

“The Best We Can Deliver”

TAAPCS Annual Report 2014-2015

October 29, 2015

Prepared by Dr. Garry Andrews
TAAPCS Executive Director
www.taapcs.ca

TAAPCS CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



TAAPCS Co-Presidents Roger Nippard and Judy Gray

“Our Children Deserve the Best Education We Can Deliver”

Annual Reports are traditionally a time to present a retrospective, reflective look at a year that has gone by. This year, however, we have chosen to depart from this tradition by attempting to knit together some of the conversations of the past with notions that may describe or define our future. To do so, we use comments from Education Minister David Eggen and the scholarly work of Dr. Lynn Bosetti and Dr. Phil Butterfield.

In a letter dated October 8, 2015, in response to our invitation to attend TAAPCS' conference, Education Minister David Eggen writes:

*“The theme of the (TAAPCS) conference – Beyond Walls, Beyond Borders – is particularly relevant for today’s students and parents, given the abundance of education options in Alberta and readily available information at our fingertips. **Our children deserve the best education we can deliver, and charter schools play an important role in offering innovative and enhanced learning options for Alberta families**”.*

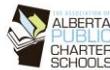
Dr. Lynn Bosetti and Dr. Phil Butterfield, in their paper “The Politics of Educational Reform: The Alberta Charter School Experiment 20 Years Later” (2015, awaiting publication) comment:

“Charter schools, decoupled from market ideology, have a role in fostering innovative teaching practices and contributing significantly to the body of knowledge on teaching, learning and leadership. In order to actualize this potential, charter school teachers, administrators, and directors require adequate government funding and support to engage in school-based action research and nurture sustainable partnerships with post-secondary institutions. Adequately funded charter schools could serve to inform exemplary teaching practices and enhance student success and foster meaningful, evidence-based professional learning for teachers.”

The evolution of charter schools has always been about innovation; initially that innovation was to encourage enhanced choice within public education. As value added organizations, charter schools have now more clearly articulated and embraced their role as centres of research and innovation through sharing evidence-based practices designed to contribute the knowledge base of the broader educational community. A sample of some of these initiatives which have occurred over time is included later in this report; the list, while not at all comprehensive, indicates intention and contribution to the dialogue on improvement efforts in Alberta.

Charter schools ARE invested in providing “the best education we can deliver” to the 9000+ students whom they serve. It is hoped that the Bosetti/Butterfield study will assist charter schools to be able to build closer relationships with the Department of Education in regards to funding and support in order to make their contributions even more significant.

It has been our pleasure to serve as Co-Presidents of this Association; we are humbled by your trust, and honoured to have been your representatives. We believe that charter schools have never been more relevant, more important or more necessary as part of the public education solution. We salute your leadership, your vision and your commitment.



As per By-law requirements, the following report on the activities of The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools for 2014-15 is respectfully submitted.

BACKGROUND

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools has 13 members from a wide geographic and demographic area which extends from Medicine Hat in the south to Valhalla Centre in the north. As well, there are six schools in Calgary and five schools in Edmonton and area. The mandate of each school is unique and distinctive. The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools was formally created to support all schools regardless of location and mandate. (www.taapcs.ca)

TAAPCS OBJECTIVES *(revised January 2014)*

1. To promote and facilitate public charter school education in Alberta.
2. To advocate collectively and effectively on behalf of the membership.
3. To promote a forum for public charter schools to meet in support of common goals.
4. To advocate for continued innovation and choice within public education.

MEETING DATES

The three regular meetings for the Association took place on the following dates:

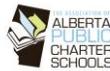
- October 23/24, 2014 – Calgary
- January 15/16, 2015 – Red Deer
- May 6/7, 2015 – Medicine Hat

Preceding the regular meetings were Superintendent as well as Charter Board Directors' meetings. In addition to the above, the Education Advisory Committee met in Red Deer on the following dates:

- September 19, 2014
- December 12, 2014
- February 20, 2015
- April 17, 2015
- June 18, 2015 (conference call)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 2014-15

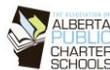
- Co-Presidents: Judy Gray and Roger Nippard
- Co-Vice Presidents: Yvonne DePeel and Don Falk
- Secretary-Treasurer: Meredith Poole
- Executive Director: Dr. Garry Andrews (ex-officio)



POLITICAL CHANGES

After 44 years of Progressive Conservative leadership, the province of Alberta elected a new government this past spring. The New Democratic Party, under the leadership of Premier Rachel Notley, took office in May, 2015. To date, there have been no official indications from Education Minister David Eggen's office that the initiatives begun under the PC's will be discontinued. Charter schools are heartened by this government's re-investment in public education. However, the new Education Act, which was to be proclaimed in September 2015, and the accompanying Regulations have been delayed for one year, so at this time, the Ministerial Orders regarding the Act and curricular expectations do remain in effect.

