



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Edmonton Public Charter School Eliminates the Opportunity Gap
THRIVE School full-day K-6 program combines high-engagement academics, extracurriculars and integrated supports at zero cost to families

EDMONTON, Alberta – November 10, 2022 – THRIVE Charter School Society is pleased to announce that it has received approval from the Ministry of Education to open a public charter school in Edmonton. THRIVE School offers a unique research-based program for academic achievement and strong social and emotional competence for students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds living in central northwest Edmonton. Full-day programming (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) provides enhanced STEM learning and high-quality extracurricular programs in music, sports, and the arts. Complementary services to further break down barriers to educational equity include: an on-site family resource centre, yellow bus transportation and student meals – all provided at zero cost to families.

Educational research indicates that historically underserved students often experience unique systemic barriers that, in turn, lead to opportunity and experience gaps. This lack of a level footing can hinder academic achievement and hamper engagement, with cumulative impacts on educational outcomes. The THRIVE model seeks to eliminate these gaps through a carefully and deliberately designed educational program that enables all students to reach their fullest potential in academics and social well-being.

Over the past decade, THRIVE founder Jared Priestner gained valuable insights into child and youth well-being through his family's corporate philanthropic initiatives focused on child health, nutrition and sport. Although these efforts help build healthy communities, Priestner saw that existing initiatives were not moving the needle on educational inequity faced by underserved children and families.

“There is an urgent need to even the odds so that all kids in our community have an equal opportunity to achieve incredible heights in every aspect of their lives. That’s what THRIVE is all about – breaking down barriers by providing the best possible opportunities in an educational environment deliberately designed to build curious minds, confident hearts, and bold futures.”

- Jared Priestner, Founder, THRIVE Charter School Society



THRIVE’s ultimate goal is reflected in its vision statement: “An accessible and equitable education ecosystem that eliminates opportunity gaps, empowers students to realize their extraordinary potential and gives rise to positive multigenerational change.”

“THRIVE Charter School will greatly benefit Edmonton’s northwest communities, and I’m honoured to have played a part in opening a school that offers such innovative and necessary programming. THRIVE will enable students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds to access an education that can address opportunity gaps and provide them with the foundational skills they need to pursue any future they may choose.”

- Hon. Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education

Like all Alberta public schools, THRIVE’s core educational programs are funded by Alberta Education grants, with supplementary programs supported through a sustained donor contribution. All enhanced programs and services, including transportation, meals, and extracurricular activities are provided. Families of students enrolled at THRIVE will not pay any fees or incur any costs.

THRIVE School is located at McQueen Road and 107 Avenue in central northwest Edmonton. Modernization and expansion of the existing school is currently underway; a new playground will also be constructed. The K-6 school will open its doors in September 2023 for the 2023-24 school year. Registration will open in early 2023.

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About THRIVE School

THRIVE School is a public charter school in the Edmonton neighbourhood of McQueen dedicated to supporting academic achievement and holistic well-being for students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds living in central northwest Edmonton. THRIVE offers rich opportunities for engagement and academic challenge in a nurturing small school environment. Our vision: “An accessible and equitable education ecosystem that eliminates opportunity gaps, empowers students to realize their extraordinary potential and gives rise to positive multigenerational change.”

For more information, visit thriveschool.ca.

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BACKGROUND

THRIVE Vision

An accessible and equitable education ecosystem that eliminates opportunity gaps, empowers students to realize their extraordinary potential and gives rise to positive multigenerational change.

Fast Facts

- **Enrolment:** THRIVE School will serve students in kindergarten through grade 6. The school will offer a small-school environment with a maximum of 180 students. In the future, THRIVE plans to expand to add a junior high location.
- **Opening:** THRIVE School will open in September 2023 for the 2023-24 school year.
- **Location:** The school is located in Edmonton on McQueen Road and 107 Avenue. Substantial modernization and expansion of the existing school building is currently underway to provide THRIVE students with a bright and modern place to learn and grow. A new playground will also be built.
- **School day:** THRIVE School offers a full-day program from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **Governance:** THRIVE School is operated by the THRIVE Charter School Society, a non-profit society incorporated under the *Societies Act*. The charter board is responsible for governance and overall operation of the school in accordance with the *Education Act* and all related regulations.

Student Profile

THRIVE School serves K-6 students from low-socioeconomic status (low-SES) backgrounds in central northwest Edmonton who are eager to commit to the pursuit of academic excellence and contribute to a strong community of belonging. The program is designed for students who will derive strength from establishing trusting relationships and a close home to school connection.

Academics will be supported through high expectations, robust resources and pedagogies shown to be successful at driving high achievement with students from low-SES backgrounds. THRIVE's small-school environment and on-site wraparound services will foster a valuable sense of belonging and build strong home to school connections.

With the expectation that the student body will be diverse, THRIVE will undertake an affirming and culturally responsive approach to learning in all contexts, recognizing students for the assets they possess and encouraging them to build on their diverse experiences to make learning relevant and meaningful.



