

Ramsay School Council

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Ramsay School Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Thursday Nov 21, 2024, 6:30pm

Location: Ramsay School

Attendance:

Executive	Educators	Members (apologies for any spelling errors)
Sarah Dmytryshyn (Chair)	Principal Shane Turner	Erin Davies
Hilary Echtner (took minutes)	Assistant Principal Traci Peterson	Sarah Hop
Vanessa Porteous	Drew Jackson	Veronica Hansen
	Sabine Harris	Nicole Battistella
	Susan Vukadinovic (guest)	Imad Yassine
		Rustam Rakhmangulov
		Lulit Arega
		Carol Engstrom

1. **Call to order** (Sarah Dmytryshyn): 6:33pm
 - a. Land acknowledgement provided by Shane Turner
 - b. Members present: as noted above
 - c. Approval of agenda: change to add PA update
 - Motion to approve Hilary Echtner; seconded by Vanessa Porteous
 - d. Approval of minutes: Motion to approve Nicole Battistella; seconded by Imad Yassine
2. **Grade 3 teaching team** shared their focus on outdoor learning. Being outside enhances classroom learning and is tied to curriculum. Sit spots allow students to slow down and appreciate their surroundings and observe changes over time/seasons. Outdoor time also helps to build the classroom community and builds trust and connections with classmates. Making nature connections through kindness, friendship and mindfulness.
 - a. Science connections: field trip to Weaselhead, exploring seeds
 - b. Literacy connections: journal writing, using photography to write descriptive sentences and use similes.
 - c. Math connections: water levels measurement, special awareness of the city.
 - d. Social: connections to city scape and the people that live within in it; patterns in nature. View the world through “2 eyes” approach using both Indigenous and western lenses
 - e. Art and our senses: sound maps, drawing/sketching observations (using scientific sketching method), photography
 - f. Health: understanding how nature helps us to calm as well as fuel and energize our minds and bodies

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3. **Parent Association (PA) Update** Veronica Hansen

- Casino fundraiser will be December 18/19 at Cowboys Casino – this is a very important bi-annual fundraiser for our school!
 - We're in good shape for the fundraiser to go forward. HOWEVER, 14 shifts still required to be filled! Please sign up!

4. **Guest Speaker – Trustee Susan Vukadinovic**

- AERR report tells us how we are doing and will be released next week. CBE results show that CBE students are 5% above provincial average grade of "Acceptable", 9% ahead of "Excellent" rating
- Biggest issue is we need more funding. Funding increases we've seen are for enrollment only. Calgary's enrolment increase this year is > many school boards across the province. We have a population with a growing complexity. E.g. higher % of ELAL than historically, higher % of students with disabilities and learning challenges. Class sizes are growing across the system
- Three key priorities:
 - (1) Convince Provincial Gov't that CBE is worth investing in.
 - (2) Convince Prov Gov't to increase funding across the province by \$1B based on current enrollment. This would bring us to middle of the pack of funding on per student basis across Canada. Across AB this would translate to \$180M for CBE families.
 - (3) Convince Prov Gov't to provide funding for capital priorities. 13 new schools (all in Calgary's outer ring) and 1 modernization.
- Trustee does 4 key things:
 - (1) set broad policy and expectations
 - (2) provide oversight of policy and ask probing questions
 - (3) advocacy – advocate for funding for CBE students because the CBE does not have an independent way to get funding; the only way is through Prov Gov't
 - (4) Politician stuff – speaking at events, grads, being the "boots on the ground"

5. **School Report** (Principal Shane Turner and Assistant Principal Traci Peterson)

a. **Fun Lunch**

- Subway fun lunch was successful. Thanks to all who helped to make it a success!

b. **Club Friday**

- Tomorrow will be the first Club Friday.
- Every club will have at least 2 students from each grade
- 11:30-12:30

c. **School Development Plan** – unique for Ramsay School

- Created yearly
- Around an area/areas of need
- Data driven
- New format this year

d. **Student learning Conferences**

- November 28 & 29
- Choice of in person or online

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- Recommend students attend the conference. If there is a topic to discuss without the student present a separate meeting can be set up with the teacher.

e. Winter Family Event – December 12

- 5:30-7:30 drop in event with participation from each classroom
- Theme is “Season of Giving”

6. School Council Business

b. 2024/2025 School Council Activity:

- No meeting in December
- Skating social in February. Date TBD
- Skates will be available to borrow, paid for by the Parent Association

7. New business

- No new business

8. Motion to adjourn – Carol Engstrom 7:55pm

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Appendix: Q&A with Susan Vukadinovic

Q What information can you share about the provincial government's September announcement of over \$8 billion to build new schools over the next 7 years? How will that affect the CBE and in particular our children's trajectory through designated inner core junior high and high schools? Are there additional resources to equip and staff those schools?