In an effort to familiarize elected officials with charter schools, the Association and our member schools have been meeting with a number of MLA's, from both sides of the house. This process is continuing. As well, invitations to meet with the Minister and the Deputy have been extended.



BYLAW CHANGES

In January, 2015, members in attendance at the General Meeting supported a bylaw change and affirmed the direction the Association was taking. The bylaws, which were initially written when the business of the organization was conducted entirely by volunteers, were not seen to be in keeping with current practice. Of specific concern was the statement indicating the President was the Chief Executive Officer of the Association and that her/his duties were, in part, to be determined by the Board of Directors. With the employment of an Executive Director, the "duties" of the President were, in many cases, taken over by the Executive Director. Further, those duties were not

defined in the bylaws. In an effort to clarify the operational procedures, a motion was put forward to declare the Executive Director as the Chief Executive Officer. It passed. Following this motion, the duties of the Executive Director were presented and this too was affirmed by the members. Also affirmed by the members were the Association's Vision, Mission and Goal statements. It was suggested that the next step in the evolution of the Association was a strategic planning exercise. This exercise will take place in 2015-16.



FINANCIAL PICTURE



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The financial situation of the Association continues to be stable. As noted in the financial report, we are operating within budget, in part thanks to a modest membership fee increase two years ago, but also due to a Stakeholder Organization grant of \$25,500 we received from Alberta Education. A grant request for 2015-16 for \$25,500 has been submitted. We are also very appreciative of the \$50,000 grant we have received from Alberta Education over the past three years which supports our School Leadership Learning Initiative.



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP LEARNING INITIATIVE

Year Three of this initiative was completed in 2014-15. As in the past, it was very successful and participants indicated a desire to continue into 2015-16. Accordingly, a request was made to Alberta Education. While no additional grant money is available, Alberta Education is allowing the Association to utilize deferred revenues arising from the grant's unspent portion to fund the initiative ourselves for the forthcoming year. We are doing so. It is anticipated that we will continue with more than 30 administrators involved.



EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EAC) ACTIVITIES

The working committee for the Association is the EAC. This group met five times during 2014-15. Chaired by Co-Vice-Presidents Yvonne DePeel and Don Falk, the committee provided direction for such matters as:

- the Association's responses to Alberta Education's requests for feedback on a variety of initiatives,
- sharing information regarding emerging issues in member schools,
- dialoguing with representatives from Alberta Education who attend the meetings,
- receiving presentations from groups whose work might align with the Association,
- preparing presentations to Alberta Education on behalf of the Association's members on such matters as Inclusive Education funding and Collaborative Regional Service Delivery,

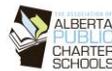
- drafting communication to elected officials on matters of interest to the membership,
- assisting in planning agendas for general and other meetings, and
- sharing expertise/networking with others.

EAC members 2014-15

Co-Chairs: Yvonne DePeel, Almadina; Don Falk, New Horizons

Judy Gray, FFCA; Mr. Roger Nippard, FFCA; Denise Budgen, FFCA; Joe Frank, Westmount; John Liu, Westmount; Dale Erickson, Calgary Arts; Susan Chomistek, Connect; Phil Butterfield, Connect; Lynne Paradis, Suzuki; Heather Christison, Suzuki; Issa Mosa, Almadina; Ian Gray, Aurora; Pam Halverson, Alberta Education; Garry Andrews, Executive Director

Without the valuable assistance of these volunteers, the work of the Association would be difficult to complete. Thank you as well to Alberta Education for their attendance and participation.



NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

During the course of each year, we receive several requests from individuals and organizations asking for information regarding how to apply for a charter. Reference is made to the Alberta Education website and the “Charter School Handbook”. Then if requested, individuals are referred to members of our Executive who can provide more specific answers to the questions.

This year was no different. To date, we understand that two applications have been made to local boards and have been denied. Therefore the next step, which involves applying to the Minister, has taken place. One school is more advanced in the process than the other. We trust we will receive more information from the applicants regarding their status in the near future. If approval is provided, the 15 school cap on charters in Alberta will have been met. As a point of information for the reader, the Association’s submission to Alberta Education regarding the new Act and its Regulations requested the removal of the 15 school cap.



CHARTER SCHOOL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INITIATIVES

A feature of each Association regular meeting is the presentation of research being done in our schools. This has proven to be a popular initiative and, to date, has resulted in numerous requests for more information. Networking is taking place and partnerships are forming, not just between schools but also with post-secondary institutions. By doing so, charter schools are effectively fulfilling the expectations expressed by Alberta Education that we not only retain, but enhance, our research emphasis. Examples have been included here. More has taken place since these projects were undertaken and/or completed, and we will endeavour to update the research projects on our website (www.taapcs.ca). We then hope to solicit feedback as to how helpful this information has been to those who have accessed it.

