

“Speaking with One Voice”

TAAPCS Annual Report 2018-2019

October 26, 2019

www.taapcs.ca

“Alberta is a paradox wherein there is both profound respect for individuals, and extraordinary collaboration and unity. Individuals, working together in unity, such that individuality flourishes.”

Ron Koper, Chair

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Background

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools represents all of Alberta's 13 charter schools. Charter schools are public schools under the *School Act, September 1, 2018* and, as such, provide to parents and guardians a choice for their child(ren)'s education. Charter schools help Alberta satisfy the statement from the Preamble of said *School Act*, "*WHEREAS parents have a right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children...*" Alberta is the only province or territory in Canada to legislate charter schools.

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools' 13 members are located in 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)

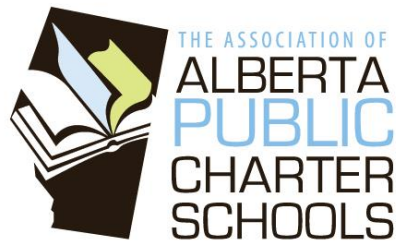
What is TAAPCS?

TAAPCS is an association comprised of Alberta Education approved public charter schools. It is led by a volunteer Board of Governors and employs a part-time Executive Director.

<p>Almadina Language Charter Academy #118, 3132 - 26 Street NE Calgary, AB T1Y 6Z1 Tel: (403) 543-5078 / Fax: (403) 543-5079 www.esl-almadina.com Offers: kindergarten to grade 9 Focus: English as a second language</p> 	<p>Connect Charter School 5915 Lewis Drive SW Calgary, AB T3E 5Z4 Tel: (403) 282-2890 / Fax: (403) 282-2896 www.connectcharter.ca Offers: grade 4 to grade 9 Focus: inquiry and place-based learning supported by technology integration and outdoor/experiential education</p> 	<p>Suzuki Charter School 10720 - 54 Street Edmonton, AB T6A 2H9 Tel: (780) 468-2598 / Fax: (780) 463-8630 www.suzukischool.ca Offers: kindergarten to grade 6 Focus: Suzuki approach to academic, musical and personal excellence</p> 
<p>Aurora Academic Charter School 12245 - 131 Street Edmonton, AB T5L 1M8 Tel: (780) 454-1855 / Fax: (780) 454-8104 www.auroraschool.com Offers: kindergarten to grade 9 Focus: traditional education</p> 	<p>Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE) 201 5 St. SW Medicine Hat, AB T1A 4G7 Tel: (403) 528-2983 / Fax: (403) 528-3048 www.capegreat.org Offers: kindergarten to grade 9 Focus: personalized integrated program(s) just before kindergarten to grade 9</p> 	<p>Valhalla Community School 9702 - 100 Avenue, Box 143 Valhalla Centre, AB T0H 3M0 Tel: (780) 356-2370 / Fax: (780) 356-2789 www.valhallacommunityschool.ca Offers: kindergarten to grade 9 Focus: rural leadership and direct instruction</p> 
<p>Boyle Street Education Centre 10312 - 105 Street Edmonton, AB T5J 1E6 Tel: (780) 428-1420 / Fax: (780) 429-1428 www.bsec.ab.ca Offers: 14 to 19 years age group Focus: youth put at risk</p> 	<p>Foundations for the Future Charter Academy #110, 7000 Railway Street SE Calgary, AB T2H 3A8 Tel: (403) 520-3306 / Fax: (403) 520-3309 www.fcca-calgary.com Offers: kindergarten to grade 12 Focus: academic excellence, character and leadership development</p> 	<p>Westmount Charter School 728 - 32 Street NW Calgary, AB T2N 2V9 Tel: (403) 217-3707 / Fax: (403) 249-3422 www.westmountcharter.com Offers: kindergarten to grade 12 Focus: gifted education</p> 
<p>Calgary Arts Academy 640 - 14 Avenue SE Calgary, AB T2G 1E8 Tel: (403) 532-3020 / Fax: (403) 217-0965 www.calgaryartsacademy.com Offers: kindergarten to grade 9 Focus: arts immersion curriculum</p> 	<p>Mother Earth's Children's Charter School RR 1, Site 2, Box 42 Warburg, AB T0C 2T0 Tel: (780) 702-7531 / Fax: (780) 648-2395 www.meccs.ca Offers: pre-kindergarten to grade 8 Focus: traditional indigenous teachings</p> 	 <p style="text-align: center;">Visit us online at www.taapcs.ca</p>
<p>Calgary Girls Charter School Unit C, 7239 Flint Road SE Calgary, AB T2H 1G2 Tel: (403) 252-0702 / Fax: (403) 252-0717 www.calgarygirlsschool.com Offers: grade 4 to grade 9 Focus: exceptional learning in a girls-centered and girls-only environment</p> 	<p>New Horizons School 1000 Strathcona Drive Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3R6 Tel: (780) 416-2353 / Fax: (780) 467-0274 www.newhorizons.ca Offers: kindergarten to grade 9 Focus: gifted education</p> 	

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools focus has been on communication in 2018-2019. We communicated with provincial individuals and parties leading up to the provincial election in February, 2019. We continue our participation through preparation of the proclamation of the Education Act slated for September 1, 2019. The Association gave input into the regulation review and is participating in the development of the *Choice in Education Act*.

Internal communication has been collaborative and respectful of all opinions. We have moved to Google Suite for Non-Profits for communication within the Association and our revised website is expected to launch for the new school year.



Foundational Statements

TAAPCS VISION

Working together to support choice and innovation in public education

TAAPCS OBJECTIVES

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

TAAPCS VALUES

1. What's best for student learning
2. What's correct
3. What strengthens learning communities
4. What sustains exemplary public education

Meeting Dates

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

- October 26/27, 2018 – Edmonton
- May 4/5, 2019 – Calgary

Preceding the regular meetings were Superintendent as well as Charter Board Directors' meetings. In addition to the above, the Superintendents and Secretary Treasurers meet in Red Deer on Sept. 14, 2018, and the Education Advisory Committee met on the following dates:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • November 23, 2018 (Red Deer) | • April 12, 2019 (Red Deer) |
| • January 21, 2019 (Conference Call) | • June 13, 2019 (Edmonton) |

Chair Reflections – Ron Koper



It has been a busy and highly interesting year for our Association, for education, for Alberta, Canada and indeed for the world at large. At all levels and scales, we've been witness to both exemplary collaboration and deepening polarization. In our own way, our Association has experienced the same pressures happening across the globe.

