



Working together to support choice and innovation in public education.

June 2009

Preferred Future Document

Charter schools are very successful public schools which add value to Alberta's already excellent education system through achieving outstanding student results and demonstrating the ability to sustain and share educational innovation. These schools offer distinctive programming and provide relevant parental and community participation. The future for charter schools clearly lies within their cultures of responsible and flexible governance, along the path toward permanence, as prototypical sites of educational research and innovation.

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools (TAAPCS) has an integral role to play in coordination and leadership as charter schools move forward to both build and meet their futures. A unique and forward-looking group, TAAPCS has demonstrated that charter schools are able to come together across their differences to focus on common goals and opportunities. The document *Alberta's Public Charter Schools "Freedom to Create – Spirit to Achieve"* (May 2009) is evidence of this shared perspective and desire to occupy a legitimate place on the education landscape in Alberta.

TAAPCS recognizes and appreciates the important role that will be played by Alberta Education in the determination of the actual future for charter schools in our province. It is our strong desire that our Association be invited to participate in a dialogue with Alberta Education on this topic, and that the ideas contained within this document be considered as a starting place for that conversation. To view the entire document, visit www.taapcs.ca

Pioneers in action

Inaugural Principal job-share a success for Foundations for the Future



FFCA Southeast Campus, Principal Educators Judy Gray and Karen Wesley

Two seasoned administrators for Foundations for the Future Charter Academy put research into action this past school year by sharing the position of Principal Educator at Alice M. Curtis Campus.

With close to 70 years combined experience, Judy Gray and Karen Wesley were not ready to give up their professional careers, but wanted more time to spend with their families and attend to their personal lives.

The idea of sharing an administrative position was relatively unheard of, until now.















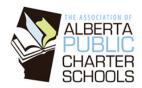












"Our motivation came as a result of personal life issues and life changes, as well as a continued and abiding interest in education. We decided to make a marriage of the best of both worlds," says Gray.

"We took look at a couple of past successes as well as challenges, but there was not a lot of literature or research to guide or inspire us," she adds. "I consider ourselves to be pioneers to research in action."

The two Principal Educators have known one another for much of their careers, but had not spent time working together until this opportunity arose.

"Because we value similar ideas and come from the same base of what's important - a teacherlearning environment and higher learning in children - we knew we could make this work," says Wesley.

One of their biggest challenges is communication.

"Communication is the key to continuity. We must be nimble, flexible and responsive, and live by the notion that no man is an island and that two heads are better than one," they add.

Both Principals keep an open communication book and have regular check-ins with staff and parents for feedback. They strive to attend to every concern.

"Early on we decided that we would support one another's decision-making, no matter what. We have trust in one another and our staff. We support one another and present an evenhanded and united approach," says Wesley. "We are here to better the lives of children and teachers in our school," she adds.

"Our biggest reward is the ability to have a life that includes spending time with the people that we love the most, both at school and personally," they said.

Through innovation, dedication and passion for their work, Judy Gray and Karen Wesley have made this opportunity a great success. They are here to help a great school continue to be great.

Community garden brings lessons to life

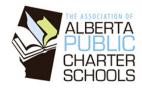
Aurora Charter School participated in a community garden project this spring, and in turn brought valuable lessons to life for their students. Peter Dang, an Aurora science teacher, Linda Williams, an Aurora math teacher, and members of the local Sherbrooke community committee, *Gardening in Partnership*, led the project.

The goal was to promote the beautification of the local community, educate students about plants and where food comes from, and to promote locally- and organically-grown produce. What made the project so special was the partnership between the community and the school. Local gardeners came to the school campus to help the students grow different types of plants. They will also continue to visit the garden on a regular basis to educate the students about care for the plants as they grow in the garden.

The outdoor classroom is designed for teachers to take their students outside to cover many aspects of the curriculum including: soil studies, composting and waste management, plant biology and reproduction, weather studies, art projects (students will be building bird houses, feeders, paintings), literature (The Secret Garden, etc.), organic farming and food production, and environmental stewardship. Products from the garden will also be used by the students. Every class at every grade level will have the opportunity to grow and be responsible for something in the garden.

Aurora School strives to promote student ownership of their education by encouraging hands-on activities, responsibility for the environment, and the development of each student's individual learning abilities. This project is one of many curriculum enhancements developed to aid in that process.

Aurora hopes to set an example of how a small community school can form a positive, working relationship with the local community to develop worthwhile projects that enhance the school's curriculum and help beautify the community. Though it takes a great deal of planning, the



project is worthwhile and the benefits long-lasting.

