

RECENT RESEARCH IN ALBERTA CHARTER SCHOOLS

Almadina Language Charter School: Past Present and Future. A Triangular Case Study Evaluating the Progress of the Educational Programs. The study aims at looking into how ELL students experience learning in Almadina. There will also be an attempt to track students' progress through the time they spend in Almadina and even after their graduation from the school.

Aurora Charter School: "Early Child Development (ECD) Mapping Initiative". Three staff members, in co-operation with Alberta Education are engaged in a five year research activity that will give Alberta school authorities, communities and parents a comprehensive range of information on children's development prior to kindergarten.

Aurora Charter School: "Engaging Teachers with Canadian Literature for Social Justice" is a multi school study being done by five Aurora teachers in co-operation with Dr. Lynne Wiltse, U of A. The study is intended to provide insights into how a collective inquiry group can help teachers address vital questions of social justice with their students through the medium of contemporary Canadian literature texts.

Aurora Charter School: A study is being undertaken, in co-operation with the University of Alberta to determine the particular strengths the school has in family support and outstanding student outcomes. In addition to a qualitative description of the organization, the study is intended to identify the underpinning causation of our student outcomes successes.

Calgary Girls' School: (NEW) "Effective, Research Informed Practice and innovative Approaches" are being studied. The objectives are: 1. Establish partnerships with post-secondary institutions (CGS is a member of the UC Research Partner Schools). 2. Support postgraduate research by CGS staff. 3. Build partnerships with community organizations to support improved learning opportunities. 4. Explore best practice for ensuring safe, caring learning environments by engaging with experts. 5. Build common language and shared understandings to inform improvement that impacts the instructional core. 6. Achieve charter goals related to fostering competent, caring, connected girls. 7. Develop conceptual understanding through instructional design.

Connect Charter School: A three year study regarding the one-on-one laptop program and student engagement study conducted by the Galileo Educational Network Association is concluding. The focus of the research is on student engagement, measures and indicators. Galileo is also conducting a follow-up study of Calgary Science School grade 9 graduates. Further, Dr. Pam Adams of the University of Lethbridge is working with CSS in implementing a research design which focuses on exemplary teaching, instructional leadership and the meaningful engagement of school leaders, teachers, parents and students in learning and teaching. A Research and Innovation Fund has been established by the Board of Directors in order for individual teachers or teams of teachers to apply for access regarding the conducting of action research and/or the facilitation of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Projects which have received preliminary approval at CSS are: Collaborative Framework for Success – A

Community Practice – Balance of Power; What is the effect of Learning Coaches on Teaching Practice at the Calgary Science School?; The Curricular Potential of Integrated Digital Inquiry Resources; Enacting Ethical Citizenship within an Inquiry-based Context; Implementation Guide for Inquiry; Parent and Community Engagement at the Calgary Science School: Growing Meaningful Connections; the Power of Collaboration to Transform Teaching and Learning.

Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE): (NEW). Our current research project focuses on parent engagement. Its goal is to increase the level of parent engagement through the use of an on line website/blog for each class (sharing what is happening in the class) in combination with a series of collaborative lunch hour parent meetings (one per month) at which topics such as the purpose and utilization of assessments, the I.S.E.E. program, anxiety, personalized program, the autism spectrum, etc. The intent is to increase parent knowledge and capacity to support the child. Building teacher capacity in engaging parents is the third component of this project. This is done through a series of collaborative lit reviews of a selected text. We are currently in year 2 of 3.

Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE): A four year study is concluding regarding the question “Does CAPE’s total Integration/Individualization program increase student engagement and, therefore student achievement? The study is in its third year.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (Southeast Elementary): (NEW). In conjunction with Dr. Larry Katz, U of C; Mr. Hyun Suk Lee, PhD candidate; and Mr. Chris Shaw, FFCA (SEE) we are studying the “application of Eastern philosophy to human movement through bilaterality training of throwing in young children to enhance physical literacy”. The overall goal of this research is the determination of the impact of Eastern philosophy in the learning of the fundamental movement skill of throwing.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (Southeast Elementary and Northwest campuses): (NEW). “Building Our Capacity to Achieve Learning For All – Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Struggling Learners”. We experimented with a residency model to build teacher capacity and efficacy in applying the TriOptimal Learning Model to enhance their ability to meet the social-emotional and learning needs of their students. The project revealed some of the challenges in facilitating a residency style learning experience but the feedback from the staff overall was very positive.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Initiative to identify and gather high, medium and low writing exemplars at each grade level”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on development of standards-based rubrics and improvement of writing.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of outcomes-based assessment, recording and reporting”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on alignment of assessment with curriculum; impact on student awareness of learning targets, meta-cognition of success in meeting targets, parental involvement with specific learning outcomes, and targeted remediation.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Continued emphasis on math facts and basic skills within implementation of new math curriculum”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact

on student capacity to enquire, explore and construct their learning for deep understanding of math concepts; impact on student capacity to computer/calculate and use algorithms.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of new resource (Math Makes Sense) within math program”. Outcome to be assessed – impact on student engagement, time on task, and efficient use of time; impact on student understanding, mastery of math facts and basic skills, and computation.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Development of innovative means for continuous review with the mat program”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on student retention of knowledge and concepts and application or transfer of skills.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Direct teaching of math algorithms as a supplement or a conclusion to exploration and inquiry”. Outcome to be assessed- Impact on student understanding of math concepts and mastery of algorithms.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Application of historical thinking concepts (historical benchmarks) within the social studies program”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on student engagement, retention of background information and capacity for critical thought; impact on the mindset or attitudes of students towards the relevance of history.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of spelling program focused on vocabulary in the content areas of language arts novels and short stories, social studies and science”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on student engagement and retention of vocabulary, as well as understanding of literature, social studies and science concepts.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of a life-skills rubric, developed with students, to assess personal habits, skills and demonstrated aspects of character development”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on discussion, growth and personal responsibility toward habits, lifeskills and behaviour.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of Kagan cooperative learning strategies”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on student engagement, understanding and retention of knowledge and concepts, as well as development of attitudes and skills in working with others.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of Kagan Win-Win Discipline Strategies”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on student meta-cognition and self-discipline in class by providing structure, follow ups, and putting into practice preventative procedures.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Implementation of music projects whereby students research and present information on composers, music genres and instruments”. Outcome to be assessed –Impact on development and retention of background knowledge, as compared to the direct presentation of information.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): “Initiative to identify and collect the best writing example from each student to pass on to the next year’s teacher”. Outcome to be assessed – Impact on student motivation and continuous improvement in writing skills.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (South Middle School): Formal research project in development through the University of Calgary – “Given the precepts of direct instruction as indicated by the charter, policies, documents and practices of Foundations for the Future Charter Academy, how does direct instruction affect Native Speaker (NS) learners and English Language Learners (ELL) at FFCA?”

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: An examination of the “charter school experiment in Canada” and its success in leveraging positive reform in public education through the provision of choice for students, parents and educators. (A paper jointly presented by FFCA and UBC personnel to the International School Choice Conference)