It has been extraordinarily gratifying to serve an organization that's compelled to come together in service of a calling that makes an indelible contribution to the shared success of Albertans. We refused to be polarized. Instead we accepted differences, chose to work collectively, find a common voice and support each other for the sake of our education system.

It is not a simple thing for 13 unique charter schools to come together in unison to better serve education in Alberta. In the past year, that's what TAAPCS has done. As a minimally-funded volunteer organization, we've made progress in a fashion dictated by our shared aspirations and values. This year's Annual Report will recount many significant investments of human energy made by our member schools individually and by our association collectively. As you review these stories, I urge you to consider these actions collectively, as a powerful declaration of our underlying shared purpose, vision, mission and values.

The work done in the fall and early winter of 2018 to prepare for the 2019 election was extraordinarily important. On the basis of relationships invigorated earlier in 2018, we laid groundwork that enabled us to participate in the new government's deliberations and actions concerning the *Education Act* and regulations in mid-2019. The shared decision-making done throughout the Association was new and challenging. The choices we faced had the potential to polarize rather than unite us. Reflecting on this process, it's reaffirming how clearly we were instructed by the shared values of our association.

This past year, many of our individual member achievements have notably reinforced the strength of all public charter schools. Standing on the steps of the McDougall Centre in Calgary in the crowd of FFCA students, parents, staff, educational partners and politicians from all parties, it was inspiring to witness the extent to which the FFCA event promoted the unique Albertan public charter school model. Achieving a milestone event for their charter school moved all charter schools forward. Whether celebrating new school openings, program milestones or at charter-related community events, all of our members showcased not only their own success, but that of the Alberta public charter school model.

Underlying the progress of the year, I've heard many members observe what feels like a new momentum. In addition to the great things we are all doing now and good Karma from consistently using strong reality-based values, we are experiencing the effects of over 20 years of successful operation. Opportunity is flowing organically from our networks and partnerships, from the virtuous self-reinforcing cycle charters follow. We invest deeply in our charter focus areas, executing with

research-informed improvement, full engagement, driving reinvestment in student learning, then in further evolution and investment. All schools follow this model to some degree, but schools of choice add momentum to their progress by virtue of their collective focus. Public charters have the additional benefit of autonomy, which grants more freedom to pursue what's best for student learning within a charter.

This organic progress could not be occurring for us at a better time than the present. The MacKinnon report's findings align with Albertan common sense. Our investments must produce improved results, scarce resources must be applied with fairness and realism. Together as Albertans, we'll all move forward. Public charter schools have earned the right to form part of the pluralistic educational landscape in Alberta. The Alberta charter model has natural strengths, which will prevent the negative entropy observed in other public charter systems. As the government moves forward to strengthen the Alberta education system, public charters are positioned to contribute strongly and sensibly.

We made progress on both deliberate and emergent strategy over the year. We were prepared to move on the emergent opportunities such as the provincial election, the *Education Act* and regulations as a result of progress on our deliberate strategies.

The formation and leadership of the Directors' Committee was conceived within our Governance strategy and delivered a unified TAAPCS voice to the government deliberations in early summer. Thanks to the leadership of our two Vice-Chairs and diligent work of Directors, educational leaders and ex-TAAPCS directors we were better prepared to participate in this critical process. Thanks to the relentless devotion of our esteemed Executive Director Kath Rhyason and her assistant Meredith Poole, we have an on-line policy manual and administrative handbook. The manual and hand-book were not simple to-do's. They outline a delineation of governance and operations and support a deeper and developing understanding of the roles of educational leaders and directors in both governing and leading TAAPCS. The leadership of TAAPCS, like the leadership of any of our learning communities, is a collaborative affair requiring the best contributions of all parties involved. As we continue to gain experience with our structure, we will learn, streamline and shape it for greater effectiveness.

Our communications strategy had both deliberate and emergent progress. We again responded to a number of emergent communication challenges, which resulted in stronger internal and external relationships and clearer delineation of a single public charter school voice. Again our tireless Executive Director and volunteer Directors have moved our Google for Non-Profits site and website forward as critical elements of our deliberate internal and external communication strategy. These are significant breakthroughs for TAAPCS, which will continue to strengthen our voice.

Our research strategy continues its deliberate march with member schools all making progress within their charter areas and sharing that progress broadly. Notably, the new *Education Act* officially recognizes this attribute of the public charter system. As an emergent opportunity, we have been able to clearly request recognition and support for a continuing research mandate, which charter schools have accepted since the outset. With the new website design our communication and promotion of research will continue to strengthen.

Overall TAAPCS moved strongly in the past year. We are becoming an organization that resembles

its strongest contributors rather than one which depends on them. This year's Halvar Jonson and our first Board of Governors' Award winners exemplify the strength that has given TAAPCS the opportunities we now have. I am sure that you will all agree they are both quiet, relentless, passionate and capable leaders who get the job done, no matter what. They both exemplify the values of TAAPCS and what we stand for.

As we look to the coming year it is clear that succession and ability of our organization to learn will be a critical feature now and in the coming years. Educational leaders and lead administrators are shifting their focus from TAAPCS and education to other pursuits. As they take their well-earned next opportunities, their irreplaceable historical knowledge, confident capability, relationships and leadership will leave a space that TAAPCS must prepare itself to fill.

It is fitting to end this year's reflections with a profound thank you. To all the educational leaders and long service directors who have moved on in recent times, to our wonderful Executive Director Kath Rhyason and our resident get-everything-done and historical fountain of knowledge, Meredith Poole. Your patience, persistence and passion have made a difference to every public charter school student in some way and to all of your colleagues in TAAPCS. We will make sure your investment retains its value. Thank you all.

Message from the Officers

It has been a pleasure to serve as your Officers for the 2018-2019 school term. As we reflect on the year, we are amazed with the progress we have made as an organization. TAAPCS is really a group of outstanding volunteers who have led and supported all public charter schools and have ensured positive liaison with government.

This year, we have successfully re-structured our organization. We now have a high functioning Board of Governors moving the organization forward.

The Board of Governors and members of the Executive Advisory Committee have met with government. We believe we have legitimized who we are and what we bring to the table.

We are pleased with the positive communication we have had with the current government. We have examined the need for and the role of EAC. In the past, EAC had a very different role. Our discussion has led to the possible consideration of dissolution of EAC as it currently operates. One probable suggestion is to have Superintendents meet regularly and make recommendations to the Board of Governors. This is an area for consideration.

More than ever, we are optimistic about the future of public charter schools in the province of Alberta. We honour the uniqueness of each individual charter school and will continue to communicate the positive impact of public charter schools **with one voice**.