The THRIVE Difference

By providing an extended day (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and embedding nutrition, transportation and all child and family wraparound services into our core program, THRIVE offers a truly holistic approach to education and care at a single school site. By removing the stressors families face that can negatively impact their access and educational journey, these elements act as an enabler to allow students and families to succeed.

Although isolated efforts to support students from low-SES backgrounds exist in individual schools and address individual elements in the THRIVE model, no school or school authority offers THRIVE's comprehensive, research-driven approach that is laser-focused on this student demographic. Furthermore, the THRIVE model offers incredible potential for innovation that could inform new pedagogical practices and school design to support improved student outcomes across the province.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

Enriched STEM programming will provide hands-on, future-focused learning designed to maximize student engagement through real-world connections. This is a crucial area where THRIVE aims to eliminate the opportunity gap for our students. It is an unfortunate fact that students from low-SES backgrounds are often not offered enrichment opportunities and are tracked into less academic programs. Research shows exposure to innovation is a crucial element to support future participation in ground-breaking fields, particularly for groups not equally represented in these fields.

THRIVE's approach to STEM learning goes beyond the Alberta curriculum and is designed as an integral part of our school programming. It utilizes pedagogical approaches specifically designed to boost engagement among the THRIVE student population. Our approach to STEM is further strengthened through a formal partnership with the Calgary-based charter school STEM Innovation Academy, enabling the provision of curriculum, assessment tools and professional learning to ensure that our STEM programming is robust, well-resourced and pedagogically sound.

THRIVE and NorQuest College are also in the process of elaborating a partnership that would bring together students and families to envision STEM pathways.

Extra and Co-Curriculars

THRIVE's extracurricular and co-curricular programs will provide students with opportunities to participate in the kind of high-quality music, athletics, arts and STEM activities that are often cost-prohibitive for families from low-SES backgrounds. Students from low-SES backgrounds are less likely to participate in activities outside school, yet research shows that these extracurricular activities can boost social skills and have a positive impact on academic performance. In addition, the extended school day and availability of extracurricular activities relieves an additional stressor for families who typically require out-of-school care.

Personal Opportunity Plans

At THRIVE, we place a priority on understanding each student academically, socially, emotionally, and contextually and on empowering the student and their family to articulate their vision for the student. Each THRIVE student has a Personal Opportunity Plan (POP) that addresses their needs, gifts, and goals. These personalized plans provide a roadmap for each student and a guide for optimal instructional approaches. The POP also outlines any needs for further assessment, intervention and enrichment specific to each student. POPs are updated quarterly and remain with the student through graduation.

On-Site Family Resource Centre

Knowing that our students and their families likely experience numerous systemic barriers, the THRIVE model locates wraparound support directly in the school building to provide holistic support to students and their families. Through an established partnership with Jasper Place Family Resource Centre, students and families will have on-site access to a wide variety of support services.

As the designated Family Resource Network Hub for West Edmonton, Jasper Place Family Resource Centre provides a range of services, including: counselling, parenting programs, family and youth mentorship, early childhood development programs, health programs and basic needs support. In addition to direct provision of services, supports and programming, they also extend the reach and impact of the support system by connecting students and families to a web of additional qualified service agencies and providers.

Professional Learning

The school's team of educators and leaders will benefit from a focused and coherent research-based strategy for sustained and structured professional learning that includes such areas as neuroscience, trauma-responsive approaches and Universal Design for Learning.

Transportation

Yellow bus transportation is provided to and from school for all THRIVE students. The school's catchment area is intentionally small; the goal is to keep bus rides under 20 minutes.

Nutrition

Research shows that good nutrition plays a crucial role in strong academic outcomes. Students at THRIVE are well-fuelled with a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks each and every school day.



Funding and Fees

Like all public schools, THRIVE's core educational program is funded by Alberta Education grants. Supplementary funding for THRIVE School will be provided by the THRIVE Charter School Foundation, which receives donation funding from the Mike Priestner family of Edmonton.

All programs and services, including transportation, meals, and extracurricular activities will be provided. Families of students enrolled at THRIVE will not pay any fees.

What are Public Charter Schools?

Public charter schools in Alberta are autonomous non-profit public schools that offer unique programming to improve student learning and contribute to educational choice. Public charter schools follow Alberta's programs of study and employ certificated teachers. They cannot charge tuition and may not be affiliated with a religious faith or denomination. The public charter school board is accountable to the students, parents, community and the Minister of Education and ensures compliance with the *Education Act* and all regulations set out by the *Education Act*. The Minister ensures that the public charter school is operated in accordance with its approved charter, and that it achieves the outcomes outlined in the charter and as required by provincial legislation, regulation and policies, as well as to uphold its fiduciary responsibilities. There are currently 19 public charter schools approved in Alberta. Additional information can be found through the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools at taapcs.ca.