

ECNS School Council Minutes
of the meeting on November 18, 2024 at 7pm
Julie D., Chair; Tim D., Vice Chair; Christy H., Secretary

To be approved/reviewed at the next School Council meeting on Thursday, January 16

Members Present: Terri S., Michael W., Fola O., Habteslassie S., Ashley R, Shanna S., Jessica K., Danielle T., Lisa S., Denise G., Catherine S., Edwin L., Rianne F., Bo D., Peven T., Glen B., Chris L., Candice K., Ademola A.

Administration: Karla L.W, Sibin A.

ESCE Board Member: Fola O.

Teacher Representative: Jessica V.D.

1. Call to order, scripture reading & open in prayer.

- The chair called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.
- The secretary read Matthew 11:28-30 and opened the meeting in prayer.

2. Acknowledge of members present

- The chair acknowledged members, admins, and community members present.

3. Approval of meeting agenda

- The chair asked the members if anyone had wished to add items to the agenda. With none given, the Vice Chair motioned to approve the agenda and Lisa S. seconded.

4. Approval of previous Meeting Minutes - June, September, October

- A parent mentioned that the June minutes were not available in enough time for all parents to see before being approved. Another parent mentioned that we could table these minutes to approve until reviewing the September and October minutes.
- The principal reminded members that they can review minutes from the school council binder in the school office, and that all approved minutes are posted online on our school's website, under the school council tab: <https://www.edmchristian.org/school-council/>
- The chair stated that all who signed PIPA forms would have received the school council minutes (June-October 2024) and all documents needed for this meeting in one email for easy reference.
- A parent asked for clarification on whether or not the June minutes were posted. The chair responded that it was requested but not completed yet.

Decision: With the general consensus of the school council, all the meeting minutes to review (June 10, September 23 & October 21, 2024) will be posted on SchoolZone and a motion to approve will be made at the next School Council Meeting in January.

5. Unfinished business

A) School Council Framework: Bylaws & Mission Statement, Code of Conduct, Order, etc.

- The chair reviewed that at the October 23, 2023 school council meeting, it was motioned for the School Council Executive 2023-24 to draft the bylaws and present it to the school council for input. It was not completed and was tabled for this year's unfinished business. This year's executive proposed that guidelines be motioned to be used instead of bylaws for the following reasons:
 - They would require an additional meeting separate from school council
 - They would require two thirds approval from all parents in the school to adopt them and the same to change anything within them.
- A school admin voiced support for the use of guidelines, given that we have not always gotten a large response from parents on other surveys and calls for feedback. A parent also voiced support, adding that future councils can annually review them, edit as needed and accept them each school year.
- The chair asked for a vote by show of hands to proceed with bylaws—no hands raised.
- **Decision: With no members voting to proceed in drafting bylaws, ECNS School Council will not have bylaws.**
- The chair then asked for a vote by show of hands to move forward with using guidelines.
- **Decision: by show of hands, the vote passed. (Yes:18; No: 0; Abstain: 1)**
- The chair described the School Council Guidelines document in detail, encouraging parents to read all sections and subheadings. The chair then opened up the floor for questions/comments on the proposed document.
- The principal voiced appreciation for the time put into the guidelines. She asked if the school council Gmail account had changed the password after last year's school council exec's term ended. The chair and vice chair confirmed that the account password has changed and requires two factor authentication to access the account.
- **Decision: A parent suggested that at future school council meetings, parents could wear name tags with the grades of their kids to help get to know one another better. By general consensus, this will be available for parents at future meetings.**
- School admin also expressed approval for the Guidelines document, with a suggestion to add a line at the end of the document stating that they will be reviewed annually. A parent added agreement for this review date. The chair mentioned that it will be added.
- With no other discussion, the chair asked for a motion to vote on accepting the guidelines, with the agreement to add a line for it to be reviewed annually after the School Council AGM elections—Chris L. motioned to accept, and Glen B. seconded.
- **Decision: By show of hands, the vote passed, with the provision that the guidelines be reviewed and/or amended by next year's school council executive. (Yes:15; No:0; Abstain:0)**

B) Decision on child care

- The chair opened the discussion on providing child care at school council meetings. The cost would be \$25 per babysitter, who would be pooled from interested students in

grades 7-9. The students would be responsible for setting up the child care space(s) and being ready for parents to drop off children 10 minutes prior to the start of a school council meeting.