Sincerely,
Dale Erickson and Chris Gilmour

Reports of Committees

1. Awards and Recognition Report

The Awards and Recognition committee provides oversight for awards and recognition within the Association. In 2018-2019, with their guidance, we awarded three Halvar Jonson Awards. The internal Board of Governors' Award was not issued this year. Certificates of Appreciation were given to volunteers who provided leadership in the Association.

The 2018 TAAPCS Halvar Jonson Awards

As Minister of Education, the late **Halvar Jonson** played a huge role in the creation of charter schools in Alberta. To honour the important contributions of Mr. Jonson and other individuals who champion charter schools in Alberta, our association created an award in his name. This year, TAAPCS recognizes four individuals for their efforts to champion charter schools in Alberta: Richard Bird, Todd Hirsch, Warren Connell and Coleen Taylor. These committed champions have not only been strong advocates for individual charter schools, but have worked in systemic ways in moving forward the charter school initiative within Alberta.



Richard Bird has always been able to push the issue of charter schools being different than private schools – that they are, in fact, public schools. As we know, many people struggle to understand that charter schools are not private schools and should be treated like all other public schools. Richard has been excellent at breaking that down for a wide audience and getting a positive dialogue going.

Mr. Bird is exceptional in his unwavering support and fervent belief that the best educational experience for indigenous children is at Mother Earth's Children's Charter School (MECCS). He has given his own time and a significant amount of financial support, and has used his personal and professional influence to ensure that MECCS has the financial and human resources necessary to continue to provide a safe and caring environment where students can reach their potential.

Todd Hirsch and **Warren Connell** came together into a unique partnership to enable the development of Calgary Stampede Youth Campus and the creation of the unique partnership between Calgary Arts Academy and Calgary Stampede. This partnership, over a period of many years, facilitated the following:

- Vision of Calgary Stampede Youth Campus – celebrating Western Heritage and Culture, Education and the Arts.
- Lease agreement for the land and building known as the Weston Bakery between Calgary Arts Academy, Calgary Stampede, Alberta Infrastructure and Alberta Education.
- Formation of Calgary Arts Academy Foundation with the mandate to raise one million dollars towards capital costs for the renovation of the Weston Bakery.
- Renovation financing by Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure.

Todd Hirsch is Board Chair of the Calgary Arts Academy (CAA), serving the school for 7 years. Mr. Hirsch is a prominent authority on the economy, a well-known public official and author of three books. Todd is passionate about education and the Arts. He is a strong advocate for progressive change and believes Alberta has the potential to ensure a positive future.



Warren Connell is a true Calgarian who has worked in a variety of roles for the Calgary Stampede. As the CEO, he is passionate about making a positive difference for the local, provincial, national and international communities through celebrating and supporting Western Heritage and culture, education and the Arts. Mr. Connell studied the charter school movement during partnership development and supported Calgary Arts Academy as the Calgary Stampede "school of choice".

Coleen Taylor was a pioneer, both as a visionary and driver for the first Alberta public charter school, New Horizons Charter School (NHCS). Ms. Taylor drafted the bylaws for the original iteration of the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools, served as its first Chair and, as its key founding parent, was the first Board Chair of NHCS.

Ms. Taylor continues to support NHCS as noted by her participation in the 20th anniversary and the recent Grand Re-opening celebration. Ms. Taylor shared an amazing insight into what it took to establish a charter school in 1995. She dreamed of establishing a school for gifted children in Sherwood Park. New Horizons Charter School is the fulfillment of that dream. She and her husband, Ross, were instrumental in obtaining the first facility, renovating it to become a suitable learning environment, and staffing the school.



2. Board Professional Learning Report

The Board Development Committee is focused on creating opportunities for Directors to come together while also learning together. The plan is to have development sessions in both Edmonton and Calgary to make attendance easier while also providing opportunities to share the cost of the facilitator between boards.

The committee is currently engaging with boards that are bringing in facilitators for their own Board Development to assess potential sessions and potential facilitators. Our aim is to have a session in each city in late winter/early spring of 2020. More to come as plans firm up.

3. Communications Report

The Communications Committee oversees and provides input regarding the internal and external communication for TAAPCS. The communication committee has taken the lead for Strategy B, Communication. This committee meets regularly and proposes and delivers actions to enhance communication. A communication plan is under development.

4. Directors' Report

We are very pleased to report that the Directors' Committee has made great strides over the past year. At our AGM a year ago in Leduc, we discussed that we wanted to shift some of the work and engagement from the Superintendents to our base of Director volunteers. Our first attempt at bringing the group together was in February, when we convened a special meeting of Directors to accomplish several key tasks:

- Call out accomplishments to date
- Review our shared purpose
- Provide input on agenda items for the strategy session at the Spring General Meeting

Although we did not have attendance from all member schools, the input was helpful and provided a baseline for the Directors' portion of our agenda at the SGM on May 3-4. In that subsequent SGM in Calgary, we spent several hours in a strategic planning review, with the ultimate goal to:

- Increase Director clarity regarding the TAAPCS organizational structure, major association process and roles, and
- Develop alignment on two major strategic focus areas, regulation revisions and funding equity.

To meet the second objective, we asked for volunteers to flesh out committees for each of these. Response was excellent with a mix of Directors, at least one former Director, Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers coming together to work the details for ultimate lobbying to the new government. Each team met several times to discuss common positions and to draft messaging for collective review. A thanks to all participants (and apologies to anyone we may have missed):

Funding Equity Committee Members:

Roger Nippard (FFCA)
Dan Hanson (New Horizons)
Dale Erickson (Calgary Arts Academy)
Teresa DiNinno (CAPE)
Cole Jordan (Calgary Arts Academy)
Felix Amenaghawon (Aurora)
Gary Care (CGCS)

Regulatory Review Committee Members:

Don Falk (New Horizons)
Andrew Chu (formerly FFCA)
Joe Frank (Westmount)
Ken McNeill (Calgary Arts)
Boris Vidal (Suzuki)
Natalya Nicholson (CGCS)
Mohamed Salih (Almadina)
Marcy Dormer (Aurora)
Faruq Suleman (FFCA)

The great work by these two committees formed the basis of one summary letter expressing the TAAPCS position on a variety of key issues. This work was debated by participants from our member schools at a special meeting on May 27, and, after some final editing and polish, resulted in a formal letter which was sent to the new Minister of Education in early

June. Minister LaGrange did not take long to acknowledge our letter and soon after, Kath, Ron, Faruq and Gary were invited to the Alberta Legislature to meet with her and her staff. This was the start of excellent engagement which continued through the summer.