Westmount teacher walks the talk

The 2009 Excellence in Teaching Awards program recognized 134 creative and innovative teachers as award semi-finalists for their exceptional work in Alberta's Kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms. Semi-finalists were selected from 365 eligible nominees province-wide.

Westmount Charter School had an impressive total of four teachers recognized as semi-finalists from across Alberta, including Patti Noble (grade 2), Nicole Brayton (grade 3), Rona MacEachern (High School) and Paul Monaghan (Middle/High School).

On May 20, 2009, 23 award recipients were selected from the 134 semi-finalists, and included among these award recipients was Westmount's own Rona MacEachern. Hired as Westmount was establishing its High School, she was the foundation for the English Department and continues as its curriculum leader. As an indication that the department was in good hands, the first year that Westmount had students old enough to write Diploma exams (2005), eight advanced grade 11 students in "Ms Mac's" class wrote the English 30-1 Diploma exam, and all eight achieved the standard of excellence.

In her role as facilitator of instruction, Rona continually explores new ways of addressing the diverse learning profiles of her students. Rona is a strong contributor to the professional learning community within the school and she has focused on creating authentic assessment in the humanities while addressing student diversity in evaluation formats.

In the spring of 2006, Rona and three colleagues coauthored *The Human Condition*, a locally-developed course that focuses on human rights, sustainable development and international relations. These courses have culminated in biennial humanitarian initiatives in Ecuador. In addition, four years ago Rona and her students decided to "adopt" two children through Plan Canada, with the annual fundraising "Evening for Ahmed and Fawzia" coffee house and talent show providing the necessary funding. In all that she does, Rona MacEachern "walks the talk".



Westmount Charter School's Rona MacEachern

Suzuki students take centre stage

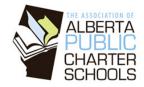
After attending the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (ESO) in the morning, Suzuki K- 6 musicians delighted parents and special guests with an equally amazing concert in the evening.

The talented students played Canadian folk and 20th century music, featuring selections from *Star Wars*. They were accompanied by Edmonton's Harpe Jazz Trio. Angelic voices completed the instrumental program ending with a contemporary arrangement of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" for the children's choir, faculty and advanced ensembles. The experience of performing on a big stage in such a beautiful venue was awe-inspiring for the young musicians.

An open invitation is extended to all to join Suzuki Charter School for their 15th anniversary concert featuring early music and the enduring pieces of the Beatles on May 14, 2010 at the Winspear Centre in Edmonton.

A song for Spirit

A group of Year 1 and 2 students from Calgary Arts Academy wrote a song for





Spirit, a Golden Eagle who was found last year near Lethbridge, shot and blinded. "Spirit" is being cared for by the Birds of Prey Centre in Coaldale, Alberta and visited Calgary Arts Academy's elementary campus in May. The students performed their song for Spirit at a school assembly.

This year's theme at Calgary Arts Academy is "Choose to make a difference." Calgary Arts Academy teaches the Alberta curriculum through Arts Immersion, and students demonstrate their learning through showcases. Year 1 and 2 students chose to make a difference by writing a song to perform for Spirit to cheer him up.

Gil Tucker from Global Television did a news story on the event, which aired on Global News on May 22. Colin Weir, the Director of the Birds of Prey Centre, said he has been touring schools for 25 years, and that this event and the song for Spirit was the most moving and inspirational he had experienced.



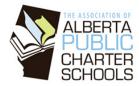
Think Green: Save Our Planet! Story by Nadeen Abdul Razzak, Grade 3 Student

One dark spring day, unfortunately, the Earth was threatened. The sun was covered with dark angry clouds. The clouds had a big frown. The Homo-Sapiens species were threatened to go extinct. Because of toxic waste, the grass looked awful. The plants were all dead, and the breeze was terribly toxic. There were two girls named Leona and Alexa who loved to dance and sing all the time.

At school, Ms. Melody was teaching them about how the Earth was threatened and how to become Global Citizens. When Leona and Alexa heard about that they were shocked! Alexa's eyes popped out. Leona's mouth was wide open. They couldn't believe that they will go extinct one day because of Global Warming and Pollution. The class was rehearsing a song "Think Green" about how the Earth is threatened. Alexa and Leona were feeling very bad for the Earth. They practiced and practiced until they got it all memorized.

On Assembly day, Alexa announced before beginning the song with the rest of the class, "Help us save the Earth! We are not going to have a good quality of life if we don't save our planet, Reduce, Recycle, and Reuse!"

