

## **Alta Vista School Council Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

Chair Melissa Extross called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.

### **2. Approval of Agenda**

- Motion to approve: Shawn
- Seconded by: Reuben
- Decision: Approved

### **3. Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes**

- Motion to approve: Shawn
- Seconded by: Reuben
- Decision: Approved

### **4. Chair's Report (Melissa Extross)**

- Grounds Renewal Update: Melissa spoke with Kurt Berger, who plans to send a draft plan for the grounds renewal by the end of the month.
- Attendance Review: One member was removed from the council for missing three consecutive meetings without notice. This decision, made without objections, was necessary to maintain quorum.

### **5. Administrative Report (Alina Orlea, Principal)**

- Principal's Update: Alina expressed her appreciation for the Alta Vista community as she transitions into her new role.
  - Facility:
    - Alina expressed her appreciation to the school council for advocating for extending the kindergarten yard and renewing grounds (scheduled for 2025, details anticipated soon).
    - Two classes temporarily relocated due to construction but will return by Monday.
    - Additional construction phases are planned, with more information expected by summer.

- Emphasized student safety by keeping the facility as a closed-door school. Alina stressed that all parents, guardians, visitors and volunteers must use front door and ring the bell.
- **Staffing:**
  - A new Education Assistant, Ms. Amal, has been hired to replace an Education Assistant on extended leave.
  - Gloria is managing daily staffing challenges effectively despite new substitute restrictions.
- **Operations:**
  - Parents must notify teachers and the office via email or phone call of extended student absences.
  - Students absent for over 15 days must be demitted and re-admitted.
- **Curriculum:**
  - Teachers are concluding Term 1 evaluations.
  - SK to Grade 2 students will undergo mid-year reading assessments by a central team.
- **Wellbeing:**
  - Alina actively engages with students, emphasizing community and accountability.
  - She aims to foster an environment where students feel heard and valued.

- **Q&A Session:**

During the Principal's Report, Alina participated in a Q&A session, answering questions from council members and attendees. Below is a summary of the questions and her responses:

**1. What is one thing you've learned during your career as an educator that you are excited to bring to Alta Vista Public School?**

Alina shared that she deeply values the stories and experiences of every individual in a community and that everyone matters. She thrives in learning the stories behind the person and is excited to bring her focus on inclusivity and relationship-building to AVPS, ensuring that everyone feels heard and appreciated.

**2. Do you have any special talents or hobbies?**

She enjoys arts and crafts as a way to detach from work. Her hobbies include crochet, painting by numbers, and hiking. She credits her sister, an architect, as her inspiration for creativity.

**3. What has been a career highlight for you?**

Becoming the principal of Alta Vista Public School is a significant milestone in her career. She also reflected on her journey of moving to Canada in 2010 and how it helped her recognize her own cultural privilege.

**4. If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

Her choices include fish, dark chocolate, and chickpeas.

**5. What has been a career challenge to date, and what did it teach you?**

Retraining her professional credentials after moving to Canada was one of her biggest challenges. It taught her perseverance and the importance of adaptability.

**6. What do you enjoy doing in your time off?**

She enjoys reading, listening to audiobooks, hiking, and exploring arts and crafts.

**7. What are you currently reading or listening to?**

She is currently reading *Intermezzo* by Sally Rooney. This book was on Barack Obama's Top Ten books of 2024.

**8. What motivates you day-to-day?**

Her organizational skills and detailed checklists keep her motivated and on task. She finds satisfaction in achieving small, measurable goals.

**9. If you won the lottery tomorrow, what's the first thing you would buy?**

She would take a dream cruise to Alaska, a destination she has always wanted to explore.

**10. Who or what has had the biggest impact on your career to date?**

She credited a mentor who challenged her to rethink her career path, encouraging her to focus on staying in schools where she could directly impact students and make a difference.

**11. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?**

In addition to Alaska, she would love to visit family members scattered across the globe.