We feel great momentum has been generated within our Director team over the past year and we appreciate your support. We look forward to working with you all over the next year to advance our collective agenda.

5. Policy Advisory Committee - To be established in fall of 2019.

Strategy Update – Fall 2019

Our three strategy focus areas, governance, communication and research, effectively focussed available resources and human energy this year. Similar to most volunteer organizations, emergent strategy items with urgency made easier progress, while the less urgent deliberate strategy goals were challenging to rally volunteer resource time. We did make valuable progress on both deliberate and emergent strategies, however.

It is worthy of note that all of the emergent work which was strategic in nature easily fit within one of our deliberate strategies. This is another indicator that our three deliberate strategies remain appropriate.

The Governance strategy focus remains a healthy and necessary place for TAAPCS attention. Critical progress has been made this year in Bylaw execution, policy development and execution, administrative procedures, and the delineation and effectiveness of both governance and administrative leadership. This topic was a major item of discussion at the Spring General Meeting and excellent progress was made with the publishing of both a policy and administrative procedures handbooks. As TAAPCS continues to mature, the model of collaborative leadership will be essential to continue developing. It has been noted that the complex committee structure is hard for TAAPCS to maintain and streamlining committees may be a useful undertaking to improve governance and operational effectiveness.

Emergent work in the governance area was targeted on the new government's proclamation of the *Education Act* and associated regulations. This was extraordinarily important and signifies a new level of performance for TAAPCS in speaking with one voice. The new government was formed with remarkable speed and worked tirelessly over the summer to place in motion the revisions they felt required to service the shared Albertan education vision. The broad engagement scope, high volume of input and tight deadlines meant individual school voices were far less accessible to ministry leadership and administrative professionals. The speed and intricacy of the regulatory work required TAAPCS to contribute concise suggestions regarding complex regulatory matters. The officials who engaged us made it clear that our input was appreciated and important, and that their actions would be formed from aggregated feedback and policy direction promised by the government. The exceptional work done in May and June by our Director's Committee,

Superintendents, and Ex-Directors was invaluable in this process. Also of note was the representation of TAAPCS in the ongoing regulatory conference calls by our Executive Director, members of our Executive and Superintendents. It was a strong collective effort that moves us in the right direction toward a governance model, which is responsible, effective and agile.

Developing a broad base of involvement in TAAPCS will be critical to the governance of the organization as the turnover of long service educational leaders continues to grow.

The communication strategy consumed a large portion of the organization's capacity. As noted earlier we made significant progress speaking with one voice in the emergent governance work. We learned how to quickly develop a TAAPCS position on a given issue using our best thinking and experience through broad-based collaboration. This is a communication/collaboration practice that can serve the Association well over time if we develop capability to replicate this process.

Planned pre-election and post-election internal and external communication was carried out. The committee formed an *ad hoc* government relations group to focus on developing relationships, which helped to guide several meetings including both the Minister of Education and Ministry officials at key events.

We are attempting to respond more strategically to emergent media and communication needs. Developing proactive methods of communicating in media situations where we can be effective is important. Some unsuccessful interactions with media were experienced. Interview comments supplied by TAAPCS were not played on air, as we were led to believe, but rather supplied to virulent opponents of public charter schools. It is clear that we need greater sophistication in dealing with the media and the Communications Committee is addressing this.

The research component of public charter schools is now formally recognized within the *Education Act*. On several occasions we requested formal recognition for this in the funding methodology, given that public charter schools have been highly active conducting, using and sharing research within their charters. The website revision will showcase our three strategy areas. Research is intended to be a prominent feature of the website which will increase access to and acknowledgment of public charter school research. The research foundation is increasingly important as opponents of the public charter and choice in education model become more organized and assertive with their views. Much of the opposition to public charters is based on 'what-if' speculations, academic philosophy and underlying motivation to obtain a greater share of the scarce education resources. An active, vital, well-grounded and highly-communicated research capacity remains as one of the most essential features necessary for sustained public charter success.

Research Support and Promotion

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools supports and is actively engaged in innovation and research that occurs in our member schools and with our stakeholders from local to international.

Research Support and Promotion Committee:

TAAPCS has established a standing committee on Research Support and Promotion comprised of charter school administrators, practitioners, and researchers, as well as post-secondary and Alberta Education representatives that have included:

Dr. Eugene Kowch, Leadership Chair, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
Dr. Belina Caissie, Senior Manager, Research, Alberta Education
Dr. Cristian Rios, Faculty of Mathematics, University of Calgary

The Research Support and Promotion Committee's mandate is to provide support to charter schools endeavoring to do high-caliber educational research, and review and assist with the dissemination of charter school research within the broader educational community.

Alberta Research Partnership Program Projects:

Two TAAPCS member schools have successfully completed the first year of research projects as part of the Alberta Research Partnership Program.

Aurora Academic Public Charter School is undertaking a project entitled *Analysis of parents' perspectives on social connectedness as lived through their experiences in parent/teacher interview processes*. This research project includes partners from Simon Fraser University, the University of Alberta, and Edmonton Public Schools.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA) is undertaking a project entitled *Exploring the Global Competence (GC) of Teachers and Students: The Impact of Diversity, Classroom Pedagogies and Teacher Professional Learning*. This project is being completed in partnership with Golden Hills School Division, the International School of Macau, Calgary Regional Consortium, University of Calgary Werklund School of Education, and University of Alberta.

Additional Research Projects occurring in Alberta Public Charter Schools:

Almadina Language Charter Academy:

Partnered with the Reading Foundation to examine the *efficacy of "Discover Reading", a systematic reading program designed to introduce and provides strategies on how to decode and encode simple, complex and multi-syllable word structures*.

Partnered with Dr. Hetty Roessingh, University of Calgary, on several projects relating to efficacy of intervention strategies with ESL students.

Aurora Academic Public Charter School:

Established an Action Research program with its staff that has led to the publication of 14 research projects in two volumes of *Action Research - Community of Practice*, research journal compilations of Aurora and partner organizations research projects from 2016-2018.

Aurora is partnered with Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, and Edmonton Public

Schools investigating parents' perceptions on social connectedness and parent-teacher interview processes within their school contexts.

We are also partnered with the University of Alberta to compare *mathematics provincial achievement test (PAT) results and related longitudinal trajectories for 3 cohorts with a goal of identifying successful pedagogical practices* within Aurora Charter School that can be shared with other colleagues and stakeholders.

Boyle Street Education Centre:

During the 2018-2019 school year, BSEC was successful in obtaining a grant from the Alberta Education research partnerships program. The research titled "Exploring the Social-Emotional Strengths of Students Put at Risk" begins in September 2019 and will continue to May 2022.