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: A study (HS) is being conducted to determine whether the creation and use of explicitly proactive strategies can be successful in reducing academic dishonesty.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: A study (HS) is being conducted which examines how two leadership strategies emphasizing building relationships and effective communication impact teacher collaboration, teacher job satisfaction and teacher perception of school climate.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: A study (HS) is underway to determine whether developing and supporting the use of a coaching manual helps in facilitating character development.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: Affects of Post-Secondary Recruiting on Alberta High School Athletes and Athletic Programs. This action research project investigated the affects of the post secondary recruiting process on high school athletes and athletic departments in Alberta. The Alberta Schools Athletic Association facilitated the survey used to conduct the research through their website. The participants surveyed were school administrators, athletic directors, teacher coaches or community coaches. There were a total of 178 respondents to the study. From the study one was able to establish that the high school athletic community has concerns of the negative effects that the post secondary recruiting process has on our athletes and athletic programs, especially through athletic transfers and recruiting between high schools. The ASAA has since established a new process by which a transfer will be determined to be academic or athletic.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: An action research study at the high school level on how involving students in the development of assessment items contributes to their learning process.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: An investigation of the impact of clear learning targets and the use of balanced assessment practices on student achievement.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: This study (HS) is looking at how schools create and sustain a culture of heterosexism which may be damaging our GLBT students and what we can do differently to make our school communities safer for everyone.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: Assessment Research: A research project involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data was conducted in order to compare teachers' perceptions with their actual practices in the use of assessment for learning to develop critical thinking. Findings were analyzed and recommendations were made to support teacher learning. Using actual data meant recommendations were made that were more consistent with where teachers were in their understanding of how assessment for learning could be used to build critical thinking. This project was completed as a requirement for a Master's of Education program with Gonzaga University.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: Exergaming research project. FFCA (SWE) embarked in a research partnership with the University of Calgary (Faculty of Kinesiology) and Mount Royal University (Dept of Phys Ed and Rec). The focus of the partnership revolved around the study to better understand the use and impact of technology as part of the daily physical activity of children. Our stage has been converted into a research lab that uses exergaming (exercise and video gaming equipment) to help children develop fundamental movement skills like agility, balance, coordination and laterality

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: Daily Activity Research. FFCA embarked in a research partnership with the University of Calgary (Faculty of Kinesiology) and Mount Royal University (Dept of Phys Ed and Rec) to develop a better understanding around the relationship between growth rates, motor proficiency, and physical activity in students over a 3-5 year time period. The longitudinal study started with grade 4 students who would have an evaluation of their movement skills as well as measurements of their growth during the time that they are participating in this study.

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy: Future projects: Qualitative investigation around the stories that make FFCA great. Key question: What make FFCA a great place to teach and learn?; The role that social media plays in teacher and student education

Westmount Charter School: (NEW) "The development of gifted children's academic literacy." This is a longitudinal (action research) study of academic literacy (reading/writing with Dr. Hetty Rosessingh, Werklund School of Education, U of C, with special application to students who are gifted including ESL learners. This research project also led to the development of a new Locally Developed Course by Westmount teachers at the mid-high "Enhanced English for Business, Engineering and Social Sciences 35". As well this research project has application beyond gifted students and has influenced the development of the provincial SLA's for Grade 3 over the past two years. Briar Hill Elementary School (CBE) most recently partnered with us by joining our literacy development research project with Dr. Hetty Rosessingh.

Westmount Charter School: External (Academic) Research as well as Internal Research is underway. External: Brenda Diteljan under the supervision of Dr. Gail Kopp with the University of Calgary: "How Expert Gifted Program Teachers' Conceptions of Perfectionism, Influence and Reflect on, Gifted Perfectionist Student Behaviours". The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how and if the students' teacher's conceptions of perfectionism, as an expert gifted program teacher, influence the students' perfectionist behaviours.

External: Hetty Roessingh with the University of Calgary: "patterns of lexical diversity in the writing development of children: English language learners and Native speakers at Grade 3". The study seeks to glean research insights into patterns of lexical diversity in the writing development of children in Grades

3-4. The salient feature in the lexical repertoire relates to richness of productive vocabulary (ie. Control over low frequency and more academic-like words).

Internal: AISI funded (Cycle 4) Action Research: Literacy Focus. “Gray Oral Reading Tests and the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal: Through identification and support, raising the level of excellence in reading on PAT’s and other. As well, “to attempt to find evidence that can be measured to determine if there is a significant difference in using a critical thinking delivery model compared to a traditional delivery model as it pertains to literacy in the younger grades”.

Internal: Practice-based Research in Conjunction with the Canadian Sport Centre. “Video Analysis to Engage Activity in High-School Sciences”. Dartfish Technology enables the school to film, measure and analyze human movement with the intention of improving health and the skills to improve movement and posture: Pre and post test training is involved.

Valhalla Community School: (NEW). We are in the early stages of examining the impact of peer coaching and student feedback on teacher professional learning. A partnership with Grande Prairie Regional College Arts and Education faculty is being explored.