

Morinville Community High School Council Meeting
Tuesday, October 20, 2015

"When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say, I used everything you gave me."

Erma Bombeck

Welcome to the second meeting of the 2015/16 school year. Much of what we hope to do this year is a continuation of the collaboration and work that went into the previous three years. MCHS is a strong and accomplished school and part of a community that is growing in diversity. We are building upon an earned reputation as an academic school and, as a school and School Council, need to continue moving forward with the vision developed with students, faculty and parents three years ago:

*Community leaders on a journey of opportunity and change;
respecting and celebrating our unique and personal bests.*

We firmly believe, and this is confirmed by research, that a focus upon culture and climate will continue to have a positive and lasting effect on overall student achievement. Our desire is for all improvement to be sustainable and to continue to create an atmosphere of excellence.

As a faculty we will continue working to ensure a safe and caring environment that meets the needs of all learners. MCHS faculty is committed to ensuring that all students who chose to are able to graduate within the regular three-year time frame, with the courses that meet their needs and interests. To assist in this process, students, parents and faculty need to understand their role as equal partners in education.

Update

The following is a brief historical update of what has taken place to this time. It is our custom at each School Council Meeting to share a report in this type of format for your review and consideration. Our hope is that we will discuss and revisit various topics throughout the term as this document serves only as a starting point for discussion and action. This report serves only as a very brief introduction to a number of topical areas that will be examined in greater depth over the course of this school year.

The more information about MCHS that the School Council has will assist in permitting all decisions that are made are informed decisions. Education must be a partnership where

communication is a two-way process that is open and transparent.

Student Positive Behaviour Supports

We will continue to stress HOWLS (Honour, Ownership, Welcoming, Leadership and Safety) as we had last year. Our desire is for HOWLS to become truly embedded within the culture and climate of the school and for this philosophy to positively impact all areas of the environment.

This will continue to be ongoing all year and will involve many different learning opportunities. School Council will be part of the discussions that we have over the year.

We would like to thank the Morinville Fire Department for their sponsorship and participation in our September HOWLS Lunch that we held on October 2. We had 181 students nominated for this lunch.

Emergency Procedures

MCHS will be ensuring that students and faculty are cognizant of regular emergency drills (i.e. fire drills and lock down drills), toxic spill, tornado and other emergency practices and procedures. Please do not be alarmed as we work through establishing a number of these procedures as these are expected to be standard operating procedures in all our schools.

This year, all GSACRD schools will again adhere to the Canadian Safety Association (CSA) and Alberta Safety requirements and participate in at least six fire drills, two lock-down drills and one tornado drill.

To this date, we have participated in three fire evacuation drills including one under the supervision of the Morinville Fire Department.

Grade 12 Grad Retreat

We had 24 Grade 12 students participate on this Retreat on September 24 and 25 at Camp Mackicholea (Camp Mac), which is run by the United Church and is located near Larkspur, north of Westlock. This retreat began to undertake the planning process for graduation and provide an opportunity to bond as a class. We would like to thank Mrs. Christiansen, Mrs. Boucher and Mrs. Blackburn, along with CrissCross Ministries (formerly the Oblate Youth Ministry).

Washroom Update

Over the last number of weeks MCHS has been in the media a fair amount, concerning our move towards transitioning some of our gender specific washrooms to simply washrooms. Not all of the reporting has been accurate to the true situation and it has focused some attention on our school.

This whole process has been undertaken to address a sense of better inclusion and is not being done solely to accommodate the needs or wishes of a segment of our general population. This also addresses the changes in our district administrative procedures and policies for the entire district.

The original washroom design in our building is very unique and permits a transition like this to happen, in a very direct and straightforward manner. Each washroom stall is completely private, with full floor to ceiling cinderblock walls and full/solid doors that fully seal. The sink and mirror areas are open to everyone in the halls.

This has been a feature at MCHS since the school opened in 1994.

Over the last few weeks we have met and spoken with over 300 of our students to talk to them about the concept and reasoning, ask for their feelings on the topic, ask how many washrooms should be transitioned and the location. The feedback from students has been unanimously favorable.

In the next few weeks or so, once the new signage has arrived we will begin to transition a few of our washrooms while still keeping some gender specific washrooms as well.