As well, School Superintendent, Mavis Averill, initiated conversations with the Aboriginal Teacher's Education Program (ATEP) to inquire about having pre-service teachers in our school. This has resulted in being included in a research project starting in the 2019-2020 school year. The goals of this Project are to develop a mentorship relationship between Pre-Service Teachers and Mentor Teachers in secondary schools and to engage in research to understand the process. This project will investigate and document, Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (University of Alberta) pre-service teachers' and partner school mentor teachers' readiness for implementing foundational knowledge about First Nations, Metis and Inuit in secondary schools. This research is meant to inform the University of Alberta Faculty of Education and pre-service teacher training programs more broadly, about the learning needs and supports related to pre-service teachers' field practicums and teacher mentors' needs and response to professional learning.

BSEC Support Services team members researched the positive aspects of building a "Calming Room" in our school to serve the needs of students with high anxiety and heightened emotional responses. This construction was completed during the summer and is in use for this school year.

Calgary Arts Academy:

Participating in the University of Calgary Werklund School of Education Partner Research Schools *Leading and Learning* project.

Calgary Girls School:

Undertaking an empirical study to explore *how integrating coding into the K-12 curriculum, using gender-responsive pedagogy and a design for use approach, can attract and keep girls in STEM related studies.*

Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE):

Undertaking a 3-year research project investigates the *effectiveness of four types of mentoring strategies used by administration to increase teacher confidence and efficacy* in developing and delivering integrated learning experiences for students.

Connect Charter School:

Partnering with Mount Royal University to examine *The Impact of Outdoor Education on Executive Functions in Adolescence*, in a mixed methods research project exploring Connect Charter School's Journey to Experiential Place-based and Experiential Learning.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA):

Partnering with the University of New South Wales to examine Central Office Leadership that Works: Examining *how a common focus on collaborative inquiry facilitated the development of a cohesive central office leadership team and impacted school leadership* across our campuses.

Partnered with Mount Royal University to examine physical literacy development including a published study on *Enhanced Object Manipulative Skills Programming for Girls in Elementary School*.

New Horizons Charter School:

In collaboration with the University of Calgary and led by principal investigator Dr. Sal Mendaglio, an exciting research study entitled, *The Lived Experience of Parenting Gifted Children*, was undertaken during the 2018-19 school year. The study's purpose was to investigate the day-to-day experience of parenting a gifted child. And at the request of Dr. Mendaglio, the study will expand in the year ahead so as to include parents of older children. We look forward to receiving the results of this research study and believe that they will prove to be of significant value to the parents of students in our school.

Undertaking a study examining *how teachers might change individualized student learning to more collaborative student learning in a project-based learning context*.

Undertaking a study examining the PAT performance of students who have been accelerated up to two grades ahead in mathematics to see if gaps in their understanding exist at the time of writing which may be connected to their accelerated program.

Suzuki Charter School:

The research project involves a partnership between Suzuki Charter School, Calgary Arts Academy and the University of Alberta, and is proceeding on schedule. This is a five-year project (in year three) that explores the relationships between teachers and students within the context of teacher feedback. The Learning Errors and Formative Assessment (LEAFF) model is a learning and assessment model that provides simple and inclusive teaching practices to improve student-teacher engagement.

The objective of our SSHRC-funded research is to develop simple to use, evidence-based socio-emotional tools – curriculum materials, stories, assessments – that will complement and guide teacher-intuitions to help meet the socio-emotional needs of children in their math and science achievement. However, the vision for the project is larger - to develop a suite of engaging, simple and accessible, evidence-based tools to inform and guide parents and teachers in their pursuit of creating nurturing learning environments for children and adolescents. These preventive, research-based and tested tools could be promoted to parents, teachers, and schools in support of children and adolescents' health and development as life-long learners.

Valhalla Community Charter School:

Examining the *impact of implementing the Writing and Thinking Road to Reading* and Spelling program measuring the impact on the number of phonograms and words kindergarten to grade 3 students are able to read and write from dictation, and the volume and clarity of writing in personal stories, subject reports and written responses to questions about text.

Examining the *impact of the implementation of a cursive writing program in lower grades exploring the links between handwriting and reading* as well as the written expression of ideas with the intention of developing measures of note-taking effectiveness and capacity for immediate written expression of ideas in students in upper grades.

Westmount Charter School:

Exploring the *Linguistic profile of Gifted ESL Students* highlighting the linguistic and academic reality of the majority of gifted English as a second language (ESL) students enrolled in English schools in Alberta.

Researching an *Anxiety-based Psychological Intervention to Examine its Efficacy and Applicability with Gifted Children*: The purpose of this study is to better understand anxiety struggles in gifted students. This study will focus on application of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy to determine its efficacy in reducing anxiety symptoms in grades 4-7 gifted children.

Member Highlights



Almadina Language Charter Academy

Focus: English as a Second Language, K to Gr. 9

- Almadina serves 1,163 students and their families in two separate campuses. The Mountain View Elementary Campus serves Kindergarten to Grade 4 students, and Ogden Middle School Campus serves Grades 4 to 9. We are in the process of finding a suitable third school site to accommodate our current wait list.
- Almadina is the only public charter school that has an English Language Learner (ELL) mandate. We have an ELL focused approach, which ensures students are successful with the outcomes from the Alberta Program of Studies and the language outcomes contained within.
- Almadina is a leader in teaching students whose second or third language at home is English. All students are assessed to determine their language learning needs. We do pre-testing and post-testing for literacy and numeracy.
- Our schools include students from approximately 35 different countries. We serve students with many diverse first languages such as Arabic, Urdu, Kurdish, Somali, Punjabi, Oromo, Amharic, and French.
- We have been recognized time and time again for our excellent ELL programming and student performance. In August 2013, The C.D. Howe report named Almadina as one of the top twelve performing schools in the province.



- There is also a focus on digital citizenship throughout all grades. Both our Mountain View and Ogden campuses are developing computational thinking through our workshops with Kids Code Jeunesse (K.C.J.).
- We are collaborating with the University of Calgary in research focused on developing fine motor norms. This endeavor remains a major Almadina research project. Our intent is to publish this action research through a collaborative venture with the University of Calgary.



