

Exemplifying Choice

TAAPCS Annual Report 2019-2020

December 10, 2020

www.taapcs.ca

“We continue to gratefully help shoulder the responsibility to increase the equality of opportunity for appropriate educational choices, for all Albertans. We continue to recognize the diversity and individuality of Albertans, and help to meet the future with engaged educational innovation within our dynamic learning communities.”

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 *Education Act*, and, as such, provide to parents and guardians a choice for their child(ren)'s education. Charter schools help Alberta satisfy the following statements from the Preamble of said *Education Act*: *"WHEREAS parents have the right and the responsibility to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children; WHEREAS parents have prior right to choose the kind of education that may be provided to 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.

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



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



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



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



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.capeisgreat.org
Offers: kindergarten to grade 9
Focus: personalized integrated program(s) just before kindergarten to grade 9



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



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



Foundations for the Future Charter Academy
#110, 7000 Railway Street SE
Calgary, AB T2H 3A8
Tel: (403)520-3206/Fax: (403)520-3209
www.ffca-calgary.com
Offers: kindergarten to grade 12
Focus: academic excellence, character and leadership development



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



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



Mother Earth's Children's Charter School
RR 1, Site 2, Box 42
Warburg, AB T0C 2T0
Tel: (780)702-7531/Fax: (780)848-2395
www.meccs.ca
Offers: pre-kindergarten to grade 8
Focus: traditional indigenous teachings



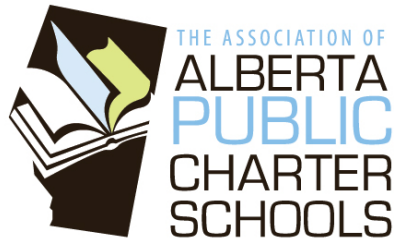
Calgary Girls Charter School
Unit C, 7239 Flint Road SE
Calgary, AB T2H 1G2
Tel: (403)252-0702/Fax: (403)252-0717
www.calgarygirlsschool.com
Offers: grade 4 to grade 9
Focus: exceptional learning in a girls-centered and girls-only environment



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



Visit us online at www.taapcs.ca



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 Annual General Meeting for the Association took place on October 26, 2019, preceded by meetings of the Superintendents as well as Charter Board Directors.

The Spring General Meeting was held on May 2, 2020, via Zoom.

Committee Meeting dates are detailed under Committee Reports.

Chair Reflections – Ron Koper



Since Alberta's incorporation a scant 115 years ago and no doubt for all time before that, there have been times when working together has been critical for Albertans. 2020, is arguably one of those times. The unique confluence of challenges has taxed everything and everyone inside Alberta heavily. Problems presented themselves with seemingly unprecedented sweeping scope, unyielding peril and urgency.

Fulfilling the promise of education in this period has demanded the very best from Albertan schools, teachers, parents and students. While struggling forward like all other Albertans, public charter schools moved through the year with a strength that exemplifies education in Alberta.

The 2019 bi-annual professional conference, Champions By Design, was prescient in its theme. The conference led our year off, happening almost concurrently with the 18-19 AGM. It was an extraordinary event, well organized, well attended, valuable concepts explored, research insights shared and important networking accomplished. This support for innovation and shared commitment to excellence in educational design happened just prior to one of the most uniquely challenging time periods in recent history. The timing was coincidental. What was not coincidental, but rather by design, has been the continuing excellent contribution public charter schools have made to Albertans over the last year.

As you review the reports of the Officers, Executive Director and each one of the schools, I hope you note both the extraordinary volume and quality of activity undertaken by members this year. Certainly, there were mistakes, breakdowns in communication and other problems associated implementing major structural and leadership transitions in a highly taxing year. We are deeply grateful to our prior Executive Director Kath Rhyason and our current Executive Director John Picard for their seamless transition and the invaluable continuity our association has enjoyed. In the context of the year we have all experienced, the association has performed exceptionally well.

Work done within our strategies continued to strengthen the presence of our association. We progressively promoted public charter schools as respected and respectful contributors to education in Alberta. The identity of public charter schools remains far from being accurately and fairly represented or assessed across the general public. Over the past year there has been steady progress toward that end with both targeted and general communication. We have worked hard and extended efforts to maintain relationships with other associations. As you will see in other reports we have been successful in some areas and less so in others. Those results are reflective of the wide diversity of thoughts and positions regarding education in Alberta. As association members, it's realistic to expect continual progress reinforcing the growing social identity of public charter schools. The expectation that public opinion in the near term either can or should be shifted to unified support of public charters, is beyond the mandate and investment level of our predominantly volunteer association.

Supportive and de-constructive views expressed about public charters schools have caused confusion, making it difficult for members of the public to form opinions grounded on facts and results. The

most vitriolic and well-organized attacks depend on misinformation and aggressive mischaracterizations of the deep history of positive outcomes public charter schools have contributed over the last twenty-five years. Our critics dogmatically foment fears using unrelated jurisdictions, rather than responsibly studying and reporting our successful Alberta reality.

Recognizing the rights of all Albertan individuals and groups to free speech and respectful discourse has been, and will be, central to association communications. Albertans who belong to public charter schools are socially just, absolutely not elitist or maliciously privileged. Public charter school families are representative of the diversity of all Albertans, appropriately, transparently and responsibly accessing public funds, for public education. Claims or characterizations contradicting the reality of who we are, are reprehensively and entirely false. Public charter schools welcome all concerned Albertans to actually visit the schools and the people engaged. Direct experience with any of our charter members will prove out the realities underlying the efficacy of the globally unique Alberta public charter system.

This year has been a tremendously validating year for public charter schools in Alberta. Our association expressed the greatly understated opinion that it has been a landmark year for education in Alberta. The proclamation of the *Choice In Education Act* was a milestone in the journey of progressive learning within the education system on behalf of all Albertans. The degree to which the Alberta system has maintained a consistent, transparent, responsible course for education, responsive to the needs of Albertans through changing political tides, is a distinguishing accomplishment. Even more remarkable has been the consistent pace and high quality of improvements in the education system over the last year, in the midst of social crisis. Contributing meaningfully to the discourse shaping education in Alberta has been both an opportunity and a challenge. It has called on the resilience, flexibility and humility of everyone serving educational needs of Albertans and on all Alberta families.