PROVINCIAL

Research at a provincial level was begun in 2014 by Drs. Lynn Bosetti and Phil Butterfield. Their report, entitled, *The Politics of Educational Reform: The Alberta Charter School Experiment, 20 Years Later*, is scheduled for release in 2015-16 and will be shared with our membership at that time.

ALMADINA LANGUAGE CHARTER ACADEMY - CALGARY

Almadina Language Charter Academy is currently in their second year of research with The Reading Foundation.

AURORA CHARTER SCHOOL - EDMONTON

Aurora School commissioned a study (2012) by Dr. Paul Newton and Gus Riveros, entitled “Aurora Charter School Effectiveness Review” University of Alberta. The study was conducted to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the Aurora instructional program. The study can be viewed at: <http://www.auroraschool.com/schooleffectivenessreview.pdf>

Aurora School commissioned a study (2013) by Dr. Augusto Riveros (University of Alberta) entitled Aurora “ICT Implementation Report” University of Alberta. The study was conducted to ascertain strengths and weakness of technology implementation process at Aurora over the 201113 period. The study can be viewed at: <http://tinyurl.com/lk7rq47>

In partial completion of her M.Ed. studies at the University of Portland, Carol Bartel Nickel completed an M.Ed. thesis (2014) entitled: “Collaboration in a Grade 9 English Classroom” Nickel (Dr. James Carroll, Research Advisor). Ms. Nickel is the Assistant Principal of the Aurora Academic 5-9 program. She collected data for the study in Aurora grade 9 ELA classes. This study compared teaching strategies –Direct instruction, Collaboration, and Computer Supported Collaborative Learning - and their effect on student achievement and student engagement.

BOYLE STREET EDUCATION CENTRE - EDMONTON

Book – Averill, M. (2013). SWEET: The Learning Lives of Students Who Have Experienced Extreme Trauma. Self-Published at the Edmonton Public Library Maker Space.

- Paper and Presentation - Community-University Partnership study – Best Practices for Supporting High-Risk Youth with FASD in a Secondary School Setting. Paper presented at 6th National Biennial Conference on

- Adolescents and Adults with FASD in Vancouver, BC.

Paper and Presentation – Cox, J. (2013). Tenured Teachers & Technology Integration in the Classroom. Contemporary Issues in Education Research. Vol: 6; No: 2. Paper presented in Las Vegas, NV.

- Participant – Community-University Partnership study - Youth 4 YEG (project lead Dr. Yoshi Iwasaki, Associate Dean, Faculty of Extension).

CALGARY ARTS ACADEMY - CALGARY

Recent research on learning through the arts at the higher grades has been discussed with University of Calgary professor, Dr. Robert Kelly. As part of planning for Calgary Arts Academy (CAA) preferred future, CAA is presently exploring the concept of design as it related to arts instruction.

In addition to this, CAA is studying different arts instruction methodologies to determine if there is in fact a similar process of arts instruction to the CAA model of arts immersion.

CALGARY GIRLS' SCHOOL - CALGARY

The Calgary Girls' School is signatory to the University of Calgary Research Partners Agreement. The procedures and processes for collaborating on research projects are still being developed; however, the Calgary Girls' School recently participated in a UC study on assessment practices. The principal was invited to present the school's perspective at the International Association of Evaluation and Assessment conference in Tel Aviv. The Calgary Girls' School is currently in discussions with the Werklund School of Education (UC) regarding research focused on the teaching and learning of Mathematics.

BP Energy awarded two grants (\$10,000) for energy-related, student research projects and two of our science teachers are participating this summer in professional learning designed by Telus Spark. The program provides skill building, collaboration and practical challenges for designing learning that fits our school.

CONNECT CHARTER SCHOOL - CALGARY

Connect Charter School has been designated as a Partner Research School with the University of Calgary and has a similar Memorandum of Understanding with Mount Royal University. Through an Alberta Education initiative focusing on the role of charter schools in promoting a transformation of education Connect Charter School involved Dr. Pamela Adams from the University of Lethbridge in conducting a two-year research of the school which demonstrate the important role served by charter schools in partnering and sharing best practices with other schools.

Members of the Connect Charter School teaching staff have undertaken over 40 research and innovation projects over the past three years which have provided significant insights relating to exemplary learning, teaching and leadership.

CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL EXCELLENCE - MEDICINE HAT

Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE) is beginning a research project in partnership with University of Lethbridge (details to be determined) on parental engagement. It is a school-wide action research project that focuses on the use of technology to connect and inform parents and increase their engagement in the learning of their student.