- Our teachers were also involved in publishing their work in the A.T.A. Accent journal and conducting presentations at the A.T.A. E.S.L. Specialist Council Conference.
- Almadina continues to use the Mariconda Writing Program as a structured writing program and focuses on system wide use of ELL strategies.
- We provide professional development for schools with considerable E.L.L. population. Their staff visit our schools to observe classes and debrief afterwards with teachers.
- The Wellness Empowerment Program (WEP) is a school-based project funded through Alberta Health and Wellness (Capacity Building) That supports mental health initiatives. The WEP program's new mandate focuses on capacity development amongst our staff members. The W.E.P program has evolved into a mental health team promotion model for the greater Calgary community.
- Our character education program plays a huge part in Almadina's success. Along with learning English, students also focus on universal values such as empathy, respect, acceptance, conscience and self-acceptance.



Aurora Academic Charter School
Focus: Traditional Education, K to Gr. 9

Aurora Academic Charter School is actively engaged in a provincially funded research partnership investigating parent perspectives for improvement of engagement and social connectedness within the culture of their schools. The research team consists of Simon Fraser University (Dr. Malcolm Steinberg



Principal Investigator), University of Alberta(Dr. Paul Veugelers and Dr. Nicole Ofosu Co-Investigators), Edmonton Public Schools (Dr. Owen Livermore Co-Investigator) and Aurora (Dr. Paul Wozny, Key Research Contact and Co-Investigator). A group of Aurora Mathematics teachers are investigating the efficacy of various mathematics resource supports and associated pedagogy in relation to student learning and achievement.

Aurora completed the construction of a new elevator to improvement accessibility and mobility of our students, parents, and staff. This is a valuable addition to our inclusive teaching and learning infrastructure and supports.



The enrolment at Aurora (Kindergarten to Grade 9) is at 872 students total with over 2500 students on the waiting list. Aurora hopes to grow to include high school programming in future and is currently hoping for access to surplus sites to accommodate this growth.

A new Aurora Elementary Entrance area of over 5000 square feet is currently under construction with an anticipated completion date of

approximately June, 2020. This new entrance will feature an innovative parent/student engagement area, along with a flexible work space, meeting room, work room, administrative offices, and multiple washrooms.

Our Aurora Science and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Team Lead Mrs. Amanda Joblinski and volunteer teachers are coordinating with multiple stakeholders across Canada the Edmonton Regional and Canada-Wide Science Fair for Spring 2020. This exciting and inspiring event will involve students across Canada along with support and presentations from University of Alberta and multiple advanced technology organizations along with many potential scholarships for students. Over 10,000 visitors are expected to engage in the Canada-Wide Science Fair which will take place in Edmonton at the Shaw Conference Centre and Expo Centre from May 9 to 15, 2020.



Boyle Street Education Centre

Focus: Youth put at Risk, ages 14 to 19

Trends

Our school has invested significant resources toward offering meaningful local measures. During the 2018-19 year, our school was able to demonstrate success in charter goals to a greater degree than ever before.

Provincial measures show that we have maintained performance levels in every measure. While there have been statistical fluctuations in some categories, these



measures suggest program stability and maturity. Local performance measures, however, go on to demonstrate an increasing trend of student engagement, retention, and academic success not represented in provincial measures.

Changes and Improvements

- Superintendent and staff developed a Joint Health and Safety Team at the school. Superintendent developed an OHS handbook, school completed a safety audit and many changes were made to make working conditions and environments safer for staff and students.
- Boyle Street Education Centre Board developed a new vision and guiding principles for the school during a Board retreat. These are:

Vision Statement

- Boyle Street Education Centre (BSEC) believes that all students have the capacity to learn. Our vision is to provide an integrated educational program that enables students to be their best selves.

Guiding Principles

- Our instructional practices and student support services are rooted in the belief that both well-being and learning are necessary components of a healthy student.



Calgary Arts Academy

Focus: Arts Immersion Curriculum, K to Gr. 9



August – September 2018

- “Storytellers” is the yearly theme – everyone has a story to tell
- CAA’s Fair Trade School designation renewed
- Annual welcome back pancake breakfast served over 1,000 CAA students, staff, parents and friends
- All CAA students participated in the annual Terry Fox School Run
- CAA partnered with Calgary Stampede in the Community Fall Fair which was open to the public

October 2018

- the gymnasium at the Education Centre was officially dedicated to the Werklund Foundation, a CAA friend, partner and supporter
- Mike Downie of the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund visited the Education Centre on October 23. Mr. Downie had seen the work that our Global Leadership Club did on the Reconciliation Bench and wanted to meet them.

November 2018

- Year 8/9 students present their production of William Shakespeare's Star Wars – Tragedy of the Sith's Revenge at Calgary Public Library's new central branch.



December 2018

- all CAA students, staff and the Adult Choir performed for a sold-out audience at the annual winter celebration at Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
- Education Centre students learn they won MusiCounts Passion Prize at CNC Music's Canadian Music Class Challenge. Their entry was the Arkell's "People's Champ" and featured the talents of all Education Centre students.

February 2019

- CAA's Knob Hill students joined the nation in supporting the anti-bullying initiative by creating a "sea of pink shirts."
- Touched by the students' entry of their song in the Canadian Music Class Challenge, The Arkells surprised Education Centre students with an appearance at a school assembly.

March 2019

- Calgary Opera visits the Knob Hill Campus and performed their "Nemorino and the Magic Potion."
- Year 8 and 9 students at the Education Centre wrapped up their Fashion Alchemy contract by designing, managing and presenting a runway show and expo. Along with a looping runway show that displayed student-designed/constructed outfits, they also presented their business and design plans to the community through multi-modal expo displays.



- "The Final Word", a Calgary Public Library art installation, was a collaborative art piece created by Year 6/7 students based on RayBradbury's novel Fahrenheit 451. The installation also featured an Augmented Reality (AR) interface to enhance the experience.

April 2019

- Year 8/9 students presented their original, curriculum-based play "Le Mirage" at Vertigo Theatre.

May 2019

- Crux climbing brought their portable climbing wall to both campuses, a favourite activity for all

June 2019

- Year 6/7 students created, managed and presented their TEDtalk inspired Innovative Young Inquiring Leaders Expo featuring guest speakers and student-led dialogue.
- CAA's Year 9 students participated in graduation ceremonies held at Boyce Theatre. Afterward, they enjoyed dinner at the Old Spaghetti Factory and an evening of fun at Loose Moose Theatre.



Calgary Girls School

Focus: Exceptional learning in a girl-centered, girls-only environment, Gr. 4-9

2018-2019 was a year of transition and change at the Calgary Girls Charter School. With a new administrative team to start the year, a new superintendent mid-year and a 'new' refreshed brand in the spring, it was a busy and invigorating school year at CGCS. The key focus on the Go Girls curriculum provided the foundation for engaging learning and leading.

