

The Messenger

~ Notable News from the Edmonton Catholic Schools Board of Trustees ~



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Message from the Board Chair *Sandra Palazzo*

Dear staff, students, and families,

Another year has come to a close and what a year it has been. Despite the lockdowns and what may have seemed to some to be a never ending winter, the light is shining at the end of the tunnel. Our remarkable staff, students, and families persevered, continuing to respond and adapt to an ever changing world. Despite being apart physically, you continue to build strong school communities and inspire each other with your creativity and ingenuity. Thank you all for your dedication, commitment, and patience this school year.

Recently, the Board of Trustees has been delighted to share some exciting Division news. We announced the names of two new Catholic schools and shared that the Division's administrative services would be centralized into a common home. We also announced that we received funding for the design of a desperately needed high school in northwest Edmonton.

As is always the case at the end of a school year, we say farewell to some family, as we wish our graduating class and retirees well in their new endeavours!

And as we say goodbye to the 2020-2021 school year, we look forward to the future with optimism; for a sense of normalcy to return to our everyday lives. May you all enjoy a safe and blessed summer! May God watch over you until your safe return in September.



In the Know

Board Announces Names of New Catholic Schools

The Board of Trustees was delighted to announce the names of two new Catholic schools. At the April 28 Board meeting, Trustees approved **Joan Carr Catholic Elementary/Junior High School (Keswick)** and **Father Michael McCaffery Catholic High School (Heritage Valley)**. "The overwhelming response we received was truly heartwarming," said Board Chair Sandra Palazzo. "The tributes to the two school namesakes that are being brought forward were unique, personal, and beautiful testaments of the contributions of these members of our Catholic community in Edmonton and beyond."

The provincial government announced the new schools last year and Edmonton Catholic Schools put the call out to the public for help naming them in January. The Division received more than 300 submissions from the community.

Joan Carr Catholic Elementary/Junior High School will open in September 2022 with space for more than 900 students, while construction will begin on Father Michael McCaffery Catholic High School this fall and once built, it will have a capacity of 1,300.

Congratulations, ECSD Graduates of 2021!



The Board of Trustees would like to extend our warmest congratulations to all our Edmonton Catholic School graduates of 2021!

The accomplishment of graduation in its own right is one of great pride; however, the resiliency of your graduating class should not be understated. Even a pandemic could not destroy your spirit and determination and all your successes are more than deserved. The Board of Trustees shares in your excitement and joins you in celebrating the achievement of a culmination of 12-years of hard work and dedication. Our wish for you is that whatever you choose to do in your future endeavours, whatever life you choose to create, that it give you great satisfaction and the feeling of great accomplishment, and above all, that you remember to live fully and serve God in one another.

Congratulations and God bless, Grads of 2021!



Reminder to School Councils: Enrol for ASCA Membership Fees

School Councils are reminded to enrol for the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) membership for the upcoming year by visiting the ASCA website and completing the online "[Request for Membership](#)" without payment form. Your membership will become effective immediately upon completion of the application. You may do this at any time during the year. Schools are no longer automatically enrolled as was the case in previous years.

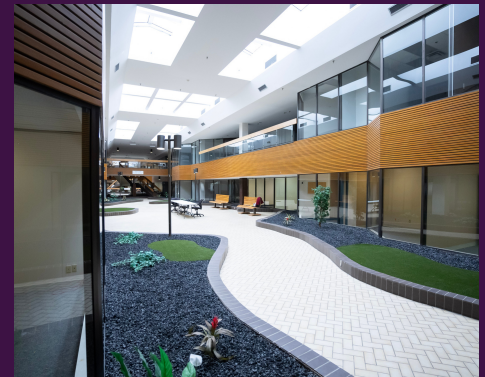
ASCA member school councils are entitled to:

- Submit a Proposed Advocacy Resolution for policy consideration;
- Vote on agenda items at General Meetings of the Association;
- Speak to any agenda item at General Meetings of the Association;
- Vote for candidates running for President, Vice President, and Director positions;
- Nominate an eligible parent school council member as a candidate for the Board of Directors;
- Participate on Board committees as invited;
- Participate on the School Council Engagement Task Force;
- Pay reduced fees, if any, for attendance at ASCA events;
- Examine the books and records of the Association.

