

God Calls Us



EACH BY NAME

Letter to Parents and Guardians from Trustee Terry Harris, Ward 71 Winter 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:



The administrators, teachers, staff and families of our schools have continued to respond in a remarkable fashion to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for this the Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD) Board of Trustees is grateful. You have actively participated in the overall success out of a spirit of collaboration, by caring about the well-being of everyone in your community, and with a commitment to making a difference in the lives of our students. Your unwavering dedication has been even more evident over the past year.

You have heard the phrase before, and it has been especially true since the onset of the pandemic: It takes a village to raise a child. Each individual involved in keeping families safe while our students progress towards graduation should take enormous pride for their part in the collective effort of mutual support and accomplishment. Your contributions to our achievements are recognized and respected by the Board of Trustees. Each Trustee wishes to express their profound gratitude to each of you for your commitment in the effort required to safely deliver an excellent, faith-filled Catholic education to our students.

It is not just the Trustees who recognize these ongoing efforts. ECSD has been named one of [Alberta's Top Employers](#) for six consecutive years. While this acknowledgement attests to the Division's ongoing leadership towards offering exceptional working environments for all our employees, our school families are integral to creating the supportive atmosphere that provides the firm foundation upon which the Division builds. Again, our heart-felt thanks for your active and positive participation in our collective success.

We are pleased to share with you the winter edition of *The Messenger*, which highlights the initiatives being undertaken by Trustees in the community and can be accessed [here](#).

Understanding and Responding to Needs

The Board of Trustees provides an avenue for student voices through regular meetings and dialogue with representatives from each of the High Schools. In response to feedback received through Student Voice, ECSD held a *Design Your Future* Virtual Post-Secondary Career Fair on December 8th and 9th for Grade 10-12 students to learn more about their post-secondary education and career planning options. This event was well received by the participants.

The Board remains committed to providing a variety of supports for families during these uncertain times. To that end, a number of parent engagement opportunities were planned during the current school year. It is heartening to know that over 1000 people attended the two virtual Parent Meetings – *Supporting Your Child's Mental Health*, which was held on October 20th and the follow-up *Supporting Your Child & Youth's Mental Health: Increased Screen Time: Now What?* that was held on January 19, 2021. You can view these presentations by clicking on the following links: [October 20th](#) and [January 19, 2021](#).



LUMEN CHRISTI Catholic Education Centre

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I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME. YOU ARE MINE. - ISAIAH 43:1

Home-School-Parish Connection



Parents are the first and primary educators of their own children. In concert with the parents, information on the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation is seamlessly incorporated into the entire *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* Religious Education program in school.

Although the sacramental content of the Religion program is plentiful and diverse, it is not intended as a standalone or replacement for robust parish-based sacramental preparation programs. Pastors in the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton offer Sacramental Preparation in their respective parishes as a way to facilitate the home-school-parish partnership. For more information on Sacramental Preparation, please contact your local Catholic Church. To find your local parish, please click [here](#).

The Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education (GrACE) hosted a live event which included stories and messages of hope on the first Sunday of Advent. The hour of hope featured the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and Catholic musician Steve Angrisano. The presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Advocacy

The Board of Trustees continues to lobby the provincial government for adequate additional funding and resources to support all facets of student learning. Trustees meet individually with their locally elected representatives to advocate for the resources our students need to fully achieve success.

Operating our schools during the pandemic comes with an increased cost for additional preventative measures, teaching staff and protective equipment. The Board has shared its concerns with the Minister regarding the struggles, economic pressures, and funding needs of our Division as we continue to support our families in their children's growth and development. In addition, ECSD and the three other large school boards from Edmonton and Calgary have advocated that all school-based staff be considered as essential workers and deemed a high priority to be offered the COVID-19 vaccination.

We are a People of Hope

We remain hopeful for the promise that 2021 brings by firstly recalling God's word to us through the prophet Isaiah 43:1: *Do not fear, I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.* Our students depend on us to instill confidence in their hearts. Whatever our role, be it as parent/guardian, teacher, division staff, school board member, or government representative, we need to continue to show them the way forward by our faith-filled response and by collectively maintaining our positive efforts to protect them and ourselves.

I wish you the best for the remainder of the school year and I look forward to connecting with you again through our spring letter, *The Messenger*, and in our community newspaper.

I am honored to serve Ward 71 as a trustee. You can reach me at 780-937-8268 or terence.harris@ecsd.net. You can also connect with me on Twitter: @_terryharris

God bless you and your family.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Harris".



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