Highlights of the Year included:

- School production of 'Dear Edwina'
- Completion of the outdoor classroom and performance space
- Renewal and relaunch of school branding
- Enhancement of the Go Girls curriculum across all grades

Issues and Trends of the Year included:

- Transition with school based and senior administration



Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE)

Focus: Personalized Integrated Program, K to Gr. 9



In January 2019, CAPE's new modernized facility on 5th Street SW in Medicine Hat opened its doors. We held our Grand Opening on June 12, 2019. Dignitaries from Capital Planning/Infrastructure as well as local jurisdictions were in attendance. Ron Koper, Chair of the Board of Governors of TAAPCS, was in attendance. Members of two families with long-term ties to our school were involved in our ribbon cutting ceremony. Parents, current and past Board members, and community members also joined our celebration.

CAPE is now in the process of finalizing the transfer of the building and the land from the Medicine Hat School District #76 to CAPE. CAPE is now owning its facility outright. This is an exciting new adventure for all those involved with CAPE.



Connect Charter School

Focus: inquiry and place-based learning supported by technology integration and outdoor/experiential education, Gr. 4-9

- Our partnership with the Tsuut'ina First Nations through the Partners in Place programing grew and strengthened. The collaborative focus is on 'Social Problem Solving Through Design Thinking'.
- Connect staff were invited to share our success stories and to present at: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference; we continued to have representation on the Elections Canada Advisory Circle of Educators; Connect Charter School has been recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for 2018-2021; Staff were also recognized as Apple Distinguished Educators; Staff were seconded to Mount Royal University to teach Education courses, extending our model of professional development.



- Continued commitment to working effectively and communicating clearly with our stakeholders
- Connect hosted the Peace Festival, which supports charities and good causes
- Students visited the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg

- Connect has successfully transitioned from Camp Sweet (established in 2002) to Camp Chief Hector. Outdoor, place-based learning continues to support and drive curriculum and learning experiences for all students



Foundations for the Future Charter Academy

Focus: Academic Excellence, Character and Leadership Development,
K-Gr. 12

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA) is a charter jurisdiction comprised of 4 elementary campuses, 2 middle campuses, and a single high school campus with the mission of providing a “safe and caring environment where academic excellence, character development, parental involvement and staff leadership are valued and fostered.” In September 2018, our enrollment reached 3508 K-12 students with a wait list of over 13,000.



FFCA experienced a number of significant highlights during the 2018-2019 school year including:

- ❖ Completing the development of a ten-year strategic plan entitled *Roots & Wings* which identified the goals of:



- PREPARING FUTURE-READY LOCAL AND GLOBAL CITIZENS AND LEADERS, and
- INTEGRATING WITH AND INFLUENCING LOCAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITIES, through the priority strategies of:

- EVOLVING & INNOVATING educational approaches and programs.
- Establishing and cultivating strategic PARTNERSHIPS.
- Accentuating and SHARING innovation and research.

- ❖ Completing the creation of two key frameworks to support the teaching and learning within FFCA:

- *Student Assessment and Reporting*
- *Inclusion*

- ❖ Publishing an article entitled *Placing System Learning at the Heart of System Leadership* in the CASS Connection magazine for school system leaders, highlighting our use of collaborative inquiry to build leadership capacity.



- ❖ Completing the baseline data collection in our Alberta Research Partnership Program funded study on *Developing Global Competencies* in partnership with the Calgary Regional Consortium, Golden Hills School Division, International School of Macau, University of Alberta, and University of Calgary.
- ❖ Holding a public rally at the McDougal Centre to celebrate the Alberta Government's approval to build our desperately-needed replacement high school.
- ❖ Earning a high school ranking in the top 5 of all Alberta high schools and as the #1 public high school in Calgary.



Mother Earth's Children's Charter School

Focus: Traditional Indigenous Teachings,
Pre-K to Gr. 8

MECCS continued to develop our partnerships as our method of sharing the things we do and learning about other aspects of society. Ongoing partnerships with Wildwood School in Grande Yellowhead and Academy at King Edward in Edmonton Public saw the inclusion of Suzuki Charter School this year. Students from each school traveled to learn about what makes the other schools special.



Other partnerships included:

To enhance our Fine Arts programming we established a multi-year partnership with HeartBeat Theatre from Calgary for a 3-day residency each year which includes our partner schools.

Spirit North was founded by Olympic and World Cup medal holder Beckie Scott and partner Laura Filipow, Spirit North works in more than 30 Indigenous communities across Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to introduce Indigenous youth to cross-country skiing. They did an 8-week orientation to cross country onsite with our students.



MECCS celebrated our 5-year partnership with David Bouchard – Canada's best known and successful indigenous author. His books are used as the focus point for our literacy program and cultural teachings.

MECCS grade 3-4 teacher Maxine Hildebrandt and her project partner Lisl Gunderman from Wildwood School in Grande Yellowheadl Division received

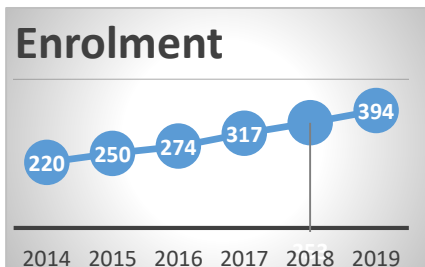
the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching at a special ceremony in Ottawa. These awards have been given out since 1996, and Maxine and Lisl joined an exclusive list of just 150 award recipients.

Facility Expansion: Having completed an \$8million major modernization during the 2017-18 school year, our school's capacity quickly proved to be insufficient to accommodate the demand for student spaces. As a result, we were awarded a new modular classroom under Alberta Education's Modular Classroom Program. A wet summer and fall delayed installation until October, with students finally moving into the new space in January 2019.



In anticipation of unabated enrolment growth, application for additional modular classrooms was submitted to Alberta Education in the fall of 2018. Unfortunately, the application was not successful, so the Board made the difficult decision to commit approximately \$475,000 from the school's capital reserve toward the purchase and installation of another modular classroom. Preparations for arrival of that classroom are presently underway, with installation expected during the fall of 2019.

Enrolment Growth: 2018-19 witnessed an 11% increase in enrolment over the previous year, marking the fourth consecutive year in which year-over-year growth has reached or exceeded 10%. With enrolment projected to increase by another 11% in the coming year, our school has doubled its enrolment over the past eight years, most of this occurring during the past four. We believe this to be due to the combination of strong support for our school's programming, the acquisition of a suitable facility, and a desirable location in Sherwood Park with proximity to Edmonton.