- The chair gave the results of the parent survey to discern the need/desire for childcare at meetings: of the 45 parents who completed the survey, 18% percent said *they would use child care*, 24% said *sometimes*, 57% said *not need*.
- A parent commented that it would be helpful to decide when child care is needed—if the meeting is later at night, maybe an even higher percentage would not need child care.
- Further discussion on babysitting was tabled until later in the meeting when discussing how to use school council budget funds.

C) 2024-25 Meeting dates set

- The chair gave results of the parent survey on preferred days/times of meetings, with Mondays and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. tied for top preference. The majority of respondents preferred monthly meetings, with 24.4% preferring bi-monthly. On the question of mode of meetings, half preferred in person, 44% preferred a mixture of online/in person, and 6.7% preferred online.
- With the survey data discussed, the chair proposed the meeting dates of
 - January 16 (Thursday)
 - February 10 (Monday)
 - March 13 (Thursday)
 - April 14 (Monday)
 - May 15 Thursday (An online meeting only to encourage parents to also attend the school auction that month)
 - June 9 (Monday)
- The chair opened up the floor for discussion— school admin asked the school council exec to consider moving school council meetings online when the weather is a factor, especially since some people have a lengthy drive. It was added for parents to keep their eyes on SchoolZone and their emails for when updates need to be made.
- A parent asked if we could have hybrid (in person and online option) meetings. School admin responded that it is not possible to do so in the auditorium due to no cameras. Meetings could move to the library if hybrid is preferred. A teacher commented that hybrid meetings often do not function well, as most online participants are only observers, and an additional person is needed to monitor the chat.
- School admin requested that the June meeting be held in person and could include a time for a celebration at the end of the year.
- The chair asked for a vote by show of hands to adopt the proposed dates, time, mode of the meeting: January 16 (Thursday), February 10 (Monday), March 13 (Thursday), April 14 (Monday), May 15 (Thursday – online meeting only to encourage parents to also attend the school auction that month), and June 9 (Monday).
- **Decision: by show of hands, the dates were accepted, with each beginning at 7:00 p.m. (Yes: 13; No: 0; Abstain:0)**
- The chair asked to vote by show of hands on accepting the mode of meetings, with all being held in person with the exception of May 15th.

- Decision: by show of hands, the vote passed to accept the mode of meetings (Yes: 13; No: 0; Abstain: 2)

6. ECNS School Admin Highlight

(Admin report is on SchoolZone and is to be read ahead of time.)

- The principal mentioned that we are seeing positive increase in volunteer numbers from parents at school, and that staff are feeling cared for (examples include hot lunch, parent prep crew, classroom helpers, and others in the report). She reiterated that most teachers spend anywhere from \$800-1000 of their own for classrooms, and that the help from parents is a huge encouragement.
- The principal also reminded parents that this week brings an end to the thirty-day agreement between the government and CUPE Local 3550. This could mean that our school would be down 23 staff if they choose to strike, particularly impacting students who are already marginalized and need support from EAs to be able to attend school. The principal asked for prayer that this be resolved well, especially because EAs have been underpaid for years. The principal encouraged parents to reach out to them through words, cards, and prayers, even as they might be making the hard choice to go on strike.
- The chair asked for any parent feedback/questions for the school council. A parent reminded everyone to look at the Wish Wall to continue encouraging teachers and staff. A parent noted that last year our school held the empowered reading program, and that we are not offering it this year—could we offer a testimonial to ask if it could come back? The principal answered that the program is widely supported and has the research behind its effectiveness. However, due to its cost, she does not know of any schools offering it this year. She will be discussing the impact of this program with the assistant-superintendent this week, noting that school boards that are growing are not served well by the present funding model. She also encouraged parents to reach out to MLAs to voice their concerns.
- A parent mentioned that last year the principal gave out “Throughline cards” and asked if we could have those again to write notes of encouragement to staff on—the principal brought them out in the meeting and many parents completed notes of encouragement.

7. ESCE Board Representative Highlight

A) Questions/Feedback on the ESCE Board email

(Email sent to all ESCE members on October 30, 2024 from Logan Day, ESCE Board Chair

- The ESCE board representative noted that the board had decided to add extra listening sessions after concluding the first rounds of sessions. One had already been held, with others to be held either this week or next. Two were for ethnic minorities and the other was for school and society staff.
- The ESCE board is also drafting their own Code of Conduct and Confidentiality documents as part of their effort to show transparency among society members. A

parent asked if members will be able to see these documents—the board member responded that the Code of Conduct policy can be viewed on the society website but could not yet speak to the confidentiality policy.