The education portfolio in Alberta is, and has always been, central to the sustained health of Alberta's economy and social structure. As the second largest portfolio in the Alberta budget it has always rightfully endured tight scrutiny and been subject to diverse viewpoints. While TAAPCS has not been successful in realizing all of our recommendations, we have been respectfully treated, engaged and heard. The importance of choice and engagement to education in Alberta has been declared. As Alberta's financial realities exert increasing pressure on education, public charter schools will struggle alongside all school boards and educational providers. We will continue to advocate for equitable treatment of our students. We also recognize that Alberta's unique educational history and broad involvement of Albertans will continue to shape education more effectively than any single interest can.

The opportunity to serve the educational needs of Albertans will always be conditional upon meeting the needs of Albertans, within the realities faced by the province. No part of the education system has been or ever will be, exempt from fully transparent accountability for its use of public funds and objective assessment of outcomes. Public charter schools are proud of their record in this regard. We continue to gratefully help shoulder the responsibility to increase the equality of opportunity for appropriate educational choices, for all Albertans. We continue to recognize the diversity and individuality of Albertans, and help to meet the future with engaged educational innovation within our dynamic learning communities.

Finally, it's important to express why the association maintains great optimism for the future. Looking outside, we've been recognized as a valid contributor. We have the support of a clear, aspirational Ministerial Order On Student Learning, responsibly evolving laws, regulations, policies and processes. We are seeing careful and progressive growth of existing charters and exciting new charters within the system. The initial panel recommendations for curriculum revisions signals updates that will help Alberta students excel.

Looking inside the association it remains clear our students stand on the shoulders of giants. The passion and wisdom to guide educational innovation, exemplified by this year's Board of Governors Award recipient Don Falk, is strong and growing. Leaders, teachers, engaged families and educational partners are all gaining in clarity and impact. Most importantly, spending any time at all with our graduates will confirm that in spite of the seemingly unprecedented anxiety concerning precedence, the future will be passing to people who exemplify our very best shared aspirations.

We can ask for no more than that.

Message from the Officers

The 2019-2020 school year has been incredibly active and demanding. We want to thank all of our stakeholders for their support for TAAPCS and look forward to building on our successes in the coming years.

Beginning with the transition from the School Act to the Education Act, followed by advocacy for equitable funding for all charter schools in the new funding manual, working through a pandemic and most recently participating in the weekly umbrella education partners meetings with our Minister on the re-entry to school plans, TAAPCS has increasingly been consulted and valued as a provincial partner in education. This represents positive systemic change for our organization.

As we await the new charter school handbook, the future of charter schools in Alberta is bright and full of optimism. Albertans value choice in education and with new legislation in place supporting choice in education, the voice of TAAPCS has never been more important.

We would like to congratulate the leadership team at New Humble who were recently approved to open Alberta's 14th charter school in the fall of 2021.

The collective diversity of charter schools and our mandates represent the strength of our purpose. Together, with one voice, we will continue to enrich and add value to the public education system in Alberta.

Finally, we would like to thank our Board of Governors, led by our chair Ron Koper, for their commitment to supporting our schools and our unique mandates.

Sincerely,
Dale Erickson
President

Chris Gilmour
Vice President

Message from the Executive Director

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools focus in 2019-2020 has been on partnerships and the growth and development of educational choice for parents in Alberta. Internal partnerships have been strengthened through streamlining of our committees and communications protocols. Externally, we have been in regular contact with the Minister and Alberta Education as well as our educational partnership stakeholders throughout the province, through which we gave input into the development of the *Choice in Education Act*, the new Funding and Assurance Framework, updated Charter School Regulations and the Alberta Education response to the Covid pandemic. Our growth as a recognized educational partner, exemplifying choice in the educational landscape in Alberta, has been notable and rewarding.

Partnerships and Choice

At the highest level of discussions and partnerships have been our meetings with the Minister of Education as well as the Deputy Minister of Education. Under the leadership of our Chair, Ron Koper, and as well as our President, Dale Erickson, we have had multiple verbal and written exchanges with the Minister and her team, and three formal meetings. Formal meetings were held on November 20 (in person) following which we were invited by the Minister to Question Period. Subsequent Ministerial meetings have occurred by Zoom or telephone on March 18 and September 1. Agenda items have included the *Choice in Education Act*, funding for charter schools, facility access, and elements of assurance and accountability. We are grateful to the Minister for the partnership in pursuing shared goals for education.

TAAPCS has participated in all consultation calls and virtual meetings with both the Minister and the Deputy Minister which have included all major stakeholders, from public and private school board associations, to the School Councils Association, CASS and the ATA. These consultations have been with respect to the new Funding and Assurance model, the Choice in Education Act, RSCD and Transportation consultations, and regarding the educational system response to the Covid pandemic, which has meant conference calls and virtual meetings on average every two weeks since March 15 of this year.

TAAPCS has provided quotes and press releases of our own in response to Ministerial initiatives including the new funding and assurance model, *the Choice in Education Act*, the new Regulations and decisions surrounding the response to the Covid pandemic, as well as the updated curriculum decisions.

Choice in Education Act

In November of this year TAAPCS (represented by Ron Koper, Dale Erickson, Chris Gilmour and John Picard) made a verbal presentation and presented a document to the consultation committee on the pending *Choice in Education Act*. As an organization, we have been pleased to see that our primary recommendations to the committee were included in either the Act or the Regulations. The updated Charter School Handbook is now pending. As a result of the greater openness to charter schools, TAAPCS has been providing support to the extent possible to a number of charter applicants, including the new Humble group approved for a new charter school in September 2021.