Program Expansion: In keeping with enrolment growth, expanded programming has also occurred. 2018-19 marked the completion of a multi-year initiative to add a second class to each of the elementary grades. In year ahead, we will add a second grade 7 class and will increase enrolments in both grades 8 and 9. During the past several years, we have also expanded our program of optional courses and extra-curricular activities for students.



And in order to address the social/emotional challenges that often accompany intellectual giftedness, counselling services have been expanded to the point that they exceed an FTE of 1.0 in the year ahead. The coming year will also see the formation of a Board task force to plan for the implementation of high school programming.

Leadership Transition: After more than seventeen years of service, long-time Secretary-Treasurer Fred de Kleine retired in December 2018 and, after seven years in the Superintendent's chair, Don Falk retired at the end of August 2019. Welcomes were extended to new Secretary-Treasurer Tracy Leigh and incoming Superintendent Dr. Dean Lindquist.



Suzuki Charter School

Focus: Suzuki approach to academic, musical and personal excellence, K-Gr. 6

Music Education:

All students prepared throughout the year for a full school concert at the Winspear Theatre to over 1000 people. The theme was music from the Romantic Era and celebrated instrumental, choral and dance.

Program Expansion:

Approval was received to expand programs to include a junior high program beginning in September 2020. Programs in the school (both academic and music) were adapted to embrace adolescent learning theory in existing grade six programs and in preparation for the addition of grade seven. A full option program has been developed with high engagement student activities in a wide variety of music, community service and fine arts areas of focus, and these will be piloted with grade six students in the



2019 – 2020 school term. A full day (three days a week) kindergarten program was developed in addition to the ongoing practice of a morning only program (five days a week). The full day program provides a favourable option for working parents.

An expanded FNMI focus integrating aboriginal stories, dance and music in the curriculum has been most successful.

Professional Development:

All faculty were engaged in skill development in the areas of brain-based learning, integration of the Fine Arts (music, dance and drama) in academic programs, mentorship between music and academic teachers, numeracy and literacy improvement, and teachers as educational researchers.



Valhalla Community School

Focus: Rural Leadership and Direct Instruction, K-Gr.9

VCS celebrated its 11th year of operation as a charter school in 2018-2019 and looks forward to many more years of providing quality education to rural students.

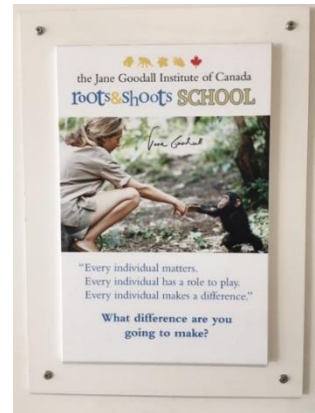
- As a function of our evaluation and renewal process, our staff have been developing a set of local standardized tests to assess and track the year-to-year progress and success of our students in core subjects. A unique locally-developed data base will enable staff to more easily understand, and improve upon, the strengths and challenges of our program.
- In September VCS hosted a multi-day drama workshop for all students by Missoula Theatre.
- In June our grade 5 and 6 students continued the tradition of a biannual trip to Jasper National Park for fun and leadership activities at the Palisades Centre.
- Also in June all VCS students engaged in a whole school field trip to a local recreation area, Spring Lake, to learn about and participate in environmental stewardship, science, and leadership activities.
- Students also experienced opportunities for service work both in school and out, including a road-side cleanup in the spring for the County of Grande Prairie.
- Continued with expanded leadership program including rotating student council (all junior high students have opportunity to experience membership and work in Student Council) and increased leadership/citizenship instruction and practice in all grades
 - o includes student planned, led and performed productions: Remembrance Day, Christmas, Spring Sing Talent Show, etc.
 - o service program partnering young student with older students for shared activities and help: e.g. paired reading, shared lunches, etc.
 - o Student Council planned and implemented programs such as School Spirit Days, in-school fundraisers, celebration activities.



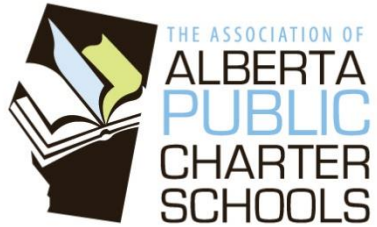
Westmount Charter School

Focus: Gifted Education, K-Gr. 12

- The 2019 graduating class marks the 1031st student to graduate high school at Westmount over the last 23 years.
- Four of our grade 11 and 12 students participated in a 2-day long Business Case competition at SAIT and won first place, earning the team an amazing cash prize! Their exceptional presentation and creative ideas scored rave reviews from the judges who were comprised of CPA representatives, SAIT grads and local business people. We are so proud of our Westmount students!
- Our Grade 9 to 12 Symphonic Band and our Grade 8 and 9 Senior Band at Westmount Charter qualified for MusicFest Canada Nationals for the upcoming school year. This is a tremendous accomplishment for our Music Program. It is very rare for a program to qualify for Nationals, let alone have two bands invited to perform in the same calendar year. This invitation was garnered from the successful results our ensembles obtained at festivals over the last two years. This is an extraordinary honour for our students at WCS. While the festival rotates across Canada, next year's Nationals will be hosted here in Calgary (May 2020).



- The Westmount junior girls' basketball team won their league championship after an undefeated season and our girls' team was also voted by the league coaches to receive the Sportsmanship award.
- The Westmount senior boys' basketball team won their league championship this year.
- Westmount is negotiating a partnership in gifted education with the Werklund School of Education.



The Last Word

I sit at my desk in rural Alberta east of Edmonton and celebrate the lines that tie me to 13 charter schools. They are pathways on the internet that are also touched by our hearts. I think of the excellent work that is happening for students, the respect and the joy in their accomplishments. I think of the parents so closely bound to their children's education. My belief is that parents are the first and forever teachers of our children and grandchildren. It just makes sense.

This is likely my final *Last Word* in our Annual Report. I am soon leaving the Association to try to retire. Hopefully 3 times is the charm.

I am very proud of our Association. Every year we have got better at becoming "director driven" and a representative for the 13 schools to government and others. Our superintendents are exceptional, proven leaders with the wisdom and motivation to help charter school students succeed. The Chair and Vice-Chairs, now and in previous years, have modeled the leadership the Association needs as a mature representative entity for our schools, their families and the school board directors. I have been privileged to serve these extraordinary individuals.

A final salute to Meredith Poole, first recipient of the TAAPCS Board of Governors' Award. In her own quiet way, Meredith was there at the birth of charter schools and has continued being our historian, conscience and motivator. She is passionate about charter schools. It has been a privilege working with her.

With this farewell, I wish the Association and its members student success, health and happiness as you grow and welcome the changes coming in the future.

Kath Rhyason