break – March 22-26
- last day of classes – June 28, 2027

**9) UPCOMING TRUSTEE ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER 2025** – The Board of Trustees approved the

following Bylaws, in preparation for the upcoming 2025 EIPS Trustee Elections

Bylaw No. 009/2024: The Establishment of Wards and Electoral Subdivisions received third

reading and was then passed by the Board. The bylaw replaces Bylaw No. 007/20 in Appendix A

– Policy 7: Board Operations.

Bylaw No. 010/2024: The Rules and Procedures for the Conduct of School Trustee Elections

received three readings and was then passed by the Board. The bylaw replaces Bylaw No.

008/2020 and will guide the upcoming school trustee election.

Bylaw No. 011/2024: Criminal Record Checks Required for Trustee Nominations received three

readings and was then passed by the Board. EIPS will abide by Bylaw No. 011/2024 throughout

the upcoming school trustee election.

**10) ANNUAL EDUCATION RESULTS REPORT 2023-24** - The Board approved EIPS' Annual Education

Results Report 2023-24, an Alberta Education reporting requirement that provides school families

and community members easy-to-understand information about the Division. It also serves as a

mechanism to improve accountability and transparency with local stakeholders. The Annual

Education Results Report 2023-24 features detailed information about how EIPS is doing relative

to Alberta Education's performance measures; how the Division supports students to achieve the

best possible outcomes; and its successes, challenges and priorities moving forward. Now

approved, the Division will submit the report to Alberta Education on November 29. After sending

it to the province, EIPS will also post it online and share it with stakeholders and the Committee

of School Councils. The summary report is attached below. To read the full report visit, [eips.ca](http://eips.ca).

**11) NAMING OF THE SHERWOOD PARK REPLACEMENT SCHOOL** - The Board approved a name for

the new replacement school in Sherwood Park—Forest Grove School—expected to open in the

2026-27 school year. Once open, Forest Grove School will offer a single-track elementary French

Immersion program and a dual-track junior high program, including a regular English program

and a French immersion program for grades 7-9.

12) **NEXT BOARD MEETING** – The next regular Board meeting takes place on November 28,

2024, at 10 AM. Board meetings are held in the Elk Island Public School boardroom. EIPS also

livestreams public Board meetings on its YouTube channel.

13) **INQUIRIES?** - If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at

ralph.sorochan@eips.ca or 780 417 8107.

14) **Have a wonderful rest of your month!**

#### **4. COSC Report - Leanna Bechtel**

#### **5. Parent Council Business - Kerry Churchill**

- \$1100 Carnival Surplus spending

Discussion on purchasing a gaga ball pit. Katie motioned to pass. Kerry seconded.

- PJ and Pancakes day - Discussed volunteers, griddles and times to start cooking.
- School Council Engagment Grant

Discussed the school purchasing the books "Anxious Generation", "Good Pictures, Bad Pictures" and "War of the Mind" to gift to Fort Christian Families who want them and discussed an audio book option. Unanimous vote was taken to use the money in this way.

- Disucssed providing a meal for parent teacher interviews. Decided on March 12 for parent council to provide supper for thie teachers this evening.

#### **6. Adjournment - 7:45pm**

#### **7. Next meeting - March 6, 2025 5:30pm**