A See following link: [School Construction Accelerator Program | Alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca/school-construction-accelerator-program.aspx)

The \$8.6 B announcement for the School Construction Accelerator Program (SCAP) is more of a recognition that there is an urgent need for schools, rather than a concrete announcement. We don't yet know how much of it will be allocated to the Calgary Board of Education and other public schools, versus how much of it will be allocated to taxpayer subsidized private schools and charter schools. We won't know until February or March 2025, which is when we anticipate the provincial government will make the next round of capital funding announcements.

I am hoping, of course, that the Government of Alberta will approve all 13 new school request and the one (1) major modernization request that are all part of the CBE's capital funding request for this school year. See: <https://cbe.ab.ca/about-us/board-of-trustees/Documents/Urgent-Need-New-Learning-Spaces.pdf>

If all 14 capital requests will be approved, I do not yet know what capital requests the CBE would make of the Government of Alberta in Year 2 and Year 3 of the SCAP.

Q Many Ramsay families are fairly new to Canada. What specific resources are available to them through the school or CBE to support families and students in a new language, culture, location, etc.?

A A good point of contact is always the school principal, at the local level.

Families are invited to visit the CBE's Welcome Centre. See: <https://cbe.ab.ca/welcome/Pages/default.aspx>

Q Can you share any additional information on proposed legislation Bill 27?

A The CBE is one of 61 school boards in Alberta. The 61 school boards are members of an organization called the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA).

If you look at this recent CBC article (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-school-boards-advocate-to-keep-opt-out-sexual-health-education-1.7388065>), you'll see that earlier this week, ASBA took a stance on the bill.

My fellow CBE trustees and I were in the room when this resolution passed (our Board was one of the schools boards that voted in favour of this resolution).

That is the ASBA position.

Now I'll tell you my personal position.

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Since February 4, 2024 I have advocating for the CBE Board of Trustees to issue a firm, formal CBE-specific statement saying we are in favour of the opt-out status quo, and against an opt-in requirement. So far I have not been successful, but I have not yet given up.

At the CBE, we support providing parents with advance notice about what is being taught when it comes to sexual health education. Currently, parents and guardians of CBE students are notified prior to any formal instruction on human sexuality education and have the right to opt their children out of this instruction. This notice is provided in both electronic and paper format, to reduce the risk that this notice is missed due to a misplaced or lost form. I am proud of the level of transparency and choice that we offer to parents and guardians.

At the CBE, we also know that parents and guardians are essential sexual health educators for their children, and that they can and should have conversations with their children about what they're learning at school, no matter the subject. In particular, we have always recognized that it is the role of parents and guardians, and not schools, to discuss family values, family morals and family expectations around sexual health and wellbeing.

Human sexuality education is part of the Alberta curriculum and the CBE uses Alberta Education's approved resources to teach human sexuality.

I am personally concerned about the proposed change to an opt-in requirement because the current process of giving parents and guardians an opt-out choice works well. CBE parents and guardians are already regularly updated throughout the school year on what's being taught in school. At the CBE, parents are, and always have been, a partner in their child's education.

Moreover, I believe that families will *not* be well served by having additional, government-mandated forms imposed on them. Parents and guardians are already inundated with forms, and schools do not have the extra time and resources to manage an additional bureaucratic process. It is already difficult and time-consuming to get parents to return a variety of essential forms, including demographic forms, field-trip forms and medical forms.

I have concerns that this additional red tape will mean greater numbers of children will not receive human sexuality education—neither at home nor at school—and not because their parents/guardians want to purposefully opt out their children, but rather because families are unable to manage the additional government-imposed paperwork. There is a significant risk that the opt-in rate will not reflect the actual number of families wishing their child to receive human sexuality education at school.

I have reason to believe that the CBE parents and guardians who are currently choosing to opt out their children, using the existing process, are typically those who think carefully about these issues and who intend to have conversations about human sexuality at home, to replace school-delivered education about human sexuality. I am concerned that replacing the successful opt-out choice with an untested opt-in requirement will result in growing numbers of children who will neither receive human sexuality education at school nor at home, but merely from peers and the internet.