Introducing Our Common Home

The Board of Trustees was pleased to share the good news that our Division would be consolidating all of its departments, with the exception of our Facilities Services, under one roof to share in a common home. The new space occupies what is formally known as the 50th Street Atria at 9405 – 50 Street and will provide centralized Division administrative services. In making this decision, we are not only fulfilling a commitment to maximize funding to go to our schools and classrooms rather than supporting old and inefficient infrastructure, but also reinforcing the importance of our Catholic presence. With the move, we will realize a minimum of \$1 million dollars of cost savings per year over the next 10 years, money that will be redirected to our schools and classrooms.

We look forward to the opportunity to have all our staff in one central location to work and live out our calling to a faith-filled life of service.



Trustees in the Community

A Year in Review: Trusteeship in a Pandemic

Like all Canadians, our Trustees had the unique experience of staying connected this year with our schools, staff, students, and parent communities in a pandemic. We worked hard to be responsive to your needs without being able to speak face-to-face. We met virtually for meetings with our MLAs and other government officials. We joined our schools via Microsoft Teams for celebrations and school council meetings. When it was deemed safe to do so, we served our schools in physically distanced situations to volunteer for hot lunches or clean up our schoolyards. Trustees were challenged to dig deep and get creative to figure out ways to maintain connections.

Throughout the year we advocated on behalf of all Edmonton Catholic Schools staff, students, and families to support all facets of student learning impacted by the pandemic. We began by calling for additional funding to ensure the safety of all students and staff while we mitigated the challenges of the new COVID-19 reality. We continued our advocacy efforts by calling on the Province to have all school-based staff be at the top of the priority list for COVID-19 vaccines in the early phases of vaccination delivery. We've also been fighting hard and continuing to push for funding for much needed capital projects, as student enrolment is anticipated to grow by 12% over the next 5-years.

Trustees also pivoted our public engagement activities online and provided a variety of support and advocacy virtually, through dialogue with our student voice representatives and via events such as the Community of School Councils (COSC) Engagement Sessions, the ASBA (Alberta School Board Association meetings and Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) Conference and AGM.

Although Trusteeship looked a little different this year, we continued to make decisions that were responsive to the needs of our schools, staff, students, and families.

Launching the Playground Initiatives Fund at St. Maria Goretti

Trustees joined Chief Superintendent Robert Martin and Superintendent John Fiacco at St. Maria Goretti Catholic School for the launch of the Division's Playground Initiatives Fund. This program will allow our students more and equitable access to different spaces and places in their outside environments and adds accessible pathways to our school yards, which will connect schools right to the play equipment. Over the summer, nine more schools are scheduled to receive more accessible pathways to their playgrounds, paving the way to more inclusive play in our Division's school communities.



Capital Announcement: ECSD Receives Funding for New High School

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange and Infrastructure Minister Prasad Panda joined Trustees at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in March as the Province announced funding for a new Edmonton Catholic high school as part of the government of Alberta's Capital Plan announcements.

"We are extremely pleased the provincial government has responded to our critical need for a new high school in northwest Edmonton. Nearly 1,400 high school students in Castle Downs/Dunluce will now have a Catholic school option in their community," said Board Chair Sandra Palazzo.

\$268 million was earmarked by the Province of Alberta for new schools and education upgrades and included the funding to design a desperately needed high school in northwest Edmonton in the Castle Downs/Dunluce area for Edmonton Catholic. This project has been on our Division Capital Plan since 2018 and will provide a Catholic high school north of Archbishop O'Leary, which is currently operating at 116% capacity. The site of the announcement, Holy Trinity, is currently undergoing a major modernization. The project was announced by the Province in 2015.



Edmonton Catholic Schools Community of School Councils Engagement Sessions

On March 15 and 16, 2021, the Board of Trustees engaged with the executive members of our School Councils and the administration teams of our schools to gather insights on the four Board Priorities for our various planning endeavors. This rich opportunity for stakeholder engagement was the first of its kind for our Division and provided invaluable feedback on the practices and supports that our families feel are of greatest value in the education of their children. The four priorities are Growing in Faith, Student Success, An Excellent Place to Work and Learn, and Building our Future Together. The report for the Community of School Councils (COSC) was presented at the Public Board Meeting on April 28 and can be found in the Board Agenda Package by clicking [here](#) and scrolling to the report. The overarching themes from this engagement were used at the Division level to inform the [Division Plan for Continuous Growth](#) and the Division Budget. Individual schools will use their specific results to inform their School Plan for Continuous Growth and their School Budget.

