

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date – April 21, 2020

Meeting Time – 7:00 pm – Microsoft Teams Meeting

Members Present: Adriano Perusin, Principal
Adriana Rerecich
Donna Vaillancourt
Michelle Sparrock-Henderson
Kevin Wells
Angela Lombardi
Phaedra Renaud
Rocio Farrell
Clark McDougall
Catherine Serafim

MEETING MINUTES

Opening prayer - Adriana

All council members joined in opening prayer.

Covid update and distance education discussion with Catherine Serafim and Clark McDougall

Teachers are doing their best to enhance their skills with distance education. In theory, May 4 is still the date when we are supposed to return to school but at this point it is one week at a time and may be extended.

Expectations are that students should be on-line approximately 3 hours per course per week. This will vary with the level of difficulty of each course. Students should have connected with their teachers by now and student response has been incredibly positive. This has revealed the strain on some families as some students are now working full time to help their families, and many families are sharing computers. Teachers are very compassionate to these students given these circumstances.

There are two platforms teachers can choose to work with - D2L platform (licensed by Ministry) or Google Classroom. It took a few weeks to get everyone on-line and teachers have worked

quickly to reinvent their methodology of educating to do distance learning. Zoom is not allowed for security reasons.

Teachers should be accessible during the school hours 8:30-2:30 but there is no set time of the day with this new schedule. Given the fact that some families are sharing computers, and some students are working in the day, teachers must be available in the evenings too.

Assessments

The board message is hold students accountable - but for the most part if marks change, they should be to the benefit of the students given these unprecedented times. Equity issues must be taken into consideration and some students are only just now getting their technology. Marks will be impacted on a case by case basis with staff and administration depending on access to technology, mental health, work, support at home, etc. Culminating will continue and exams will not be part of evaluation.

Our Social Worker, Michael Assiamah and Guidance Counsellors continue to do outreach to students who need help.

Family Needs

We are supporting access to technology and have enough Chrome Books to distribute to families who need them. Also supporting some families in financial need with gift cards for grocery stores. These funds are coming from STA care funds and Civvies day funds. We believe these funds should carry us through June. We also have received some anonymous donations through Halton Food For Thought – gift cards, and a laptop. We will be giving the laptop to a family in great need. Another anonymous donation of \$300 was received which we will use to purchase more gift cards for food. An email was sent to families encouraging outreach for those who need help.

Scheduling

St Thomas Aquinas location is not a long-term growth area since feeder schools are showing a reduction in enrollment. Places like Milton are growing rapidly but not our area. We will be down roughly 100 students this year which impacts the number of teachers and number of courses we can offer. This year we will have fewer teachers and the college level courses will be impacted the most by the reduced course selection. There will also be multiple split classes as a result. Sad to see some of these teachers leave as they have been such an asset to our school with their expertise in technology and enthusiasm for clubs and extra-curricular

activities. Our goal for next year is to promote our excellent IB program and focus on recruiting new students.

School Improvement

The planned spruce up to the school is all on hold with the Covid closure. Plans for library, weight room, artwork in main hallway will be re-addressed in new school year. There is going to be an outdoor shed but we are still awaiting permit so we can move forward. The field to the west on Rebecca will be fenced in and cleaned up and used for practice activities.

Grade 12 Graduation

Midterm marks are in and will be uploaded for College and University. Graduation has been cancelled and hoping to move to the fall and combining with IB graduation ceremony. Prom is cancelled as well.

IB update

IB exams have been cancelled worldwide. Marks will rely on IA internal assessments and extended essays and marks will be released July 5. Teachers will continue to provide work for students.

Open discussion

Offering a remote workout to students twice a week.

Adriana has started a Youtube channel as well as an Instagram account to provide mental health support to students. Also working on a Raiders Thrive newsletter.

Next meeting: May 19, 2020