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE CHARTER ACADEMY - CALGARY

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA) has chosen to partner (for the last several years) with Gonzaga University in Spokane in the preparation of leaders through offering a Master's Degree in School Leadership to cohorts of FFCA staff (Graduates of this program are currently serving in administrative positions at FFCA). FFCA has chosen to focus their partnership efforts on professional learning of staff and to receive the benefits of this partnership through the graduates of this program enacting successful and innovative approaches to school leadership.

NEW HORIZONS CHARTER SCHOOL - SHERWOOD PARK

Examining the Cognitive Processing Skills of Gifted Children Principal Researcher: Georgios Georgiou, PhD – Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, U. of Alberta.

Purpose of Study: (a) To examine what cognitive processing skills differentiate between gifted and non-gifted learners, i.e. What are the differences in cognitive processing between children identified as gifted when compared with children who have not been identified as gifted? (b) To examine which of the cognitive processing skills are predictors of student success in reading and mathematics.

Health through Physical Literacy

Principal Researcher: Dr Pat Longmuir, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute

Purpose of Study: To enable teachers and other education professionals to understand whether students have the capacity to achieve a physically active lifestyle; this is whether they are achieving the physical literacy outcomes within the physical and health education curriculum.

SUZUKI CHARTER SCHOOL - EDMONTON

Explore the Impact of the Suzuki Approach on Student Learning

Principal Researcher: Dr. Jacqueline Leighton - Chair of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta.

Purpose of Study: Is there an association between the Suzuki pedagogical approach and student academic and personal learning outcomes? Follow up work continues on this project and it may become part of a possible presentation to the American Research Association.

Currently Suzuki Charter School is discussing a research partnership with Dr. Leighton and the University of Alberta. The partnership would be in the area of research funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSRRC) to discover appropriate instructional interventions for creating the emotional and social climate to nurture the most sophisticated method of cognitive development and learning.

VALHALLA COMMUNITY SCHOOL - VALHALLA

Valhalla Community School participated in a research project for their Reading Mastery program with the National Institute for Direct Instruction in Oregon. Valhalla Community School has also shared their educational practices with the Grande Prairie Regional College education students.

WESTMOUNT CHARTER SCHOOL - CALGARY

Westmount Charter School (WCS) has many research initiatives that are resulting in innovative approaches to learning and teaching. The environment of inquiry, collaboration and continuous improvement empowers all stakeholders to “seek and find a better way”.

WCS has a number of research projects under way with the University of Calgary. Two of these projects are:

- “A case study on how teachers come to understand, identify, connect, teach and assess key mathematical concepts across Grades 5 – 9,” with Dr. Krista Francis-Pocente; and
- “Relationship between Parenting Stress and Children’s Attribution Style in Childhood Anxiety,” by M.Sc. student Maisha M. Syeda, School of Applied Child Psychology, Educational Studies in Psychology, Faculty of Education, U of C.

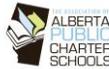
Examples of other research projects are:

- “Overexcitabilities in Gifted Students OEQ-IIc,” November 2012, with Dr. Frank Falk, Director of Research, Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, University of Akron. Follow-up to occur during the 2013-2014 school term.
- “An Online Study of the Emotional and Cognitive Mechanisms of Cyber Bullying, Victimization and Kindness,” with Dr. Joan Stevenson, Queen’s University.
- “Socialization of Gifted Children in Schools in Canada,” a study by Masters Degree student, Ms. Luliia Khilko from the University of Ukraine.

HALVAR JONSON AWARD

Each year our Association sponsors the Halvar Jonson Award to recognize the commitment of a “champion” of charter schools. In 2014, the award went to Dr. Garry McKinnon, retired Superintendent of Connect Charter School. Dr. McKinnon served charter schools in a number of roles, including the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) within TAAPCS. He was largely responsible for the creation of our School Leadership Learning Initiative, which is now supported by Alberta Education.

Dr. McKinnon, ever gracious and humble, accepted the award at the dinner held in his honor immediately prior to the 2014 Annual General Meeting in Calgary. Dr. McKinnon (left) is pictured here with his nominator, Connect Board Chair Harold Lemieux.



APPRECIATION

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools is very fortunate to have so many committed and dedicated individuals in our organization. As noted earlier, the number of volunteers who so willingly give their time make it possible to undertake initiatives which otherwise would not be done. Committee membership for such initiatives as Conference Planning, School Leadership, Education Advisory and the Executive is consistently strong and very helpful.

In particular, sincere appreciation is extended to the Executive Officers for 2014-15. Thank you again.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dr. Garry Andrews, Executive Director
The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools
October 29, 2015