2021 Annual Board of Trustees Retirement Gala

Each year, our Board is honoured to pay tribute to our colleagues as they begin a new and exciting journey in their retirement. This year, through our virtual celebration, we celebrated 96 members of our Edmonton Catholic Schools family, recognizing those from both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 retiree years.

We express our deepest gratitude to all our retirees for their servant leadership and commitment to making a difference in the lives of our students each and every day. Your contributions to Catholic education are imprinted in the lives of the children you served - you have truly made a difference and we acknowledge with deep appreciation and gratitude the work of the Spirit through your hands, your voices, and your many gifts.

The Board of Trustees wishes all our retirees the best in your retirement!



Well done good and faithful servant

Matthew 25:23



Get to Know Your Trustee

DEBBIE ENGEL | TRUSTEE WARD 74

What joys have you experienced in your capacity as Trustee?

Visiting the schools and seeing the students and their many accomplishments! Helping parents advocate for the needs of their children. And celebrating and promoting Catholic education.

What is your most prized possession and why?

My wedding ring. It represents 40-years building a life and a family. My family is my greatest treasure.

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

An airline stewardess so I could travel the world.

If you could go back and re-live one experience during your tenure as Trustee, which experience would that be?

After years of not having any new Catholic schools built in Edmonton, in 2001 the government announced they would provide funding for Edmonton Catholic to build five new schools!!

If you could have dinner with one Saint, who would it be and why?

St. Oscar Romero. He was such an amazing man with words of wisdom that have always inspired me.

What do you think God has "called" you for?

He has called me to help build his kingdom on earth.

What keeps you motivated?

The wonderful people I work with and serve.

What is one thing you hope you accomplished as a Trustee over the last few months?

Having every student graduate knowing how much God loves them!



ALENE MUTALA | TRUSTEE WARD 75

What joys have you experienced in your capacity as Trustee?

My greatest joys have definitely been opportunities that I have had to visit my schools, staff, and students and experience the faith-filled atmosphere of our schools and successes of our students.

What is your most prized possession and why?

My most prized possession is a rosary that I bought when I was in Rome that had been blessed by Pope Francis.

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I have always wanted to be a teacher and when I was younger we played school all the time. I was blessed to take my Education Degree and become a teacher after I had my children. I taught for 27 years.

If you could go back and re-live one experience during your tenure as Trustee, which experience would that be?

The wonderful opportunities we have had to visit all of our schools and let the staff know we are supportive of all that they do for the success of our students.

If you could have dinner with one Saint, who would it be and why?

I would have dinner with St. Therese of Lisieux, as she is known as the "Little Flower of Jesus." She had a simple and practical approach to spiritual life. She started the "ideal of little ways."

What do you think God has "called" you for?

God has called me to work, advocate, and preserve Catholic education so we can spread the good news, church teachings, and traditions to our staff, students, and children.

What keeps you motivated?

My faith, family, friends, fellow Trustees, and everyone in our Catholic communities who work for and promote Catholic education

What is one thing you hope you accomplished as a Trustee over the last few months?

I hope I continued to build strong relationships with our staff, students, parents, and school communities as well as continued to build the positive image of ECSD and our Catholic schools.



LAURA THIBERT | TRUSTEE WARD 77

What joys have you experienced in your capacity as Trustee?

My biggest joy has been the ability to connect with everyone! I welcome the opportunity to talk to individuals to hear successes and challenges on educational matters.

What is your most prized possession and why?

My prized possession is my backyard. It's my personal oasis to self-reflect, spend time having fun with my family, or enjoy time with friends around the fire. It also allows me to connect with nature.

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be an outdoor life guard. I always thought it would great to sit in the sun and save lives as well.

If you could go back and re-live one experience during your tenure as Trustee, which experience would that be?

One of the happiest moments for me was the night I first heard I was successful in my candidacy. It was one of the most thrilling, scariest, and rewarding experience of my life.

If you could have dinner with one Saint, who would it be and why?

I would love to have dinner with all Saints, however, these days I would love to have dinner with St. Anthony and ask him to help me with finding my lost face masks.

What do you think God has "called" you for?

I believe God has called me to challenge myself by putting me in different situations that allows me to continue to learn from these experiences.

What keeps you motivated?

Celebrating the successes of students and staff keeps me motivated knowing that every decision made by the Board is after being fully informed on an issue.

What is one thing you hope you accomplished as a Trustee over the last few months?

The one thing that I hoped I accomplished is for the Board to succeed in being awarded a community engagement award.



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WHAT'S AHEAD

Last Day of Instruction

June 25