**12. After a week and a bit at Alta Vista, what are your thoughts?**

She expressed her admiration for the students, describing them as “so cute” and full of energy. She is looking forward to reconnecting with her French skills and fostering a sense of community within the school.

**13. If you could share a meal with four people, living or dead, who would they be?**

Her father (who passed away seven years ago), her mother, her sister, her partner and a good friend in Montreal.

**14. Coffee or tea?**

Coffee, the darker the better, and black.

- **Elementary Review Update:**

Alina provided an overview of the proposed changes to the OCDSB’s elementary program, emphasizing the importance of parental and community engagement during this review phase. Key points discussed:

- **Overview of Proposed Model:**

The OCDSB is currently reviewing its elementary programs, special education supports, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Based on data, research, and feedback gathered in 2024, the proposed new program model includes two main pathways:

- **Enhanced English Program:** This program offers more French instruction while maintaining a strong focus on English, providing a balanced bilingual learning experience.
- **French Immersion Program:** Starting in Grade 1, students will follow a full French immersion curriculum, with increased English instruction in Grade 1 to support foundational bilingual skills.

This streamlined approach aims to:

1. Improve program quality and accessibility.
2. Focus resources on creating dynamic, bilingual teaching and learning environments.
3. Support inclusion by offering community-based education.

- **Key Changes:**
  - Entry Points for French Immersion: Families will have more flexibility, with students able to enter the French Immersion program at Grades 1, 2, or 3.
  - Discontinuation of Current Models: The English with Core French and Middle French Immersion programs will be phased out. Transition details for current students will be provided later.
  - Program Enhancements:
    - Increased French instruction in the English program.
    - More English instruction in Grade 1 French Immersion to provide a solid foundation in both languages.
  - Changes to School Structures:
    - Grade configurations and attendance boundaries will be reviewed and adjusted.
    - A school locator tool to help parents identify their designated school will be launched in February 2025.
  
- **Special Education and ESL Supports:**
  - Redistribution of Special Education Resources: Gradually phasing out 39 of 142 specialized program classes. Resources from these classes will be reinvested into general classrooms to better support a wider range of students with diverse learning needs.
  - Inclusive Learning Environments: The remaining 103 specialized program classes will continue to support students with complex learning needs.
  - Robust Support for Multilingual Learners: In-class support and ESL assistance will remain priorities, with English Literacy Development (ELD) classes maintained for students with limited prior schooling.
  
- Timeline for Implementation:
  - **Winter/Spring 2025:** Community feedback will be gathered on the proposals.
  - **Fall 2025:** A transition plan will be developed based on feedback.
  - **Winter-Summer 2026:** Preparation for implementation.
  - **Fall 2026:** Full implementation of changes.
  
- Parent Engagement and Feedback:

Alina strongly encouraged parents to share their opinions and participate in the consultation process. Options for engagement include:

- Attending community meetings in March 2025.
- Completing the OCDSB online survey (open January–March 2025) at [engage.ocdsb.ca](https://engage.ocdsb.ca).
- Contacting their OCDSB trustee directly.

○ **Questions Raised:**

1. If attendance boundaries change, will current students need to leave their school?  
Alina confirmed that boundary changes may result in students being required to move schools, but details will be clarified in February 2025 when boundary proposals are shared.
2. Will Alta Vista’s grade levels (JK-8) remain the same?  
At this stage, it is uncertain. The OCDSB will release further information with the attendance boundary proposals in February 2025.

## **6. Teacher’s Report (Kim Holland)**

### **Kindergarten (JK/SK):**

Kindergarten students have been embracing the winter season through various engaging activities.

- **Hibernation Exploration:**
  - Students are learning about hibernation through hands-on STEM activities, books, and class discussions.
  - They built cozy dens for small toy bears, sparking conversations about how animals prepare for and survive the winter.
  - Next week, a science workshop will provide students the opportunity to experiment with fur, fat, feathers, and ice to understand how animals stay warm in cold environments.
- **Construction Adaptations:**
  - Kindergarten classes have been rotating through temporary classrooms due to construction. Students are learning flexibility and respect for diverse learning spaces, making the most of the new environments.
  - The heat exchange system has inspired a creative unit on space, with students imagining and learning about spacecraft.