Funding

In February of this year, TAAPCS administrators and board members attended the announcement and explanation of the new funding and assurance model. While the model added some measure of Specialized Learning Support (SLS) funding for charter schools, the funding is far short of what is received by other jurisdictions. The perception that charter schools do not serve students with specialized learning needs is inaccurate, and we continue to work with the Ministry to demonstrate the extent to which our schools serve and support increasing numbers of students with special needs.

TAAPCS Committees

At the 2019 AGM, a proposal was approved to restructure the functioning of TAAPCS committees. This effort, undertaken largely by the Communications Committee in a series of monthly meetings from November to April, resulted in a series of streamlining proposals approved at the Spring General meeting and is reflected in Committee reports.

John Picard, Executive Director

Awards and Recognition

The 2019 TAAPCS Board of Governor's Award

Alberta's public charter schools have a long and successful history of innovative and effective practice. As important players on the landscape of public education, charter schools have played a pivotal role in providing choice to families in the education of Alberta's children. Today and during the past, the association has benefited from the efforts of many supporters from within our organization. The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools (TAAPCS) initiated the Board of Governors' Award to recognize and thank those from within the association who have given their time, energy, influence and expertise to enhancing the charter school promise.

Meredith Poole

Meredith has always been a strong advocate for quality public education. She embraced the notion of public charter schools long before most people even knew anything about them. Meredith invested her love of children, the belief in the importance of quality learning, her personal knowledge and her ingenuity in challenging our province to take a chance on Public Charter Schools.

Once this dream had become a reality, Meredith began her career with Foundations for the Future Charter Academy and in 2004 assisted in the resurrection of a professional association of these schools, now known as TAAPCS. She invested her many talents and great energy in making certain that the Association succeeded. She has been an organizer and member representative at meetings; she has been the Treasurer, the Secretary and the Secretary-Treasurer. In fact, she has been the "mom" for this organization. She has cared for it, nourished it and provided guidance for it for the past 15 years. No one will ever really know the extent to which she has given of herself in serving this



organization. In the words of a former colleague, she is a champion! “Thanks, kid! You’re the best!”

The 2019 TAAPCS Halvar Jonson Award

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 Jolene Kochendorfer for her efforts to champion charter schools in Alberta. Jolene has been not only a strong advocate for Valhalla Community School charter schools, but has worked in systemic ways in moving forward the charter school initiative within Alberta

Jolene Kochendorfer

Jolene has shown exceptional leadership in maintaining an educational institution in her community. She has become an eloquent spokesperson for the charter school movement and particularly the rural leadership program at Valhalla. She has made herself available over the years to speak to politicians, civil servants, educators, teachers and students, even though she is a busy farm wife, mother, grandmother, church worker and community volunteer.



Jolene was a leader in establishing the charter school at Valhalla Centre. The district public school board decided in February 2008 to close the school at Valhalla and transport the students east to LaGlace or west to Hythe. A group of parents decided this was unacceptable. Under the banner of the Valhalla School Foundation, a steering committee was established to explore alternatives with Jolene as co-chair. The charter school idea easily offered the best solution. Jolene attended over fifty meetings between February and September 2008 involving all aspects of school functions: governance, staff, funding, busing, student recruitment and so on.

With the help of Alberta Education staffers and Premier Stelmach himself, the charter was approved in record time. The 13th charter school in Alberta opened on September 2nd, 2008. Jolene was co-chair of the Valhalla School Foundation for two years then assumed the chair and stayed in that position for the next seven years having served three 3-year terms, the maximum term of service under the bylaws.

Under Jolene’s guidance, Valhalla Community School became a well-known entity in the West Peace and provided jobs and income to the area and assured the prosperity of a hamlet with a population of less than 100 persons. Jolene stepped down as board chair in 2017 but remains to this day keenly interested in all matters relating to Valhalla Community School.

Reports of Committees

The proposal at our 2019 AGM to approve a restructuring of TAAPCS committees resulted in a ‘streamlining’ proposal adopted at the Spring General Meeting in May of this year. Policy changes resulted in four committees being combined into one committee now known as the Priorities Committee. The Priorities Committee has met twice and is developing ways and means to meet their multiple mandates. In addition to these changes, the ‘Executive Advisory Committee’ became the ‘Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers Committee’ with a similar mandate but also facilitating open conversation and sharing amongst TAAPCS administrators. The Executive Committee was also formalized and has met twice since the SGM.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee was tasked with considering the restructuring/streamlining mandate, as well as important communication considerations connected to advocacy and the development of the TAAPCS website. Meeting monthly from November through May, the Communications Committee proposed four resolutions for policy and bylaw changes in relation to streamlining, and two documents for use in advocacy work and for posting on the website. In addition, the Communications Committee provided input and feedback for letters to the Ministry as well as press releases.

Priorities Committee

The formation of the Priorities Committee was the result of the streamlining efforts and the policy changes adopted at the SGM. The Priorities Committee has taken on the mandates of Communication, Board Professional Development, Policy and Awards and Recognition. The Priorities Committee met twice before the beginning of the new school year, and its primary work was to determine award winners from the 2019-2020 school year and develop a work plan for the coming year.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee was formalized and meets regularly to consider high level decisions proposed by the Executive Director along with the Priorities Committee and the group of Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers. The Executive Committee is composed of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Chair of the Priorities Committee, the four officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) along with the Executive Director. In addition to regular meetings, members of the Executive Committee have met with the Minister of Education on three occasions in the past year, and represent TAAPCS at meetings with the Deputy Minister as well.



Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers Committee

The Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers Committee has met numerous times over the past year. Meetings have been held in both scheduled and impromptu fashion to respond to the various initiatives of the Ministry and discussions and negotiations of concern to all charter schools. Through this Committee, chaired by the President, Dale Erickson, items related to the internal functioning of TAAPCS as well as common concerns and issues arising related to Alberta Education and schools are discussed regularly. Meetings were held October 25, November 22, January 31, April 23, July 30 and August 20. Items discussed included budgets and the new funding and assurance framework, input to the *Choice in Education Act*, charter school advocacy and permanency, the Ministerial Order and planning for the new curriculum, and throughout the spring and summer, the response to the Covid pandemic. All our meetings have been informed by the presence and input of the Field Manager for charter schools, Maurice Trottier.