- A school admin. thanked the board for the first round of listening sessions they offered, drawing on email communications from the board to members on September 18th and October 7th with the intention of striving for transparency, allowing participants to listen to diverse opinions, better understand our communities perspectives, and find common ground . Previously, some members voiced concerns about the ESCE board prioritizing a special interest group of parents; a school admin noted that the two additional listening sessions are only for ethnic parents, and that a parent asked her how parents were invited. The school admin asked the following questions: 1) How were they announced as nothing was sent to schools to post on SchoolZone or via other communication? 2) How were these ethnic groups chosen, given how many ethnicities are represented at our schools? And 3) Was the same process followed in the previous sessions, since Anita Slomp (mediator used at previous sessions) was not present?
- The ESCE board member responded that a specific ethnic group did not feel safe at the previous listening sessions due to their experience at the AGM meeting in June. One individual came to all the previous listening sessions as a representative from that ethnic minority. This individual had also asked if the board can have their own listening session with them. In response, the board planned two listening sessions which would focus on ethnic minorities who were not represented in the first round of listening sessions. The board felt it important to include all parents as best as possible, so this was the method taken to address those concerns.
- A parent asked how the ESCE board determined which parents to reach out to, which criteria was used, and if that decision was truly transparent on part of the board to invite some, but not others. A school admin noted that they were a person of color but did not receive notice of these listening sessions. A parent shared that their family contains four different ethnicities but did not receive an invitation to the sessions. A parent mentioned that they attended the ESCE board meeting where this idea of additional listening sessions was discussed, and that since it involved BIPOC/ethnic minorities, all the ethnic minorities should have been invited. The ESCE board member answered that he would take this feedback to the board, noting the need to find a way forward to include more minorities. He expressed appreciation for the feedback..
- Another parent noted that at the listening session they attended in the first rounds, they sat at a table with parents from all different perspectives and backgrounds. The parent felt that these newer sessions are not listening sessions in the same spirit.
- A school admin asked who facilitated the previous session, since the previous mediator was not present. The ESCE board member answered that two ESCE board members were present at this session. He reiterated that the people who attended the session had expressed not feeling heard or respected, and he again appreciated the feedback received from this school council meeting. He mentioned that what they have said was also noted and what everyone stated in the listening sessions will be shared with everyone once they are concluded.

- A parent asked the board member to communicate to the board the feeling that this was not transparency at work in how these last two listening sessions were offered.
 - The chair concluded the topic by noting that it is also a concern that minority group(s) did not feel safe in the school to attend the listening sessions.
 - Another parent had questions about the financial audit timeline, as well as when the Creator's Classroom would be completed. The ESCE board member noted that the audit of financial statements has been concluded, and that he would ask for an update on the Creator's Classroom timeline.
 - The ESCE board member brought up that the board is working on membership bylaws, with a survey going out to members in a few weeks for their feedback.
- Action item by ESCE Board member: To provide an update of the Creator's Classroom timeline and give feedback to the board about minority groups listening sessions.**

B) How to become a member of the ESCE

- The ESCE board member detailed the process for membership in the ESCE: Currently, to be a member of the ESCE one must have kids enrolled at one of our schools, sign ESCE's statement of faith, and pay program fees; OR, one must be over 18 years old, pay \$25 and sign ESCE's statement of faith.
- The board member reiterated that there would be an upcoming survey about possibly amending the membership of ESCE bylaws.

8. School Council Funds

A) 2024-25 amount currently available

- The vice-chair stated that \$6108.58 is the balance for the school council, and that we have contacted the Society for the balance confirmation. Two divisions did not spend their \$1200 funds that were approved on June 10, 2024.
 - Spin bikes were purchased, as per the approved spending, for students in the lower grades.
 - Div 1, 2, and 3 still have funds to spend; a report, based on minutes from last school year, on the specifics is forthcoming and School Council will share this update at the January meeting
- The vice chair also noted that we applied for the \$500 grant from the Alberta government for school councils. The Principal stated that the grant request was forwarded and final approval by ASCA will be determined shortly.

