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## **From the Vice-Principal - Mr. Josh Van Doesburg**

### Should Students Use AI at Ponoka Christian School

Artificial Intelligence has become one of the biggest conversations in education right now. Most conferences and PD sessions that are available in the last year and upcoming seem to be focused on this topic. This fall I took a graduate course on AI through the University of Alberta; in this course I was challenged to think critically about where education is heading and how quickly schools are moving toward fully embracing AI in the students' hands. In many public-school settings, there seems to be a growing comfort with students openly using AI in classrooms for assignments, planning, and even assessments. While I understand why this shift is happening, my stance on AI use, especially for students at Ponoka Christian School, is quite different.

One of my biggest concerns with AI use in schools is how easily it leads to *metacognitive laziness*. Metacognitive laziness is when students stop thinking about how they think and instead rely on something else to do that thinking for them.

School-aged students are still developing their brains and learning how to plan, question, evaluate, and reflect on their own thinking and work. When AI starts generating ideas, organizing responses, or solving problems for them, those mental processes become obsolete. Over time, students can become dependent on AI as a shortcut rather than engaging deeply with the learning themselves. Romans 12:2 reminds us to, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind," and that renewal requires effort, struggle, and reflection. When using generative AI the idea of effort, struggling, and reflection do not need to happen.

In my course, there was a strong push toward preparing students for a future where AI is normal and unavoidable. I agree that AI will be part of the world our students enter as adults, but that doesn't mean it should be freely used at every stage of development. At Ponoka Christian School, we care deeply about formation, not just outcomes. We want students to learn how to think, reflect, and question; not just how to produce an answer. This reminds me of Proverbs 1:7 which says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Proverbs is telling us that wisdom and understanding take time, intentional guidance, and should never be rushed.

Another danger of AI in the students' hands is confusion around truth and authorship. When giving an answer AI can sound confident even when it is wrong or biased. AI is driven to please the user and can provide answers without proper facts. Young students do not have the maturity or background knowledge to recognize these conflicting issues.

My personal fear is that if they grow up relying on AI too early, they may struggle later to tell what is real, what is manipulated, and why it all matters. As educators in a Christian school, we are called to help students discern truth and develop integrity, not shortcut those processes. If our children are willing to shortcut on assignments, would they be willing to shortcut on their personal reflection on bible passages or devotions? Are they going to turn to AI instead of parents, grandparents, or pastors when it comes to faith or personal questions? Personally, I pray not; but saying it can't happen would be irresponsible as well.

My belief is not that AI is inherently bad, but that timing matters. Students need to develop strong thinking habits first. When they engage with AI later in life, they will have the cognitive maturity and moral framework to use it wisely. As 1 Corinthians 13:11 says, "When I was a child, I thought like a child... when I became an adult, I put the ways of childhood behind me." There is a season for learning without shortcuts and in my opinion, school is at the top of the list.

At Ponoka Christian School, our responsibility is not to keep up with every educational trend, but to do what is best for our students. Protecting their thinking, integrity, and formation now prepares them far better for a future where AI will eventually have a place.

### **From the Board - Mrs. Carien Dominicus**

As this is the first newsletter of the New Year, the Board would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Blessed 2026! We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas break, and we pray that this coming year may be a year of blessings and serving our Lord and Saviour in every area of our lives.

We would like to welcome Mrs. Dalia Slaa as our new librarian! She will also be assisting with some EA tasks in the school. Please introduce yourself and make her feel welcome in our school.

As you're hopefully all aware, a current petition in Alberta is calling for the defunding of independent schools. If successful, the ability to provide affordable Christian education will be compromised. Families who wish to partner with schools in raising their children in the fear of the Lord could lose the opportunity to choose this form of education. To show your support for independent education in Alberta, the board recommends to please add your name at [StudentsFirstAlberta.ca](https://StudentsFirstAlberta.ca). Signing takes less than a minute and helps strengthen our collective voice.