Everyday students joined hands with Alexa and Leona to collect waste off the school playground, recycle cans and bottles and reducing waste by bringing to school litter less-lunches. Earth Day was everyday. Suddenly, the Earth was extremely beautiful! The sun was shinning again with luster such as a diamond. The birds were chirping again beautiful melodies! The butterflies were fluttering their wings with joy. The clouds were as fluffy as cotton balls and had big huge smiles. The breeze was beautiful and fresh. Suddenly, the pollution vanished. Homo sapiens and other living things were not threatened to go extinct. Alexa, Leona and all students became global citizens by helping to save our beautiful Earth.





News items:

Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans

Alberta Education is currently meeting with community members throughout our province to determine what individuals want from their education system over the next 20 years. This "Dialogue with Albertans" will result in a new governance approach and a new policy framework for education in Alberta. If you have the opportunity to participate in the process, please take advantage of it. Many of these opportunities are provided online through the Alberta Education website at www.education.alberta.ca/.

Celebrating the spirit of innovation

Suzuki Charter School was thrilled to tell their story to Dr. Dennis Shirley, professor at Boston College, when he visited Alberta to learn more about AISI and its impact on schools for his "Multiple Perspectives Review" in collaboration with the University of Alberta and Alberta Education. Through the support of AISI, Suzuki Charter School's areas of focus - academic, personal, and music excellence - have evolved since its first cycle with a deeper understanding of Suzuki concepts, resulting in higher performance standards. Cycle 4 will continue to adhere to the Suzuki methodology. The sound framework established over the years will prepare students for the 21st Century in their exploration of technology and by transmitting music and curricular concepts effectively.

Philanthropists of tomorrow

Students from the FFCA Southeast Elementary campus raised \$2500 to contribute to the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter – a non-profit organization in Western Canada created to support women and children on their journeys towards lives free of violence. In recognition of their efforts, the non-profit organization gave them a Tulip Award, in the "Philanthropists of Tomorrow" category, which goes to individuals making significant contributions to end family violence.

Green school initiative

Boyle Street Education Centre (BSEC) is making great strides in ensuring that their school building meets environmental standards in order to be designated an "environmentally responsible school". Beyond making BSEC an aesthetically vibrant and environmentally friendly place, the ultimate goal of those involved, from the building management company to the teaching staff, is to instill in students a sense of wonder as well as one of responsibility for the natural environment. Jeffery Boorman, a BSEC science teacher, comments about having a "green school" and feels that this will help shape curriculum and consequently generate an interest in science. BSEC is using green building techniques that can help reduce energy bills, while providing a healthier learning environment for students and instilling in them an awareness that will ultimately benefit the planet.

Blueprint for life

Students from the Calgary Arts Academy and Foundations for the Future Charter Academy participated in workshops teaching youth to create a positive blueprint for their lives. Junior and senior high school students were introduced to hip-hop dancing, beat boxing, spoken word, rhyming, stepping, dj-ing, fashion, and visual art. These sessions were designed to expose youth to the various components of urban arts culture. The students also joined the Blue Collar Dance Company on stage, during the second annual LiveStyle: Calgary's Urban Arts Festival, in May. The evening concluded with the screening of the new music video created by participants of the Bounce Back program, a video and music program for youth who have been living on the streets of Calgary.



Premier Stelmach shows government in action

Premier Ed Stelmach recently visited a group of Gr. 8 students at the Foundations for the Future Charter Academy, South Middle School campus. He talked to the young Albertans about the government and current events in our province. Using critical thinking tools, the FFCA students prepared a series of in-depth questions for Mr. Stelmach. This unique opportunity for the students to speak directly with the Premier of Alberta about what they are learning in the classroom was a welcome addition to their social studies curriculum.

"Exergaming" research centre opens

Recently, Foundations for the Future Southwest Campus joined in a partnership with the University of Calgary and Mount Royal College to engage in research around the impact of exergames on youth fitness, as an integration of technology into Physical Education classes. Exergames are a new trend in video gaming that combines an element of exercise with traditional gaming. A media conference was held to celebrate the research centre opening.

Student leaders were a part of the grand opening and demonstrated various activities in the centre, showcasing i-Dance (a wireless, multi-player system), Wii Fit and Exerboards. Stay tuned for updates and progress on the research.

TAAPCS communications support

Effective July 2009, Lindsay Kelcher will be the new Communications Coordinator for Foundations for the Future Charter Academy and will provide support for TAAPCS as well. For story ideas and other communications-related inquiries, please contact Lindsay Kelcher at: lindsay.kelcher@ffca-calgary.com.

For detailed minutes of past regular meetings and upcoming meeting dates go to: www.taapcs.ca