Research Support and Promotion

TAAPCS has established a standing committee on research support, sharing, and promotion comprised of charter school administrators, practitioners, and researchers, as well as post-secondary and Alberta Education representatives that currently includes:

- ❖ Dr. Eugene Kowch, Leadership Chair, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
- ❖ Dr. Damien Cormier, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
- ❖ Dr. Belina Caissie, Senior Manager, Research, Alberta Education
- ❖ Dr. Paul Wozny, Aurora Academic Charter School
- ❖ Kurtis Lienweber, Foundations for the Future Charter Academy

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

Alberta Research Partnership Program Projects with Alberta Education

Two TAAPCS member schools are successfully engaged in collaborative multi-stakeholder research projects as part of the Alberta Research Partnership Program.

❖ Aurora Academic Public Charter School is engaged in a participatory qualitative research project involving analysis of parents' perspectives on social connectedness as lived through their experiences in parent/teacher interview processes in multicultural school contexts. This research project includes partners from Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, Edmonton Public Schools along with Aurora Elementary and Middle Schools. The final research report can be accessed online at: <https://www.auroraschool.ca/research-publications>.

❖ Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA) is engaged in 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 can be found on the TAAPCS website.

Member Highlights



Almadina Language Charter Academy

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

HIGHLIGHTS:

Student engagement as classes were cancelled:

- Continued high levels of student engagement online with our learning community
- Ongoing high interest in the school charter mandate with a lengthy wait list

Planning for school re-entry over July and August 2020:

- Planning for school re-entry, significant collaboration with all stakeholders and guidance of CASS and TAAPCS.

Board advocacy:

- Continued work on a proposal for high school to ensure continuity of support for E.L.L. students
- Ongoing consultation with Alberta Education to advocate for support of E.L.L. students and additional facilities to house our increasing demographic

New school year:

Presently, we serve 1,215 students. We have a waitlist of over 500 students.

- Successful re-entry with a staggered start for our learning community
- Creating of first ever online learning programming for our E.L.L. student population and families
- Ongoing evolution of digital tools to improve learning (SeeSaw, GoFormative)
- Continued to administer S.L.A.s at Grade 3 level, to inform student learning
- Collecting feedback from stakeholders on budgeting with federal pandemic funding
- We have increased our interactive educational programs and apps, such as Mathletics, Nearpod, GoFormative, Screencastify, Brainpop, Kami, etc...
- Our substitute teachers will be provided with tutorial sessions to enable them to sub for our online teachers in an efficient and effective manner. Sessions will include access to Google

Classroom, GoogleMeets, Zoom, Seesaw, etc... Such training will enable our substitute teachers to co-host and conduct online classes successfully.

Research projects:

- Partnered with the University of Calgary (Dr. Brandon, Dr. Brown and Dr. Parsons) and the Government of Alberta. *Optimum learning for all students: Implementing Alberta's 2018 Professional Practice Standards: A longitudinal, mixed methods research study.*
- This is a 4-year longitudinal study, to assess, deepen and extend the implementation process for Alberta's three professional standards: the Teaching Quality Standard, the Leadership Quality Standard and the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard.
- Action research project exploring word study with English language learners.
- Action research project focuses on exploring how learning the language of social and emotional well-being might impact classroom learning.
- Action research project in K.G. to support the development of phonemic awareness through implementation of a multisensory program focusing on oral, kinesthetic cues and sound manipulation.
- Action research project to how to develop a focus on numeracy within an E.L.L. focused charter school setting. Information gathered will contribute to the creation of a professional learning plan in the future
- Partnership with the University of Calgary: How does a flipped classroom support ELL students in meeting learning outcomes in grade seven math?
- Creating a Girls-Only Student Lead Coding Club Model for Community-based Peer-to-Peer Learning-Partnership with Kids Code Jeunesse (KCJ)- How can a girls-only student lead model be developed, made up of an underrepresented group in technology, to impact their community by using the power of peer teaching to teach other kids how to code with micro:bits
- The Numeracy Learning Coach will conduct an action research on how Math Intervention/Programing Instrument (MIPI) assessment will impact students' numeracy learning over the 2020-2021 school year. The project started Sept. 2020 for all grade levels in the school (grade 5-9), Online and In-school students and will be implemented at the end of the school year, in June 2021.
- Administration will attend the University of Calgary Research Partner Schools webinar on October 19th, 2020 to discuss future research projects



Aurora Academic Charter School

FOCUS: Traditional Education, K to Gr. 9

HIGHLIGHTS:

The current enrolment at Aurora (Kindergarten to Grade 9) is 833 students, with over 2600 students on the wait list. While our Aurora Charter includes provincial approval to offer Kindergarten to Grade 12 programming, our current facility does not support the addition of high school programming. We hope to expand to include high school students and are therefore actively seeking facility space. We look forward to continued support in this quest for our students, parents, staff and community stakeholders.

Our Aurora teaching and learning team is actively engaged in research and evidence to inform policy and practice. We publish our school-based and collaborative action research projects on our school website to allow for sharing, dissemination, and use of our research with colleagues and stakeholders.

Our research partners include the University of Alberta, Simon Fraser University, the University of Calgary, Alberta Education, Alberta Teachers' Association, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and numerous school divisions and universities/faculties.

Our Elementary Wing was recently renovated to include an Elementary entrance area. This renovation design includes a large foyer area for improved parental access and engagement along with upgraded Elementary administration and support team facilities. This addition will also include a flex staff/conference room to allow for increased collaboration and consultation with students, parents, staff, and stakeholders. The new office will provide a dedicated space for collaboration with Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, and Registered Psychologists currently providing support to our students as part of our recently expanded services for students.

The summer of 2020 saw a transition in leadership as Dr. Dale Bischoff, Superintendent, Dr. Paul Wozny, Deputy Superintendent, and Holly Macagno, Secretary-Treasurer retired. We are thankful for their dedicated service, and wish them well in this new chapter of their lives.