B) Discussion: Ideas for 2024-25 School council funds

- The vice-chair opened the floor for suggested funds allocation.
- Another parent asked about how school council funds are spent and where revenue comes from. The chair noted that it is up to school councils to choose how to spend our funds, and that some of the funds come from our hot lunches. The chair noted that we received a binder from last year's council and previous councils, and just yesterday received a balance statement from the society.

Action item by School Council Exec: A summary of last year's school council statement will be made available for the next school council meeting in January 2025. The vice chair also mentioned that this year, he will keep a general ledger to balance alongside the society's ledger. He will communicate with the school staff to find out which divisions have not spent their 2024-25 \$1200 funds yet.

Decision on child care

- A parent asked if our school council paid for the babysitting training for Grade 6 students last year—the executive confirmed we did.
- The chair directed discussion back to the child care option for school council during the 2024-2025 school year and asked for comments/questions. A parent asked for clarification that an amount from last year was spent for the babysitting, and the chair and vice chair noted that it was paid for in March.
- The teacher representative gave feedback to be selective on the location as many teachers do not have additional time in the mornings to put things back in place and have their supplies in their rooms. She also suggested that the council might need to allocate funds to have our own supplies, rather than using teachers' classrooms and materials.
- Another parent noted that coordinating babysitting is a large undertaking, and perhaps parents could share babysitting resources, host at each other's homes, etc.
- A school admin said that at previous schools, the councils did offer babysitting, starting with students who took the course and prioritizing teens whose parents regularly attend school council meetings. The interested students could put their names on a rotating list. She also offered to allocate \$200 from the Scholastic book fair earnings that we had, noting that we could buy Legos and other supplies to have on hand—perhaps they could even be available for kids in the corner of the auditorium where the meetings are held.
- A teacher suggested that if we move forward with babysitting that another parent volunteer take on the role of organizing the students and schedule, in order for it not to fall under school council exec or school administration.
- A parent noted that if we have a station set up in the auditorium for kids, in a two-parent household, one parent could stay with kids, then switch on and off to take part in the meeting.
- The chair recapped some main themes from the discussion: space and logistics need to be considered, and we have \$200 in funds to use from the book fair.
- The chair asked for a vote by show of hands on providing child care for school council meetings. A school admin asked if we could amend the vote to try out babysitting for January through March. It was agreed. It was also noted that parents would register beforehand to ensure correct numbers and rations. A parent asked where the money comes from? The chair noted that the funds come from School Council funds, with \$25 per babysitter being paid, with a minimum of two needed per week, maxing out at \$100 paid per meeting.
- **Decision: By show of hands, the vote to offer babysitting for January-March passed. (Yes: 11; No: 0; Abstain: 3)**

- The chair asked for a volunteer to be the child care coordinator—no one volunteered,
- **Action item by School Council Exec: The chair noted that we would reach out by email to try to find a child care coordinator.**

9. Parent Engagement

A) Update on the Classroom Wishes wall

- The chair reminded parents that the Classroom Wishes wall is up in the school, and would like ideas on making the wall more visible to all parents, including those who are not in the school on a regular basis.
- A teacher noted that since SchoolZone is used to communicate to parents, maybe exec could take a picture of the wall and ask the admin assistants to post it. A parent suggested using the Facebook group “Parents of the Edmonton Christian NE School” to help spread the word about the wall.
- The chair mentioned that we also received a suggestion to have the Wish Wall to include a list of areas where parents can volunteer in the year. It was also mentioned that teachers could use their wish wall star to put something parents could volunteer for rather than an item to purchase as an option. The chair requested tracking what stars have been completed with an approximate cost to see the huge impact made at the end of the year.

Action item to give to the Classroom Wishes Wall Coordinator: Review feedback from above, including adding it to the Facebook group and creating a way to track it

B) Discussion on intentional planning to engage and build the full school community

- The chair noted that this year is a time for building unity among our school.
- **Action item for Members of School Council: Exec would like to receive feedback from parents by Friday, December 20 on topics for school council to advise on and ideas to further build community. Parents should email exec at ecns.schoolcouncil@gmail.com**

10. Other

- A school admin reminded parents about the upcoming Christmas concert with JUNO Award-winning musician Garth Prince on December 6. Details are on SchoolZone, under the School tab.

11. Meeting adjourned

- The chair closed the meeting agenda, and the principal concluded the meeting in prayer, adjourning at 8:37 p.m.