

St. Thomas Aquinas School Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

Attendees: 8 Parents – Sarah Palmer, Melissa Gibson, Adam Brown, Carol Caines, Danielle O’Neill, Christabel, Juliana Bilachi, Akeba Cumming

4 STA Staff & 1 Visitor – Anna Gomez, Christine McKee, Kathy Voth, Dan Pagnucco, Lisa Turchansky

Call to Order @ 6:03 by Adam Brown

Prayer & Land Acknowledgement

Welcome

- Welcome to Lisa Turchansky, our ECSD School Trustee

Principal’s Report

- PD Day Jan 23rd
 - The morning consisted of learning sessions for Elementary and Jr. High teachers.
 - The afternoon was spent in the large gym where all staff participated in a smudge ceremony with an FNMI coach.
- Grade 5/6 Volleyball is underway with a tournament happening this week.
- Grade 5/6 running club has their competition at the Butterdome on Feb 24th.
- Jr. High Basketball teams are in the middle of their season.
- Mr. Oster has been hired to teach Grade 2F. 3 other teachers have been hired to take over current maternity leaves.

Guest – Lisa Turchansky

- Adam had sent Lisa a list of concerns we have had including Class Sizes & School Boundaries.
- Class Sizes
 - Lack of money is the biggest reason for class sizes. Most of the money received from the government goes towards staff salaries. There is also a new funding policy for how schools receive funding. Previously they got a specific amount for each student; it has now changed to a weighted, rolling average based on the school’s occupancy over a specific # of years.
 - Increases in Immigration and shortage of Teachers also impact class sizes.
 - This is a well-known issue across the province, specifically in the large cities.
 - How can parents advocate for smaller class sizes/more funding?
 - Write to and talk with your school board trustees, MLA’s, as well as both the Education & Finance Ministers.
- School Boundaries
 - This is a continuous discussion within the school division.
 - Boundaries can change based on city development & opening of new schools.
 - There are currently no plans to change our school boundaries
 - Ms. Turchansky also informed us that the 2 schools we expected to be built within the next 2 - 4 years are not actually in the construction plans yet.

- Question: A lot of the schools closer to the centre of the city are under-utilized, how does ECSD deal with this?
 - Special programming (i.e. Hockey/Sports, STEM, Arts, etc) is the main way ECSD encourages families to choose these schools.
- Questions/concerns brought up by meeting attendees:
 - Building/Bathroom Codes
 - With the addition of more portables are we still within building code for bathroom spaces? The school was built with the expectation that portables would be added.
 - Landscaping around the school is dirt & gets muddy in spring/fall
 - This is being discussed by Ms. Gomez & ECSD maintenance.
 - Option of a tire recycling pathway mentioned. Ms. Gomez will inquire about this option.
 - Bringing in non-Catholic teachers
 - With the shortage of teachers, will ECSD hire more non-Catholic teachers? This has recently been discussed by the school division. These teachers would need to take special classes/certifications.
 - Special Education Students
 - Inclusion of special needs students was discussed.
 - GIST Program is an excellent resource for special needs students. Program is regularly full.

Open Floor

- Division-wide Community of School Councils (COSC) Evening
 - March 11 @ 6:15 – 8:45
 - Lumen Christi Catholic Education Centre
 - If you are interested in attending please register at the link provided by March 3
 - <https://www.ecsd.net/division-wide-community-of-school-councils-meeting->

Meeting was adjourned at: 6:53pm