Boyle Street Education Centre

FOCUS: Youth put at Risk, ages 14 to 19

HIGHLIGHTS:

September 2019 was a very different world than the one we are in today. September 2019 found us in a very good situation with excellent student numbers and an engaged staff. The school year, however, was to prove very challenging.

We continued with our two research projects with some student interviews taking place in September and October regarding student resilience. Our ATEP student teacher and our two mentor teachers connected to this program started their course work at the U of A in Indigenous Studies. They developed course work together which served two functions: one as a requirement for the course and the other to offer Indigenous experiences in the classroom to our students. Our ATEP student teacher started with us just prior to the pandemic closing schools.

We continued to research land-based learning opportunities for our students. All staff used new professional development documents based on the new TQS to develop their own learning plans for the year.

Our 15-year Charter renewal application was successful. This was cause for celebration but unfortunately the pandemic has caused us to postpone this.

In the first week of January, we hosted a ministerial visit that went really well and one that allowed us to share our voices regarding the importance of public education, stable funding models and how being a charter school allowed us to develop a model that truly embodies what a public charter school was envisioned to be - a place where people who are not served by the mainstream school system can access learning and thrive in their lives.

In the second week of January 2020, we had a water main break which damaged our whole main floor of our school. We had to cancel classes for a short time in order to repair the damage which was extensive. We moved all operations to our second floor and learned how to utilize all of the spaces available to us in order to continue to offer classes. We had a second closure due to an unfortunate incident during the recovery phase of our water main break. We had only been truly operational on both floors for approximately one week when AB ED closed all schools because of the pandemic. Thankfully, days before AB ED announced school closures, we were able to hold our annual Staff vs Student hockey game.

After the school closure, as in all school communities across the province, our staff had to find new ways of teaching and of reaching out to our students to make sure they were emotionally safe and capable of carrying on with their learning programs in a virtual world. This resulted in new partnerships as the one which was created with a food service delivery company, Fresh Routes. This enabled us to not only deliver lessons but also to make sure that our most at-risk students still had food through the pandemic. This partnership is continuing in this school year.

This challenging school year was stressful for our whole community, our staff, our students and our wider school community. That we have all come through these events with cohesion and resilience is a testament to the strength of our community. We are still in recovery, but we are moving forward. The lessons we learned through our school closures of last year has enabled us to look differently at our learning spaces and has helped us through this time of safely offering school to our students during a pandemic.

During this year, school Superintendent developed a new Policy Handbook for the school as well as an Administrative Handbook to support the school in updating outdated policies and ensuring that we have procedures to guide the school through the daily decisions of a school jurisdiction.



Calgary Arts Academy

FOCUS: Arts Immersion Curriculum, K to Gr. 9

HIGHLIGHTS:

August – September 2019

- CAA announced its yearly theme of “Magic Happens When ...” which celebrated the learning that happens when an individual goes outside their comfort zone
- CAA School Council hosted the annual Pancake Breakfast at the Knob Hill Campus. This event was open to all CAA families
- All CAA students participated in the annual Terry Fox School Run on September 26

October 2019

- Year 3 students welcomed Kindergarten students to CAA in the annual Rose Ceremony on October 2
- Year 2/3 students hosted their culinary arts experience “Le Deux Trois French Café” on October 10 at the Knob Hill Campus
- Elementary students enjoyed a fun filled afternoon/evening at their annual Halloween Monster Mash on October 23
- CAA hosted TAAPCS Convention – October 24 and 25 – over 450 people at CAA’s Education Centre at Stampede Park
- As a component to their “Mural Mayhem” learning contract, Year 6/7 painted a movement piece on the old Penguin Car Wash in Inglewood

November 2019

- CAA Year 4/5 students presented their showcase “One Miserable Day” on November 1
- Year 8/9 students presented their showcase “William Shakespeare’s Star Wars: The Force Doth Awaken” on November 6 at Victoria Pavilion at Stampede Park
- CAA’s Knob Hill Spirit Club held a fundraiser for the Veterans Food Bank
- All CAA students paid respect to our heroes on November 8 in their annual Remembrance Day Assemblies
- On November 22, our Knob Hill Campus hosted Hot Chocolate Day, a fundraiser to help save walruses

December 2019

- CAA’s “Mitten Tree” campaign began on December 2. All donations were given to those in need
- CAA’s annual winter celebration titled “Magic Happens When ...” took place at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium on December 6. All students performed to a full house of over 2,000 people

January 2020

- Elementary students’ Spirit Club hosted a “wear red day” during which students were encouraged to do two random acts of kindness
- Alien In-Line Skating visits the Knob Hill Campus January 13 to 17
- Rocktagon Climbing Wall visits the Education Centre on January 13 to 17

February 2020

- Kindergarten and Year 1 students present their “Pop Up Art Gallery” at the Knob Hill Campus
- Year 6/7 students presented their showcase titled “Colours of Music” on February 12 and 13
- CAA students participated in Pink Shirt Day on February 26
- CAA received approval from Alberta Education to offer a high school program

March 2020

- CAA hosts a high school information session for interested applicants on March 2
- Year 8/9 presented their showcase titled “CAMP” at Vertigo Theatre on March 4 and 5
- CAA hosts the Fairtrade Conference on March 12
- CAA classes cancelled (along with all classes in Alberta) on March 15 due to the pandemic
- Adult Choir cancelled
- Year 4/5 students were excited to work on their contract titled “Shadows, Strings and Other Things” which involved the creation of their own puppets
- CAA “soft” launched our online learning program on March 25, and online curriculum delivery began on March 30

April 2020

- CAA students, parents, and staff settle into online learning

May 2020

- CAA staff release their music video “Nowhere with you” which was dedicated to the students at CAA, specifically how much we missed seeing them in person

June 2020

- Year 3 students hosted an online talent show and released the video to families and friends
- CAA School Council created and released their own “Nowhere With You” video, featuring CAA parents, and dedicated it to CAA staff
- Year 9 students celebrated graduation on June 5 using online live and recorded Presentations

Cancelled due to pandemic:

Year 2/3 Showcase – Comic Con Adventures

Year 4/5 Showcase – Small Town

Year 6/7 IYILX Conference (Inspired Young Inquiring Learners eXchange) CAA Adult Choir practices and performances



**CALGARY
GIRLS
CHARTER
SCHOOL**

Calgary Girls School

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

HIGHLIGHTS: 2019-2020 was a very successful event filled year.

