

Working together to support choice and innovation in public education.

June 2014 Issue

It is hard to believe another year is “in the books”. It was more than 20 years ago that charter schools came into existence under Minister of Education Halvar Jonson, and over that time many changes have taken place. But we are not yet where we aspire to be. As this newsletter attempts to highlight, numerous events and initiatives have transpired since our December edition so things are not slowing down appreciably!

Upcoming Meetings

- Oct. 23/24, 2014 – Regular Meeting/AGM, Calgary
- Jan. 15/16, 2015 – Regular Meeting, Red Deer (tentative)
- May 7/8, 2015 – Regular Meeting, Edmonton (tentative)

Halvar Jonson Award

Nominations are being solicited for this annual award, now in its third year. As noted above, Mr. Jonson played a huge role in the creation of charter schools in Alberta and, to honour his contributions, our association created an award in his name. It is intended to recognize a “champion” of charter schools. Information

about the award and nomination forms are available on our website. The closing date for submissions is September 15, 2014.

“The Impact, Capacity and Adaptability of the Alberta Public Charter School System” Final Report

In May 2012, our executive committee met with Dr. Dianne Gereluk and Dr. Eugene Kowch, researchers from the University of Calgary, to explore the possibility of engaging in a study of our association and its schools. After several conversations, it was determined that the focus of the study would be primarily on the association, while references would obviously be made concerning how well our schools perform. The intent of the study was essentially to look at what was working well and what we might focus upon in order to improve as an association of charter schools. The report was released in February, 2014 and discussed at our May 9 Regular Meeting. Subsequently, the Education Advisory Committee determined that several actions would be taken. The Executive Director will draft “guiding principles” which represent his understanding of the organization’s current philosophy. As well, he will review and revise if



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necessary, TAAPCS’ four objectives. These will be reviewed by a committee, edited and circulated to the EAC for review at its September 19 meeting.

A recommendation will then be prepared and presented for consideration at the October 2014 Regular Meeting.

Task Force for Teaching Excellence

Our association has responded to Alberta Education’s request for feedback regarding this recently released document. We commend this committee on their efforts. While some of the recommendations might be controversial to some parties, our association believes it is important to engage in conversation about these issues; otherwise, changes which might be required are not possible. Our response to the report’s recommendations appears on our association’s website www.taapcs.ca.

Capital Caucus Presentation

One of the objectives of the association is to improve our connection with the government. Over recent years, meetings have been held with the Minister of Education, as well as MLA’s. A committee of our representatives was scheduled to meet with the Capital Caucus of MLA’s in

Edmonton on June 25 to discuss issues related to charter schools. Although the meeting was postponed at the eleventh hour, their presentation is contained on our website. Many thanks to Monica McCormack, Board Chair of Suzuki Charter School for her leadership in organizing this presentation, as well as to Jolene Kochendorfer, Board Chair of Valhalla Community School; Bill McGregor, Board Chair of Foundations for the Future Charter Academy; and Judy Gray, President of the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools, for their contributions. We trust that this meeting will be rescheduled for early in the new school year.

Inclusive Education Funding

Over the past two years, our Association has expressed concern that, with the institution of a new funding model regarding inclusive education, the majority of our schools have been negatively impacted. We were encouraged at our May Education Advisory Committee meeting when Mr. Greg Bass, Deputy Minister, indicated a willingness to entertain a proposal from our association which might address the issue. Accordingly, John Liu, Secretary-Treasurer of Westmount Charter School, in consultation with Alberta Education personnel, developed an approach to funding which we have asked Alberta Education to consider. The proposal “holds



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harmless” those schools which are currently receiving funds in an equitable fashion, while allowing those which are currently negatively impacted to be brought into alignment with other school jurisdictions in the province. After discussion with each of our schools, Mr. Liu has recommended we make application to Alberta Education for their consideration. This has been done.

Capital Projects and New Facilities

We are grateful for the Minister of Education’s support in providing funds for modernization of both Westmount Charter School and Foundations for the Future Charter Academy. As well, we are pleased that CAPE Charter School in Medicine Hat will be moving to a newly modernized school as early as September 2017, and that New Horizons will be moving from Ardrossan into Sherwood Park in September 2014. Also, in a unique partnership, the Calgary Arts Academy has received approval for a major renovation project of an existing building on the site of the Stampede Grounds. It is hoped this Stampede School will be open by September, 2016. Congratulations to these schools in their efforts to improve opportunities for their students through the improvement of facilities.

Farewells and Welcomes

As is the case every year, our association bids a fond farewell to a number of our members and extends a warm welcome to those who are joining us. We are saying, or have said, good-bye to four of our superintendents this year. Jay Pritchard, FFCA; Dr. Garry McKinnon, Connect; Lee Lucente, Suzuki; and Dr. Sue Ditchburn, Calgary Girls’ School are now moving into different phases of their careers (mostly connected to “grandparenting”) and we want to say thank you and to wish them well. Conversely, we are saying welcome to two new superintendents whose appointments have been approved by the Minister and therefore their work has already begun. Dr. Dianne McBeth is now the Superintendent at the Calgary Girls’ School, while Susan Chomistek has assumed that role at Connect Charter School. Welcome Dianne and Susan! We anticipate that the names of the new superintendents for Foundations for the Future and Suzuki Charter School will be announced shortly. As well, appreciation is extended to Karen Wesley for her work at FFCA over the past couple of months.

Have an enjoyable, restful, relaxing and safe summer.

Dr. Garry Andrews, Executive Director, TAAPCS

