



Bursting at the Seams

"Our goal continues to be to offer Christian education to all who desire it ..."



Edmonton Christian School has been in the business of offering Christian education for a long time. For the most part we have had the space and facilities to offer

Christian education to anyone who truly desired it. This situation is changing. Our school, at several grade levels, is getting full. In spite of major construction projects and renovations we are still unable to keep up with the demand. It is our belief that the growth at the Northeast Campus could be significant in the next few years. The problem is that the cost of building new facilities and renovating old ones to accommodate this growth may be beyond our means. We already have significant borrowing costs and the size of our mortgage is at the limit of our ability to pay. We also know that the West campus is in need of significant upgrades and money will need to be spent there to improve that facility.

We had planned for two classes from kindergarten to grade 9 in each of the campuses and four classes at each grade in the high school. There is some flexibility as to how classes are added at the schools but adding them at all levels where growth is high is not feasible.

In order to manage the growth we need to follow Edmonton Public policy on schools that have the potential to be "over-subscribed". This over-subscription policy was restated in section 1.4.1 of our agreement with Edmonton Public:

In accordance with the School Act, non-residents of EPS are welcome in the Edmonton Christian School Alternative Program (ECSA Program). If the ECSA Program is over-subscribed, current students and their siblings will have first priority, with remaining places being filled by random selection, with first priority to resident students of EPS.

A school that is oversubscribed needs to declare their enrolment limits. New students coming into the school need to apply by the first part of April. Once all the applications are in, a process of *random selection* takes place to determine who is admitted. If the enrolment limit is not reached by

the April deadline, all applicants are admitted. Applicants are then accepted on a first-come first-served basis until the limits have been reached.

Since we have the potential to be oversubscribed we must follow this policy for the coming year. However, we have several concerns, the greatest of which is that children of parents or grandparents who are long-time supporters of the school may have difficulty enrolling their children in our school. Yet, it is clear that we need to have a system of limits in place in case we are inundated with new applicants. We are somewhat encouraged by the fact that some families may have access to both the West and NE campuses. Our transportation system may also assist in this process.

Our goal continues to be to offer Christian education to all those that desire it and hopefully this procedure does not interfere with that goal. As always, we continue to encourage your feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact us. You can phone the society office or e-mail me at peterbuisman@edmchristian.net.

Finishing Touches Update

We are excited to report that we have reached 79% of our goal.

We thank the Lord for His blessings!

Donations are accepted anytime; call us at 408-7933 for more information.

Our Goal:	\$745,000
Raised as of January 11:	\$488,000
Pledged as of January 11:	\$100,000

GOVERNANCE

As a school we are always engaged in ongoing reflection to determine how we can best provide Christian education. One of the areas we have been examining in the past few months is our governance structure.

For many years, Edmonton Christian School operated under a multi-school, multi-principal model. When joining EPS in 1999, the decision was made to move to a one-principal, one-school model. There were a number of reasons for this, but a primary one was to ensure that our school was unified and true to our vision and mission, now that we were living in a “new (and public) world.”

Ever since joining EPS, there have been ongoing concerns related to the governance structure, both from administrators and from staff members. After collecting a great deal of information, in 2005, the ESCE board held discussions with EPS about reorganizing the governance structure, with a vision of moving toward a three-school, three-principal model. Because of concerns about having to alter parts of the agreement beyond the governance structure, the ESCE board decided to remain with the current structure of one principal and three assistant principals.

This discussion has now been resurrected. It seems that the reasons for having a different governance structure are still in existence.

Why change the governance structure?

A primary reason would be to reflect reality. In almost every sense of the word, our assistant principals do the job of a district principal. They provide instructional leadership, they manage the campus budget, they provide supervision and evaluation of staff, they lead staff meetings, they are responsible for student behaviour and conduct, and they are the people that staff, students, and parents go to when there is an issue. Each of our campuses has a student population that is comparable to, if not larger, than most EPS schools. However, our assistant principals are not fully allowed to develop and express their leadership, as they are always responsible to report to a principal.

Related to this is the difficulty that we have experienced in attracting people to and retaining them in principal positions at our school. As we look at long-term sustainability of our current governance structure in terms of effective leadership, we must consider a structure where leaders are recognized for the job they do.

In addition, there also remains the question about the current principal role -- a role which limits meaningful connections between the principal and teachers, students, and parents – a role which is heavy on administrative and “meeting” work, and more like a “mini-superintendent” than an on-site instructional leader.

As our schools continue to grow, and as we look at the geographical distance between the Northeast and West sites, we have to consider how to best provide leadership in each of these schools, the kind of day-to-day leadership that is essential for a school to function effectively.

Concerns

We are well aware of concerns with changing the governance structure, particularly in terms of school unity. Of primary importance is that we safeguard our mission and vision as a school, and that this is not sacrificed. Also, we do not want to lose the many positive things that are happening at a whole-school level, which represent our vision and mission in the daily life of our school.

There would be a clear expectation for three principals to work closely together in areas of program and curriculum. Working cooperatively with the Executive Director of the Society would also be key in maintaining unity of purpose as Edmonton Christian School. We believe that the meaningful collaboration and community building between our campuses would continue, even in a new governance structure.

Current Status

We have once again begun negotiations between ESCE and Edmonton Public, believing that changes to the governance structure will allow us to function more effectively in our mandate of providing Christian education. Changes to the agreement related to governance structure have been submitted to Edmonton Public. Edmonton Public has responded positively to these changes, but has also suggested changing the wording in two clauses of the agreement. We are requesting that since the changes asked for have nothing to do with governance they not be linked. The governance changes that we are seeking do have to be made in a timely fashion as principal appointments are made soon.

We will continue to keep you informed as talks proceed. We are also going to bring this issue up at the special society meeting on January 28. The Board would like permission from the society to make the necessary changes to the agreement with Edmonton Public to move forward on this new governance structure.