Student Services - With a prescient sense of learners’ needs, a new student services model, focusing on the social and emotional wellness of students, was developed and implemented in 2019-2020. The

development of staff capacity in this realm was shepherded by the new administrative team at CGCS in partnership with the newly hired Child Development Advisor.

Infrastructure – With the Provincial Emergency Maintenance and Renewal Funding, at both campuses, CGCS was able to use the provincial funds to begin the replacement of boilers, installation of touchless bathroom fixtures and replacement of all exterior doors to elevate safety. As well, a new universally accessible ramp was installed at the Lakeview campus.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing – CGCS partnered with Chantal Chagnon, a strong, female, indigenous, thought leader, to work with our grade four and five students and staff throughout the year. The partnership with Chantal will continue into the next school year as well.

Technology – Engaging with parents and local industry and academic experts early in the year supported new policy development. The Board Technology Committee partnered with experts, Drs. Barbara Brown and Verena Roberts of the University of Calgary, to help draft a new Technology Policy.

Pivot to at Home Learning – The pivot to emergency at home learning was virtually seamless. Our students' strong technology foundation and familiarity with Google Classroom helped to more effectively facilitate the shift to at home learning during the school shut down.

Administration and Leadership - A new school administrative team took the reins in August with principal, Dani Sever, and vice principal, Jenelee Jones, joining incumbent vice principal Marlene Vazquez. New superintendent Pamela Davidson also joined Calgary Girls Charter School in August 2019.

Board Development – As part of the professional learning plan, and commitment to continuous improvement, the Board of Directors engaged with Becky Kallal to renew and bolster understanding of Board Governance. Partnership with Becky will continue in the new year.



Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE)

FOCUS: Personalized Integrated Program, K to Gr. 9

HIGHLIGHTS:

During the 2019-2020 academic year the CAPE Board of Directors has finalized the transfer of its facility on 5th street in Medicine Hat from the Medicine Hat District #76 to CAPE. We have also completed the work in returning the Balmoral site to its original condition to the satisfaction of the lease board, MHCBE. We therefore no longer have any affiliation with the MHCBE. CAPE is now the only charter school to own its facility and the land on which it sits. The CAPE Board of Directors, supported by TAAPCS, has been working with the ministry and Capital Planning to secure IMR funding.

COVID has thrust us into a new reality that has and will continue to confront us all for some time. It has pushed us towards in-school, at-home, and blended learning options as we support each of our students and their families. In spite of the fact that we have had one-on-one computing for our grades

4-9 students and staff has utilized the technology as a teaching tool for many years, quickly adapting to online options has been a huge learning curve for everyone. Online learning increased teacher stress and significantly stretched administration capacity to support teachers but also build staff capacity in the use of a variety of online tools. Different platforms for meeting, teaching, and collecting proved difficult for parents and students between March and June 2020. This experience has impacted our program delivery for the 2020-2021 academic year.

A CMR \$600,000 grant allowed us to address facility challenges that plagued CAPE since moving into the modernized facility. We repaired the roof, are about to complete the replacement of our parking lot and we have completed the replacement of our HVAC. The complete failure of the mechanical system in early July 2020 forced a delay in our re-entry, September 8, 2020. We also contemplated returning to online learning until the system was replaced. This proved very unpalatable for many parents. However, a workable temporary solution allowed us to return to face-to-face learning. The response of the many people working on replacing that system was awe-inspiring as we worked together to bring back our students in a safe, face-to-face environment. The rapid supportive response from the ministry and the Minister also needs to be acknowledged.

In response to the mandate to share innovations with the broad education system, CAPE has published several articles in the last few years. During the 2019-2020 year CAPE published two articles on the CASSCONNECTION entitled *Personalized Programming and Equity* (Fall 2019) and *A Culture of Mutual Support* (Spring 2020).

In 2019-20 we saw a 25% increase in our enrolment, from 200 to 250 students. We opened one new teaching space. 2020-21 saw a more modest increase, 8% or 20 students. Again, we opened another teaching space. Our current facility accommodates 344 students. Therefore, we are looking forward to welcoming many more students to CAPE.

CAPE reviewed and amended its charter to more accurately reflect the current environment. We removed the reference to the Second Language Program since we suspended this program as of April 2020. It was no longer viable or relevant. We also eliminated the reference to our cap since references to enrolment caps were repealed from the Charter Schools Regulation.



Connect Charter School

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

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Connect Charter School board implemented the Exemplary Governance Framework during the 2019-2020 school year. This framework aligns with the school's exemplary learning, teaching and leadership framework and the Professional Practice Standards provided by the Ministry. Collectively, they guide our staff to help prepare our students as extraordinary citizens, teaching through a disposition of inquiry.

Connect Charter School was identified as a top achieving school in the province with the lowest funding per student. A new experiential learning opportunity for all Connect students took place at Camp Chief Hector in the Kananaskis region, where students participated in multi-day outdoor curriculum-focused learning opportunities. The school's three-year technology plan introduced single-sign-on technology-based platforms that empower and engage students, teachers and parents in the learning process. As an Apple Certified School with an Apple Distinguished teacher, students at Connect were immersed in technology focused on expanding and enriching their learning environments. The Connect parent community continued to engage with classes and to be supportive of a variety of unique learning opportunities at the school and off-site. Connect hosted a charter school administrator leadership day, focused on emerging charter school challenges and opportunities.