January is generally a quiet month for the Board, so as of yet there is nothing new to report to Society; however, we would like to send out a couple of reminders.

- Society Membership: If there is anyone who is not currently a member, but would like to be, this would be a great time to fill out the Membership forms so interviews can be

set up and new members can be approved at our Spring Society meeting. This is also a great way for Grandparents to show their support of PCS. If you're interested, just ask the office for the forms!

- Our school mission statement is "Educating our children together with home and church to know the Lordship of Christ". As a friendly reminder, communication back and forth between parents and staff/administrators/Board is a crucial part of fulfilling this mission statement. If you ever have any concerns, comments or encouragement to share...please do so!

We will be having our first meeting of the year on Wednesday February 4, 2026.

On Behalf of the PCS Board,  
Carien Dominicus

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13*

### **Sports News - Mr. Josh Van Doesburg**

The PCS junior high hockey team had a great time at the tournament in Strathmore over Christmas break. With an exciting semifinal and an even more intense final game that ended in a shootout resulting in a silver medal for the team, it was a short but great first inaugural season for the team! We hope to continue to provide this opportunity again for students in future years.

The basketball season is well underway. We are thankful this year to have 3 teams, a co-ed developmental team coached by Bob Morris, an A girls team coached by Josh Van Doesburg Candace Slomp, and Chelsea Vreugdenhil and an A boys team coached by Scott Ingwersen and Jordan Vreugdenhil. All 3 teams have had a strong start to the year. The A girls recently placed 4<sup>th</sup> at a tournament in Bentley last weekend. Thank you to our coaches for the extra time and effort you are putting into this basketball season. Please remain diligent with watching the calendar for schedules updates and changes. The CWAJHAA Championships will take place on March 20-21 with PCS hosting the boy's tournament. Fans are always welcome to come out and cheer on our teams.

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### **Important Dates**

<b>January 30</b>	No School – Teacher Work Day
<b>February 1-28</b>	I Love to Read Month
<b>February 3</b>	Bakesale – Put on by the Gr 9's
<b>February 5</b>	Gr 8/9 Visiting Day at CACHS

<b>February 9</b>	Extra Kindergarten Day
<b>February 9</b>	Parent Teacher Interviews <b>By request.</b>
<b>February 13</b>	No School – AISCA Teacher’s Convention
<b>February 16</b>	No School – Family Day
<b>February 17</b>	No School – Teacher Work Day
<b>February 19</b>	Hot Lunch – Pizza (for those who ordered)
<b>February 24</b>	All School Chapel – Justice Seeking
<b>February 26</b>	Gr 4-9 Canyon Ski Day
<b>February 27</b>	Extra Kindergarten Day
<b>February 27</b>	Jr High Award Day – No school for Gr 7-9 students

**\*\*\* Save the date: PCS Auction is to be held on Saturday April 11, 2026 \*\*\***

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**Bake Sale** - The grade 9 class will be putting on a bake sale for the school to help raise money for grad. All baking will be peanut free and will cost \$2 each. There will be a limit of one piece per student. Baking will be available for sale at morning snack time.

**Ski Day at Canyon for Grades 4-9: Important Reminders**

- **Ski Forms will be going home today!** If you have lost yours, forms are available at the office and online under Families > Forms. **Forms are due back by Feb 12, 2026.**
- New this year: **Pre order lunch!** See the form for details.
- **Parents who are planning to ski with their child must fill out a Participant Form, forms and payment for parents must be received prior to Feb 26.** The cost for parents is \$35 for lift pass only and \$61 for pass and rentals.
- Younger siblings (not in gr 4-9) who may be skiing will have to purchase lift tickets at Canyon and are not considered part of the school rate.
- **The school must be notified prior to ski day of all transportation arrangements.** There will be no changes made on the day of the trip. (ie. If your child is riding the bus to the hill but will not be taking the bus back, the school must be notified before the ski day)
- Lift tickets cannot be handed out to students until the whole group arrives with the bus and not until the Canyon staff have gone over the safety talk.
- The bus will leave the school for Canyon at **8:40am** and leave Canyon at **3pm** to return students to the school. Students will need to be picked up from the school at approx. 3:45pm. **Ponoka Christian School is not responsible for students who remain at the hill after 3pm.**