School Resource Officer (SRO)

We are pleased that Cst. Jamie Short is again with us as our SRO. He will be at MCHS every Wednesday and Friday. Cst. Short works with our Student Services personnel to address needs of students and their families, along with presenting to classes on a number of different topics.

Diversity Club

In keeping with Bill 10 and adhering to GSACRD protocols and policy, MCHS has created a Diversity Club after being requested to do so by students. We are committed to using the LIFE (Lived Inclusion for Everyone) Framework as a guideline for the creation and operation of this student group, that is comprehensive in its approach to inclusion and open to the exploration, in a

Catholic context, of a variety of issues including bullying, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, justice and respectful relationships and language.

We have met twice so far and this group is facilitated by Mrs. Kruhlak, Mrs. Belley and Mr. Eistetter.

Western Canadian Challenge (WCC) Tournament

The tournament this past weekend was outstanding, due to the many faculty members who spent countless hours planning this and working on it over the last many months. More hours were spent in the days leading up to the tournament and over the weekend itself to ensure that it was the top event that it is known to be. This tournament has an exceptional reputation amongst high schools for its quality.

Congratulations to our Senior Boys and our Senior Girls, who made us proud as they played extremely well...they are excellent ambassadors for our school and our communities. Both of our teams came in 3rd on the Championship side...doing extremely well .

When you consider the number of teams and athletes that have participated in the WCC over the last 20 years ...

- 1300+ teams
- Over 16,000 athletes and coaches
- Played a total of 5,000 different matches

This is a very impressive tournament, that is part of who and what MCHS is.

Thank you to Mr. Aaron Fidler (Boys Coach), Ms. Jennifer Willows (Girls Coach), Mr. Kent Lessard (Athletic Director), Mr. Cliff Rowein (graphics) and Mr. Michael (helping to coach on Friday) for their endless work to make this tournament happen. This year the tournament was scaled back to 24 teams down from the usual 48. We used two gyms and 4 courts at MCHS and SACHS.

Education Plan

Our plan is focused upon two items, a Faith Goal and a Learning Goal. Our Faith Goal ties directly to the GSACRD goal of supporting the domestic church and our Learning Goal focuses upon student engagement of their learning.

We do have the need to address three areas of concern identified as *issues* in the October 2015 Accountability Pillar Results:

- PAT Excellence – down 4.4% from 2014
- Diploma Excellence – down 11.0% from 2014
- Diploma Examination Participation Rate (4+ exams) – down 12.5% from 2014

In this Results report, MCHS does have several areas identified as *excellent*:

- Safe and Caring
- Program of Studies
- Education Quality
- Drop Out Rate
- Work Preparation
- Citizenship
- Parental Involvement
- School Improvement

As a School Council we will be going over the Accountability Pillar Results at our November meeting.

PACK Day

We are moving forward with the next PACK Day on October 30, but this one will be a little different. We will have two blocks for sessions in the morning, instead of the usual four and then we will get into Halloween activities as a school.

Our first PACK Day on September 25 went very well and our student attendance on that day was close to 80%.

We have had a request from Ecole Secondaire Sainte Marguerite d'Youville (ESSMY) in St. Albert, that their student be allowed to come out to MCHS for PACK Day and participate in the sessions that we offer. This is an interesting request, one that we agreed to. On November 20, we will have 60 high school students from their school come join us. It is hoped that the future PACK Days will permit ESSMY faculty to develop and host sessions for all students at MCHS.

This request from ESSMY is one that we had not anticipated and may indicate additional interest in the concept, as shown by other schools. This may also provide additional opportunities for

our students to participate in new sessions and offerings.

Budget

The MCHS 2015/16 budget was originally created based upon an enrolment of 571 students. Our actual student count is currently at 552 and we currently working with district office to address a shortfall. We had a number of students and families move out of the region, to a degree that we had not anticipated. There was some movement out of the Garrison, but a much larger number of people in the workforce have moved to other areas of the province or country.

There seems to have been an influx of young families to Morinville and area, but their children are younger and it will be a few years before we will see a population growth that will impact us at the grades 9 to 12 level.