As the pandemic struck the world in the spring of 2020, Connect's emergency online learning plan quickly transitioned our staff and students from at-school learning to at-home learning opportunities that included daily synchronous classes with reduced class sizes. Individual supports were provided to students by our Educational Assistants online and ensured students were engaged. Despite unprecedented universal challenges, the continuity of instruction remained a focus point for everyone. Our first drive-by grade 9 graduation ceremony took place where students were recognized for their accomplishments.



Foundations for the Future Charter Academy

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

HIGHLIGHTS:

Even with the abrupt cessation of ‘normal’ operations because of the COVID pandemic, FFCA experienced a number of significant highlights during the 2019-2020 school year including:

- ❖ Initial implementation of two key program frameworks to support the teaching and learning within FFCA: Student Assessment and Reporting & Inclusion
- ❖ Completion / revision of two additional draft program frameworks to support the teaching and learning in-line with our charter: Distinctive Teaching and Learning & Technology Integration
- ❖ Development of an educational intervention program for implementation as part of 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
- ❖ Successful implementation of emergency at-home learning for over 3600 students during the cessation of in-school classes due to the COVID pandemic
- ❖ Preparing to split our high school campus into two sites (one north and one south) for the start of 20-21
- ❖ Preparing to deliver an online learning program for over 700 students as part of Alberta Education’s COVID re-entry mandate

- ❖ Earning a Fraser Institute Alberta elementary school ranking in the top 5% of all Alberta high schools and as the #1 public high school in Calgary
- ❖ Earning a Fraser Institute Alberta high school ranking in the top 3% of all (public, private, and charter) 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

HIGHLIGHTS:

Undoubtedly, our biggest highlight this last year was achieving full ownership of the school and property by our Friends of Mother Earth Education Foundation on January 1, 2020. Between FOMEF and the Ptarmigan Foundation we were able to pay down the mortgage to a point where the mortgage holders Company of the Cross agreed to waive the final \$1.2 million mortgage payment.

The next biggest highlight was having our charter renewed for another 5 years.

Along with everyone else, this last school term has been and continues to be unlike anything we have seen before. There were important highlights prior to everything changing and ongoing challenges since then.

We continued to develop our partnerships as our method of sharing the things we do and learning about other aspects of society. To enhance our Fine Arts programing we continued our multi- year partnership with HeartBeat Theatre from Calgary for a 3-day residency each year in order to expose our students to various aspects of theatre as part of a drama program.

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 were doing an 8-week orientation to cross country skiing onsite with our students prior to schools being closed. As a bonus to the partnership, Leah Reid Program Leader came out to the school this fall to do a weeklong session of outdoor games with the students.



New Horizons Charter School

FOCUS: Gifted Education, K-Gr. 9

HIGHLIGHTS:

Board Advocacy

The Board's Public Relations Committee worked on its advocacy plan to support New Horizons Charter School. As they note in the plan, our school provides an exceptional congregated education program that recognizes that gifted students possess unique educational needs. The plan identified work critical in supporting our school's continued success including recognizing enrollment expansion, equal opportunity funding and continued work in gifted education research.

Enrollment Growth

New Horizons School continues to see enrollment growth as we continue to expand to two classrooms of each grade. We welcomed a second grade eight class in 2020-21 and have one more year of planned expansion as we increase to two classrooms of grade nine for the 2021-22 school year. This will complete our K-grade 9 expansion and will enable our board to focus on our planned expansion to include a high school in the future.

Our school's facility capacity is at 118% and our Learning Commons is currently being used as a classroom. Our Board is advocating with the provincial government and is actively seeking two additional modular classrooms to support our enrollment.

Funding model

The Board, through its advocacy work, supports the newly designed provincial funding model. However, the challenge the Board faces is how the funding model is operationalized and the resulting impact on school operations. The Public Relations committee is continuing its advocacy on equal opportunity funding to emphasize the importance of government funding programs equitably across the province.

Pandemic Planning

The Board implemented a successful relaunch of in-classroom learning in the 2020-21 school year. This relaunch involved significant online engagement with parents and staff at the end of the 2019-20 school year and through the summer of 2020. The result was the development of a re-entry plan that addressed many of the concerns parents identified as well as addressed provincial requirements to support re-entry to school during the pandemic.

COVID-19 has impacted how we operate our school and as a result our teachers are offering both in classroom and at home learning for students. It has been a challenging year to date, but our teachers and support staff have risen to the challenge. It is so good to have our children's smiling faces back in our school again.

Federal funding was provided to school authorities to support the expenses incurred by school boards as they implemented re-entry plans for the 2020-21 school year. Federal funds were appreciated as they covered additional staffing costs and personal protective equipment for students and staff.

CMR stimulus

A good news story coming out of the pandemic is the Alberta government's CMR stimulus funding provided to school authorities. NHS benefitted from \$500,000 to improve our school and campus capital and maintenance program. Included in the improvements was significant work on our parking lots, sidewalks, storage facilities and building security.

This work, although conducted during a very busy time, has assisted us in ensuring the maintenance of the facility is current and up to date.

Research

Ongoing research is also an important element for our school. We continue to work with graduate level students as well as with the Werklund School of Education as a Partner Research School. However, the current pandemic has made focus on research difficult. We are working to determine how to complete planned research during the current year.

Over many years, staff at NHS have worked with Alberta Education and university partners and researchers to complete research in the following areas:

- Research Report on Gifted Education (L. M. Sabatini, PhD)
- Individual Pursuits as Project-Based Learning (J. Dinel and L. Vigfusson)
- PASS Theory of Intelligence (M. Abougough)

Leadership Transition

In the spring of 2020, we had the good fortune to have Patti Dundas join our charter school as Secretary Treasurer. Her leadership and understanding of school system finance has been appreciated with the many changes our school faces with the current pandemic.



Suzuki Charter School

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

HIGHLIGHTS:

Music Successes

All division two students participated in the CBC Canadian Music Class challenge which is a national competition for music performance by school aged children and celebrates Canadian music. Suzuki students placed in the top ten nationally in four different categories.