## **From the Development Committee**

The development committee has some exciting events and fundraisers in store for the rest of the year. Please note the following:

- **Grade 1 Bird House Building:**  
Happening this evening - Grade 1 students and their dads or Grandpas or other special guy in their life are invited to attend an evening of building birdhouses at the school. This annual event is a FUN evening with your child building more than just memories!
  - **Boston Pizza Operation Education:**  
Thank you for all those who have submitted receipts to the office already. This is an easy way to support the school! We are asking all families and supporters to turn in their original receipts from any Edmonton and surrounding area Boston Pizza locations including, Ponoka, Lacombe and Red Deer to the school office, dating from Jan 2026 until June 2026. The school can then receive 5% of the total (before tax) of all receipts submitted!
  - **Gift Card Fundraiser:**  
This fundraiser is ongoing. Please find attached a form to fill out if you are interested in ordering gift cards for the upcoming month. **Forms need to be returned to the school by Feb 5.** Thank you for your continued support.
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**Now Accepting Applications** - Ponoka Christian School is now accepting **Applications for Pre-School and Kindergarten** for the 2026-27 school year. Information and registration packages can be found on the school website at [www.ponokachristianschool.com](http://www.ponokachristianschool.com) or may be picked up from the school office.

**Ponoka Christian School is Hiring!** – Please pass on the following messages to anyone you know who may be interested and pray that the Lord may provide the school suitable candidates to carry out His Kingdom work here at PCS.

- **Elementary Teacher** - Ponoka Christian School is now accepting teacher applications for an elementary teacher for the 2026-27 school year. Interested candidates can forward a cover letter, resume, statement of faith and pastoral reference to [office@ponokachristianschool.com](mailto:office@ponokachristianschool.com), attention Robert Morris, Principal.
- **Business Administrator** – Ponoka Christian School is now accepting applications for the position of Business Administrator. Interested applicants can send in a cover letter, resume (with references), and a statement of faith to: [office@ponokachristianschool.com](mailto:office@ponokachristianschool.com). For more information, please contact the school via email or by calling 403-783-6563.

## **From Kindergarten – Thank you!**

Thank you to our wonderful school community for the generous donations to our kindergarten program that we requested in the fall. The updated toys and materials have already brought so much joy and creativity into our classroom, and the students have loved exploring the new activities.

We also appreciate the continued support of families who may have unused cards, envelopes, or note cards at home that might otherwise be discarded. This is an ongoing request, as these items are always put to good use in our Post Office Center each year.

Thank you for your kindness and support - we are truly grateful!

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## **I Love to Read Month is Almost Here – Adventure Awaits!**

Starting February 2 through the end of the month, students will take part in our **I Love to Read Month** competition! The goal is simple: read for fun, try something new, and grow a love of reading!

This year's *Camping & Great Outdoors* theme includes both new and familiar favourites – from weekly top reader bonuses to class door decorating, dress-up days and plenty of raffle prizes to win!

### **Dress-Up Day Heads Up:**

**Thursday, February 5** – Plaid/Camo Day

**Thursday, February 19** – Vocabulary Dress-Up Day (Lots of ideas online!)

Watch for more information coming home February 2 (February 3 for kindergarten). So, grab your books, hit the trail, and make reading an adventure to remember!

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**Community News:**

**Rimbey Christian School Fundraising Banquet**

**When:** Friday, February 27th, 2026

**Where:** Keyera Centre (Rimbey Community Center)

**Entertainment:** An evening of entertainment with Court Jester Dueling Pianos

**Doors open:** 5:30pm, supper starts @ 6:00pm

**Tickets:** \$75 each or table of 8 for \$550

**For more info contact: Joni (403-704-7432)**