### **Primary (Grades 1-3):**

Primary students have been involved in creative and physical activities to start the new year.

- Creative Learning:
  - EF1B students used autumn leaves preserved in books to create unique animal-themed crafts, blending art and nature.
  - EF2A and EF2B students enjoyed a New Year's "champagne toast" to celebrate the new term.
- Outdoor Activities:
  - Many students participated in skating sessions at the Alta Vista rink. Teachers expressed gratitude to the "Rink Ratz" and parent volunteers for their support.
- Special Projects:
  - EF2A and EF2B worked with Ottawa University student teacher Mr. Rowen on science lessons, enhancing hands-on learning experiences.

### **Junior (Grades 4-6):**

Junior students are diving into literacy, science, and physical activities.

- Literacy Focus:
  - EF4A has begun a novel study on *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg. Students are creating reflective journals, writing creatively, and discussing the book in-depth. A book fair is planned where parents can view students' projects and presentations.
- Science and Experiments:
  - R4/5 students conducted experiments on changes of state in matter, connecting scientific principles with hands-on activities.
- Physical Education Updates:
  - Tripleball (volleyball) tryouts are underway.
  - The Grade 3-6 Skipping Club has begun, fostering teamwork and fitness.

- Thanks to council-funded equipment, floor hockey has been added to intramural programming.
- Cultural Exploration:
  - The Indigenous Club is meeting in the library, with Ms. Melissa showing a video of Joel Agowissa, an Indigenous support worker, sharing the Ojibwe Legend of Turtle Island.

### **Intermediate (Grades 7-8):**

Intermediate students are balancing academics, extracurricular activities, and community engagement.

- Community Engagement:
  - The Grade 8 WEB team was interviewed by the *Vistas* newspaper about their successful food drive for the Heron Emergency Food Centre. Look for the article in February's edition.
- Science and Art Projects:
  - Grade 8 students have been experimenting with cleaning oil spills and understanding buoyancy.
  - R78 and LDSIP classes explored adaptations in nature, using camouflage experiments to blend triangles into the classroom environment, promoting critical thinking and creativity.
- Extracurricular Activities:
  - Many students participated in skating for the first time, with peers helping each other learn this new skill.
  - Weekly science experiments, such as learning about Archimedes' Screw, have been led by student teacher Mr. Slinger.

### **School-Wide Events:**

- Skating at Alta Vista Park:  
Skating sessions have started for PE classes, thanks to the support of the "Rink Ratz" and parent volunteers. Donations of skate trainers are still appreciated.
- Library Enhancements:  
The Parent Council's funding has allowed the purchase of additional French books,



significantly enriching the library's resources and fostering bilingual literacy among students.

## **7. Treasurer's Update (Kathy Wrye)**

- Financial Summary:
  - Current Account Balance: \$43,500.56
  - Available for Requests: \$12,272
- No voting items this meeting.

## **8. Committee/Event Reports and Updates**

- Ottawa 67's Fundraiser:
  - 42 tickets sold so far. Event scheduled for February 23, 2025 at 2:00pm.
  - Price: \$26 per ticket, which includes a \$5 savings off the retail price.
  - How to Buy: Tickets can be purchased by sending an Interac e-transfer to [sc-altavistaps@ocdsb.ca](mailto:sc-altavistaps@ocdsb.ca). Please include the number of tickets you are purchasing and your email address in the message box when sending the transfer.
  - Tickets will be sent electronically via email closer to the event date, so accurate contact information is essential.

## **9. Discussion Items and New Business**

- Silent Auction Support Team: Volunteers are needed to ensure the success of this major fundraising event.
- **Reminders:**
  - **Kinder Information Night:** January 16, 2025
  - **Family Movie Night:** January 31, 2025
- Spirit Wear Coordinator: A volunteer is needed for the 2024-2025 school year.
- **10. Next Meeting:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025, In-person