

Minister of Education approves new Edmonton public charter school

The Edmonton Classical Academy will offer a traditional liberal arts education for students in grades K-8

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EDMONTON — Alberta's Ministry of Education granted approval this week for a new tuition-free, public charter school serving Edmonton-area students. The school plans to offer grades K-8 beginning in the 2023/2024 academic year.

The Edmonton Classical Academy is a geographic expansion of an existing charter. Its sister school, Calgary Classical Academy, opened in August 2022 with approximately 300 students in grades K-6. Both schools will continue to expand each year until they serve all grades from K-12.

The Classical Academy programs offer an academically rigorous liberal arts education focused on developing "the knowledge, virtues, and habits befitting free citizens." Among the school's distinct features are a smartphone-free environment; the use of traditional pedagogy and teacher-led classrooms; a knowledge-rich curriculum centred on classical works of literature, philosophy, and art; a focus on character and the nurturing of virtues; and an explicit commitment to the pursuit of truth. The program aims to develop pupils' sense of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic discernment, so that they can distinguish truth from falsehood, and right from wrong.

"While school should help prepare young people for the workforce, that should be a happy by-product of education, not the entire objective", says Superintendent John Picard. "We provide an environment which fosters a student's virtue, wonder and love of wisdom. Parents with children in the Calgary program tell us their kids come home excited to talk about their day, eager to share what they have learned, and intent on challenging themselves tomorrow. This is the difference you will see in a classical education."

Charter schools are public, tuition-free programs with unique philosophical or pedagogical approaches. They operate independently of the central bureaucracy of large district school boards, being governed instead by autonomous non-profit

organizations. This allows charters to offer exceptional educational experiences to all interested students, regardless of background or socio-economic status.

“Choice in education allows students to grow and learn in an environment best suited for their unique needs,” says Education Minister Adriana LaGrange. “It allows parents to make decisions that will set their children up for personal, academic and professional success.”

“That is why we will continue upholding and supporting the option to receive a public charter education in Alberta as well as our efforts to improve accessibility to public charter education across the province.”

The school has begun recruiting faculty members, and is now accepting pre-enrolment applications for students entering grades K-8. Discussions are underway with the Alberta Ministry of Education and local school boards to identify a facility that will house the program.

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