WE Day – October 27

We have 26 seats for this (three for our supervisors Ms. Kyra Herzog, Mr. Bryan Wegner and members of the CrissCross Youth Ministry Team). GSACRD was allocated 350 spots and these were distributed to each school. There are over 14,000 people anticipated to participate from over 550 schools from Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is a big event and we are excited that our students have this opportunity and experience.

Family Vacations During the School Year

Many families choose to take vacations during the school year, which has a significant impact upon the learning opportunities for their children and the possible achievement that students may attain. Requesting that school staff put together work assignments for students that would be missed during this time takes staff preparation time away from the other students in the class and the instructional load that each staff member has in all their subject, potentially impacting opportunities for other students. Vacations mean that a student is avoidably absent from several blocks of the same class potentially creating an educational gap that may be evident when that child returns to school from the holiday.

A student absent from one high school class over a one-week period equals over 7 hours of lost instructional time in that one subject area alone. These absences are avoidable, as the family has chosen to be away from instructional time at school. Parents are encouraged to try to schedule holidays around the school calendar as much as possible. When students are away during instructional time, they may access their work from the teacher websites, which are linked to the school website at: <http://www.mchs.gsacrd.ab.ca/>.

This means that students must take their schoolbooks with them on holiday and then access the website, in order to try and stay current and not fall too far behind in their academics. Most vacation spots have computers that are available for use or have *wifi* for other computer technology that families may take with them.

This method of accessing the schoolwork that would be missed during such trips or illness is more current and exact for students and assists student and parents to take ownership for learning. This also permits students to email work to teachers and possibly ask for clarification of questions that they may have. It is very important that students and parents understand their shared responsibility for learning and use the tools that are available through the school staff.

School staff will assist students when they are in the building. Education is a partnership between home and the school, involving students, parents and school staff.

Use of teacher websites is also an excellent manner in which parents can stay abreast of what is happening in each class and support their child(ren) at home with their learning and current information to their child(ren)'s attendance and grades on PowerSchool.

Student Attendance

As of today, semester 1 is 37% complete. On a regular basis since school started, school administrators, Grade Coordinators and members of our Student Services team have been contacting parents regarding the amount of lost instructional time that their child may have accumulated. On a daily basis students have been spoken to, regarding any missed classes that they may have had the day before. It is our intent to follow-up with students and parents to try and stay on top of absences, both legitimate absences that may not have been phoned in and others.

One of the best ways to ensure academic success in any course is for the student to physically be in the classroom. Daily monitoring assists in that process.

Alberta Education classifies all avoidable and unavoidable absences as lost instructional time and there are specific requirements for the amount that a student must have in order to earn credits at any high school in Alberta.

It is crucial that students develop good habits as it pertains to regular school attendance and punctuality. Students who are absent from school:

- Miss vital parts of the lesson
- Socially, other students may become frustrated towards your child due to the disruptions caused when the teacher has to re-teach material that had been covered earlier.
- There is clear evidence that children whose attendance is poor tend to achieve less than others.
- May interrupt their course progression required to obtain a High School Graduation Credential, meaning that they may not necessarily graduate within the average three years of high school.

The better the attendance, the better they will achieve in class. This achievement assists to ensure that the credits required for graduation from a high school in Alberta will happen as you, the parents and student, plan for.

Many students miss a significant number of classes for a wide variety of reasons from sickness, family issues, emergencies to other things that are not explainable, nor necessarily reasonable. Regardless of the reason, Alberta Education classifies all absences (avoidable or unavoidable, excused or unexcused) as lost instructional time.

If a student misses 2 school days each month for any reason, that equals over 117 hours of instructional time or 11.6% of the entire school year. This has a huge impact upon individual student achievement and realistically, most employers would potentially find this situation to be troubling and it may ultimately have repercussions upon a person's employment status.

MCHS School Discipline Report –

- For the Period of August 31, 2011 to October 5, 2011 there were 17 suspensions earned
- For the period of August 31, 2012 to October 15, 2012 there were 11 suspensions earned
- For the period of August 31, 2013 to October 18, 2013 there were 10 suspensions earned by 8 students
- For the period of August 31, 2014 to October 16, 2014 there were 10 suspensions earned by 7 students
- For the period of August 31, 2015 to October 20, 2015 there were 8 suspensions earned by 8 students