There are clear benefits to education about human sexuality when it is shared in a thoughtful manner at home and at school:

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- Sexual health is inextricably linked to overall health. Sexual health education equips students with vital information about their bodies, development and growth, and the basic science of reproductive systems.
- Sexual health education helps students learn about healthy relationships, by providing them with communication skills and with strategies for thinking about how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others.
- Human sexuality education contributes to the prevention of intimate-partner and sexual violence.
- Human sexuality education equips children with knowledge that can protect them from pedophiles and child molesters. I am particularly concerned about the serious risk that implementing the opt-in requirement might result in reducing the barriers that pedophiles and child molesters currently face in their access to vulnerable children.
- Youth who receive sexual health education are likely to delay their first sexual experience and have lower rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies.

Parents and guardians always have and always will continue to have a vital role in providing their children with the information they need to achieve healthy bodies and healthy relationships.

I'd like to see the provincial government reconsider the opt-in requirement for sexual health education.

Q Regarding the new school designation plan that saw Ramsay kids split into 3 school paths again for junior high (Rideau, Elboya and Mount Royal) it was disappointing to see - can you talk about what went into the decision to reinstate the cohort split for our school but not Inglewood? Is there a future path where our kids can stay with their peers through junior high?

A It is helpful for me to hear this perspective. Let's talk more tonight.

Because of the volume of emails I'm receiving on this issue, I've created the detailed response below, so that I can share the same information with everyone who has contacted me. I'll share it with you here, too, in case any of this helps.

Administration has been listening to families' concerns

As a result, CBE Administration revised the recommendation they are making.

Making sure your voice is heard

Regarding your questions about keeping peers together, etc, I encourage you and other Ramsay School families to send your comments, suggestions and concerns in an email to the CBE Area 7 Office at Area7@cbe.ab.ca and to Planning at accommodation@cbe.ab.ca, because they need to hear the points you are raising. (The CBE Trustee wards---I'm the trustee for Wards 8 & 9---and the CBE Areas don't cover the same geographical areas, so it is indeed Area 7 you should contact. The 7 is not a typo.) Feel free to cc me on these emails, so I am aware of concerns.

Clarification around what senior Administration is proposing

Please make sure that you look at the detailed information located here: <https://cbe.ab.ca/schools/managing-space-students/Pages/south-central-school-redesignations.aspx>. It explains the details of what CBE's senior Administration team is proposing.

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Clarification around Board decision vs. senior Administration decision

From the emails I'm receiving on this issue, I feel we haven't been as clear as we could be about who is deciding what on this issue. So I think it would be helpful for me to try to explain, in my own words, what aspects of this proposal will be decided on by the Board of Trustees, versus what aspects of this proposal will be decided on by CBE's senior Administration team (by which I mean the people at the Area-Director level and above, and not your school principal).

Determining boundaries for schools and determining grade configurations for schools (e.g., adding or removing grades from a school) are both operational decisions, which means that CBE Administration makes these decisions, independent of the Board of Trustees.

- Sometimes Administration does a major engagement when changes to attendance boundaries and grade configurations are being considered (for example, when high-school boundaries were re-drawn across Calgary a few years ago), and sometimes they do not do a major engagement to solicit feedback.
- From my understanding, a major reason why Administration doesn't necessarily do an engagement to seek public input is because there are often cases where Administration has no choice but to change school boundaries or grade configurations.
- CBE engages with communities when there are *options* at our disposal. The CBE is committed to community engagement and in doing so authentically and genuinely. CBE gathers input and feedback from impacted groups on changes when there is a decision to be made and there is an opportunity for those affected to influence the decision. This is outlined in our [Dialogue Framework](#). There are situations where Administration has determined there are no other options for consideration and, therefore, feedback cannot influence the decision. In these situations, CBE shares information as early as possible and continues to communicate with impacted groups during implementation of the decision.
- The CBE currently has 87 schools that are operating at or above 100% of their provincial-government-defined utilization capacity (which is not the same as fire code capacity).
- Keep in mind, that with the way the provincial government calculates utilization capacity, schools are considered "full" when they reach 85% of the provincial-government-defined utilization capacity. Anything above 85% starts to feel squished.
- Of these 87 CBE schools operating at or above 100% utilization, 34 schools are currently being overflowed to other schools, meaning that not every child within their designated boundaries is able to get into these 34 schools.
- To rebalance utilization, the CBE's senior Administration makes decisions every year about, for example, moving grade 4, 5, and 6s to the nearest elementary school or nearest middle school, or adjusting attendance boundaries. Even if parents aren't pleased about the changes, sometimes the change is required in order to give each student access to the kind of learning spaces they need to achieve academic success.
- While Administration isn't always able to solicit feedback from parents and guardians about school boundaries and grade configurations, Administration always strives to give parents and guardians as much notice as possible about upcoming changes.