Enrollment and Growth

The 2019 – 2020 school year celebrated the highest student enrolment in the history of school with a total of 335 students. Interest by new families to join the school continued to be strong with over 175 people attending information sessions and participating in the school lottery for available spaces.

Expansion of Programs

Plans were finalized for the first grade seven class of students to begin in September 2020. A rich program of academic and music opportunities was developed, and orientation activities were held throughout the year to prepare grade six students for the grade seven program.

Funding Re-structuring

The Board was faced with significant challenges to address significant provincial budget cuts in the fall of 2019 and engaged in a variety of strategies to balance the budget while not reducing services to students or significant changes to instructional programs. The Board was committed to continuing its advocacy on equal opportunity funding to emphasize the importance of government funding programs equitably across the province. Several revenue generating options were investigated and expansion of out of school programs (fee for service) as well as applications for community grants formed part of this process.

Pandemic Planning

Significant planning was undertaken in mid-March and April to develop an effective home learning program when schools were closed to students. In particular adapting the school music program to a home learning approach involved innovation and creativity by school administration and faculty and resulted in being considerably more effective than originally anticipated.

Plans for school re-entry (for all scenarios 1, 2 or 3) were completed by mid-July and shared with parents and students on July 31. This relaunch involved significant engagement with parents and staff through the summer of 2020. The result was the development of a re-entry plan that addressed

many of the concerns parents identified as well as addressed provincial requirements to support re-entry to school during the pandemic. School administration placed orders for personal protective equipment early in the summer and plans for adapting the facility to be as safe as possible for September re-entry were completed mid-summer and included plans for a combination on site and at home supported learning programs for students.

CMR Provincial Funding Support

The school submitted a request for major improvements to the facility including replacement of an aging boiler, roofing, windows, entry ways , and washroom facilities. The submission resulted in support for 2.4 million dollars of improvements. A partnership with Edmonton Public School was confirmed and an agreement to work with Edmonton Public personnel was confirmed with on-site work to occur in the 2020 – 2021 school year.

Research

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 SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) 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. All data collection was completed in the 2019 – 2020 school term. Data analysis and conclusions are underway. The School and U of A were invited to share the project with all participants at the annual Alberta Research Network gathering.



Valhalla Community School

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

HIGHLIGHTS:

This past school year has seen two major initiatives in Valhalla Community School. The first has proven to be a timely move ... the set up of Google Classroom for VCS students. Initial setup of Google Classroom and staff training took place shortly prior to the closure of Alberta schools due to COVID in March 2020. Having this resource in place allowed our teachers and students to

continue programming through the shut down, and was key to VCS being able to offer an “At-Home” learning option to students and parents with the resumption of school in September 2020.

This past year also saw a new focus for Valhalla Community School. We have incorporated an outdoor/environmental studies component into our charter’s Rural Leadership program.

Students are given background into skills that assist them in living and working in natural settings. The school’s location, being close to the green area of northwestern Alberta, is a great asset in moving this curriculum objective forward.

All stakeholders have reacted favorably to this movement, and we have received grants to assist in curriculum development and capital purchases.



Westmount Charter School

FOCUS: Gifted Education, K-Gr.12

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ For the third consecutive year, one of our grade 12 students will serve as a member of the Minister’s Youth Council (2020/21)
- ❖ Elementary teacher, Ms. Christine Avey, is the recipient of a national award this year. Christine is the winner of The *FOCUS! Change Climate Change – Teacher’s Excellence Award for Environmental Education and Communication* award for 2020. In addition to the much-deserved recognition, Christine will receive a cheque for \$5000 and Westmount will receive a cheque for \$2000
- ❖ Mid-High teacher, Ms. Connie Sullivan submitted an application titled *RIDE FOR ENERGY!*, to the *A+ For Energy* program sponsored by Inside Education, BP Canada, TC Energy, Cenovus and Pembina Pipelines. Connie’s project receives a grant of \$4,953 as a winner
- ❖ Westmount staff augmented communication processes through digital platforms
- ❖ Information sessions on using the Google Suite and Zoom platforms for facilitating school council meetings
- ❖ Implemented Occupational Health & Safety Committee and online professional development programming (Public School Works) for all staff
- ❖ Hosted the Leadership Network Day for Calgary-area charter school leaders
- ❖ Continued its participation in the *Partner Research Schools* initiative with the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary (U of C) with the following projects:
 - Purpose of the study: To investigate the experiences of stressors and coping mechanisms in Mothers of gifted children. Researcher: Meghan Ingstrup, MA., MSc Student, under the supervision of Dr. Sal Mendaglio, Werklund School of Education, U. of C. (second phase ongoing in 2020)

- Purpose of the study: To include autistic student voice in research related to inclusive education in Canada. Participants include high school boys from Westmount.
Researcher: Chandra Lebenhagen, doctoral candidate, Gabriela Alonzo-Yanez, PhD (Supervisor), Werklund School of Education, U. of C. (study concluded fall 2019).

The Last Word

Having begun this work well into the 2019-2020 school year and following the AGM, it certainly felt like a running start, taking over from the dynamic and amazing Kath Rhyason.

As a general descriptor of how the year has gone, it has been busier than anticipated. I think that applies to pretty much everyone in education in general, and charter schools in particular. From multiple meetings with the Minister, who is very supportive of charter schools, to consultations on the *Choice in Education Act*, to a restructuring/streamlining of our way of functioning as a TAAPCS organization, there were already many irons in the fire before the Covid situation came about.

I have been strongly encouraged in this work by the supportive leadership of Ron Koper, Dale Erickson and Chris Gilmour, Dan Hansen in the Communications/Priorities Committees portfolios, as well as the rest of the Executive Committee and various Superintendents throughout the year. I have also appreciated the support of Debra Huff in her role as Executive Assistant and her efforts in bringing this Annual Report together.

TAAPCS is, in my view, a highly collaborative and positive environment and the response of each and every person solicited for support and participation in moving us forward has been outstanding. Our future is bright!

John Picard, Executive Director

