

Working together to support choice and innovation in public education.

June 2013 Issue

With the weather as volatile as it has been in recent days, and as it was for much of the winter, our students, staffs and parents are no doubt keeping their fingers crossed for good news as we head into the summer break.

Facility Announcement



While not weather related, our charter schools received very good news



this past week when Education Minister Johnson and Infrastructure Minister Drysdale jointly announced the conditional approval of capital projects for Calgary and Edmonton schools and, while doing so, indicated that the facility needs of charter schools must also be taken into consideration by the metro boards if they are to proceed with new construction. Although no details were revealed when Mr. Johnson spoke at our Association's May meeting, he indicated he understood our facility needs given the fact we now have long-term lease requirements since the introduction of 15-year charter terms. His recent announcement will contribute greatly to helping

charter schools secure longer term facility arrangements in the future.

Regulatory Review

With the passing of the new Education Act in December 2012, Alberta Education is now proceeding with the development of Regulations which will accompany the Act. Charter Schools have been invited to participate in the discussion of specific Regulations. Obviously, we have particular interest in the Charter School Regulation, but we have also representatives providing feedback on the following: Closure of Schools, Delivery of Specialized Supports and Services, Property – Disposition of Property, Early Childhood Services, School Councils, School Fees, and Student Records. The Association has also prepared a response to the Charter School Regulation and will submit it to Alberta Education once it has been vetted one more time by our member schools.

Conference 2013

Planning is proceeding for our October 25 Conference which is entitled "Charter Schools: Living the challenge of transforming education". The conference is being held at the Calgary Girls' School and will feature Dr. Ruben Puentedura as a keynote speaker. Dr. Puentedura, an expert in



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technology and its application to education, will speak about the needs of learners in the future and how education can be responsive to those needs. In addition to the keynote address, delegates will be able to choose from more than 30 breakout sessions that will focus on the learner competencies Alberta Education highlighted in its “Inspiring Education” document. More than 300 delegates are expected to attend. Registration information will be available in early September.

University of Calgary Research on “The Impact and Capacity of the Alberta Charter School System”

Researchers from the University of Calgary are in the final stages of preparing a report regarding “The Impact and Capacity of the Alberta Charter School System”. Drs. Dianne Gereluk and Eugene Kowch undertook extensive data gathering activities throughout 2012-13 and are currently processing vast amounts of information. Our Association trusts the findings will provide us with not only a thorough understanding of what our strengths are, but also a sense of what future direction our schools and Association should take as we endeavour to improve our role as agents of transformation in Alberta’s education system.

The report is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2013.

School Leadership Learning Initiative

Dr. Jim Brandon of the University of Calgary is concluding a report on the pilot project we undertook this year regarding leadership development. As noted elsewhere, we were the recipients of an Alberta Education grant which allowed us to undertake an extensive professional development program for our administrators. The purpose of the project was not only to assist charter school administrators to better understand the competencies required to be school leaders, and therefore grow as practitioners, but also to determine what professional development processes are most effective. The results are expected to provide information for other provincial jurisdictions, and thereby serve as a possible model for them to replicate. In total, 39 administrators were involved in the project. Indications are that this one-year pilot was very well received by the participants, and there appears to be a desire to continue with a second year. We are currently exploring this possibility with Alberta Education. Dr. Brandon’s report will be released in the fall of 2013.



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Charter Board Directors

Jolene Kochendorfer of Valhalla Community Charter School, has taken on the role of Charter Board Directors (CBD) Chair and in that capacity has indicated a desire to accomplish a couple of goals for 2013-14. One of those goals relates to how we might improve the attendance of directors at Association meetings. At present, we regularly have approximately 40 individuals in attendance. The numbers not only include elected directors but also include Alberta Education personnel, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers and Principals. While discussion at the meetings is consistently productive, there is a desire to hear more from the elected representatives. A second goal for the CBD is to have a clear set of priorities established for the upcoming year through the development of an action plan. In September, Ms. Kochendorfer will convene discussions with a committee of volunteers to draft such a plan, which will be then discussed at the October meeting.

Upcoming Dates

September 19, 2013 – EAC meeting, Red Deer
 October 23/24, 2013 – Banquet/Regular Meeting & AGM, Calgary
 October 25, 2013 – Charter School Conference, Calgary Girls' School

January 17/18, 2014 - Regular Meeting, Red Deer
 May 8/9, 2014 - Regular Meeting, Edmonton

Appreciation

Appreciation is extended to many members of our charter school community for a successful year. Our Executive Committee members Jay Pritchard, Judy Gray, Joe Frank and Don Falk have consistently provided wise counsel and leadership. The Education Advisory Committee members, Heather Christison, John Liu, Justin Kool, Sue Ditchburn, Dale Erickson, Ian Gray, Randy Clarke and Marlene Lambe, along with Jay, Judy, Joe and Don, have been excellent contributors to TAAPCS. As well, without the assistance of Meredith Poole much of the Association's work could not be done. Thank you also to the many volunteers who have come forward to assist with tasks such as sitting on the Conference planning committee, and attending a variety of Alberta Education consultation meetings or meeting with researchers on a variety of topics. Without the support of our volunteers, this Association would have great difficulty in serving the needs of our members. Thank you again. Have a great summer.

Garry Andrews,
 TAAPCS Executive Director