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- Decisions about closing schools as well as closing schools for the purposes of relocation, on the other hand, are a Board of Trustees decision, according to provincial government legislation (the *Education Act*).
- Therefore, the Board of Trustees owns the decision about whether or not to move the home education program to Bel-Aire School. The Board of Trustees will decide whether the CBE's home education program should remain at Windsor Park School (where it is currently located) or be moved to Bel-Aire School.
- The process for the Board of Trustees to make this decision does involve a public engagement component, specific to the issue of whether CBE's home education program should remain where it is currently located (at CBE's Windsor Park School) or whether it should be moved to CBE's Bel-Aire School.
- Specifically, on December 17th, CBE administration will be taking forward a recommendation to Trustees to consider moving the Home Education program from Windsor Park School to Bel Air School. If the Board of Trustees decides to consider the move, then the Board of Trustees begins a process of public input, which will include a public input meeting. In mid-February, there would be a public Board of Trustees meeting where Trustees would take all the input heard including the recommendations report from CBE administration and decide whether or not to move the Home Education program.

More clarification around who is deciding what: Re-opening Windsor Park School or Bel-Aire School

In other words, what the Board of Trustees is essentially being asked to do is to decide whether Windsor Park School or Bel-Aire School should be re-opened for Regular, community-school use.

I just wanted to pause here and point out that this is incredible and actually pretty awesome. Public school families are going to get additional school space in Calgary's core! With numerous schools in Calgary's core being overflowed and a growing number of children who can't attend their currently designated school, it is great news that by September 2025 the CBE anticipates having one more school building available in the core.

Because the decision about whether or not to move the home education program to Bel-Aire School (i.e., whether to re-open Windsor Park School or Bel-Aire School to Regular community use) is currently before the Board, as a Trustee I legally cannot comment on this specific aspect of the Area 6+7 re-designations issue. I am legally bound to keep an open mind about which school should be re-opened.

Note that this decision (Windsor Park vs. Bel Aire) will be made in a Public meeting and the decision, once it will be made, will stand. It will be final.

More clarification around who is deciding what: Once we add a school to the core, how will we use it?

To put this into my own words again, AFTER the Board of Trustees has decided whether or not to move the home education program to Bel-Aire School (i.e., whether to re-open Windsor Park School or Bel-Aire School to Regular community use), THEN the senior Administration team (meaning the Chief Superintendent and the senior superintendents team----not your school principal) will finalize their decision on how to use the space.

The Board of Trustees will have *no* influence on how to use the space.

The decision on how to use the space will *not* occur in a Public meeting.

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As a corollary, though, this also means there is more flexibility around determining boundaries for schools and determining grade configurations for schools.

I wanted to share that I feel we have very bright, caring people as part of the Superintendents' team at the CBE, and I truly appreciate that they are being upfront and transparent about what the re-opening of either of these schools would mean. I think it is helpful to parents and guardians that the Superintendents' team is giving everyone ample notice about how they think they'll use the space---well before the Board decides about which school will be returned to Regular community use.

Q Review how public school governance, election, and funding works, the roles parents play, and what recourses they have to participate, intervene or get help.

A Parents are welcome to have a look at: <https://cbe.ab.ca/about-us/board-of-trustees/Pages/default.aspx>.

And: <https://cbe.ab.ca/about-us/board-of-trustees/Pages/connecting-with-my-trustee.aspx>.

Regarding funding, it's important to note that the per-student funding that CBE receives has just recently been brought back up to the level it was at in the 2018-19 school year. Meanwhile we have had massive inflation. The cost of utilities, paper, IT equipment, etc. is all up. Salaries have gone up, too, and the amount the CBE spent to hire 100 teachers in 2018 would only hire 92 teachers today. Because there has been zero adjustment to public school board budgets for inflation since 2018, class sizes have grown across public schools in Alberta since 2018.

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) urgently needs the provincial government to increase education funding across Alberta by \$1 billion at current enrolment levels, to account for significant inflation and the increasingly complex needs of our student population. See: [Message from the Board of Trustees on Education Funding - News Centre - CBE](#) (The CBE educates one in six Alberta students, so the CBE's share of \$1 billion would be about \$180 million.)

While the CBE continues to provide a world-class education and our students continue to rank among the top in the world on international standardized tests, our public schools are feeling the strain of funding that is not keeping up with our significant enrolment growth, inflation, and the growth in complex needs of our students.

While trustees are advocating for increased funding, our case is strengthened if elected officials hear from parents, too. So you can let parents at Ramsay School know that their local school trustee says they can consider sending a brief email sharing how the number of kids in their child's class is affecting their learning experience to:

- The Minister of Education, the Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides, education.minister@gov.ab.ca
- The Premier of Alberta: premier@gov.ab.ca