

# Time to Reflect

# TAAPCS Annual Report 2013-2014

October 24, 2014

Prepared by Dr. Garry Andrews TAAPCS Executive Director www.taapcs.ca

# TAAPCS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Judy Gray

# **THOUGHTS ON 2013-2014**

We chose "Time to Reflect" as the theme for this year's annual report for a variety of reasons. First, charter schools have been in existence for almost two decades and it is natural to consider what might still be meeting with success and what might not. Second, our Association, which was created nearly ten years ago, felt it was time to undertake a concerted, data-driven process in order to review our governance structure and operational principles. To aid in this endeavor, throughout 2012-13 a study of our organization was conducted by researchers from the University of Calgary. In February 2014 we received the report and began to consider its findings. There were many positives in the report but also some areas which were identified for consideration. Most importantly, our schools are clearly succeeding and providing the type of education envisioned by Alberta Education as outlined in their "Inspiring Education" initiative. However, our organization is seen as having thirteen schools which operate rather autonomously instead of as part of a "federation". The researchers felt that to better succeed as an association and therefore have a more profound impact upon education in Alberta, we need to consider the degree to which we want to "speak with one voice" on the part of our thirteen schools. In that regard, several recommendations were provided. Our executive has determined that in the forthcoming year we will begin the consideration process by re-examining the association's mission, objectives and guiding principles as well as how we carry out business.

"Time to Reflect" also relates to looking back on the activities we participated in, and determining the extent to which they met our objectives. One of those activities in 2013-14 which clearly met our professional development and community building objectives was Conference 2013. As has been the case with previous conferences, the evaluations from attendees and participants were very positive. Our appreciation is extended to the committee which planned the event, the presenters who made it so successful, and the administration and staff at the Calgary Girls' School for providing the venue and acting as gracious hosts.

Professional development for our administrators was also a focus during the past year. With a second year of financial support from Alberta Education, we were able to provide leadership development training for more than 40 of our administrators. Again, when we asked participants to evaluate the program, their responses were uniformly positive. We are very appreciative of

the assistance we received from Alberta Education and for the commitment of the individuals who planned and delivered the sessions throughout the year.

Other activities which, upon reflection, we feel were positive include the numerous meetings our representatives had with the Minister, Deputy Minister and other Alberta Education officials. The strengthening of relationships with our colleagues in government has no doubt led to the improved situation in which we now find ourselves regarding facilities and lease arrangements, as well as with the extension of our schools' mandates to 15 years. Not so positive have been our attempts to build relationships with other parties in the educational community. The ATA continues to view charter schools as unnecessary, while both the Alberta School Boards Association and the Public School Boards Association of Alberta were not prepared to offer us membership in their associations. Fortunately, the College of Alberta School Superintendents does welcome our members to participate in their organization and activities. Interestingly, the University of Calgary researchers remarked that our time would be better spent aligning ourselves with other groups and organizations rather than the traditional educational partners in Alberta if we wanted to have more impact upon education in the province.

As an association which requires the assistance of volunteers to sit on numerous committees and to represent us at various meetings, we are privileged to have the commitment of our members. Perhaps this is our greatest strength. As we continue to reflect upon our mission, guiding principles, and governance structure, we should not lose sight of the fact that this is what has driven the association in the past, and will no doubt be our driving force in the future.

It has been my pleasure to serve you throughout the past year. Thank you.

Judy Gray, President



As per By-law requirements, the following report on the activities of The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools for 2013-14 is respectfully submitted.

# **BACKGROUND**

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools has 13 members from a wide geographic and demographic area which extends from Medicine Hat in the south to Valhalla Centre in the north. As well, there are six schools in Calgary and five schools in Edmonton and area. The mandate of each school is unique and distinctive. The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools was formally created to support all schools regardless of location and mandate.



# TAAPCS OBJECTIVES

- To promote and facilitate public charter school education in Alberta
- To speak with one voice on behalf of public charter schools in Alberta
- To promote a forum for public charter schools to meet in support of common goals
- To advocate for continued innovation and choice within public education



#### **MEETING DATES**

The three regular meetings for the Association took place on the following dates:

- October 23/24, 2013 Greenwood Inn, Calgary
- January 16/17, 2014 Sheraton, Red Deer
- May 8/9, 2014 Westin, Edmonton

Preceding the regular meetings were Superintendent as well as Charter Board Directors' meetings. In addition to the above, the Education Advisory Committee met in Red Deer on the following dates:

- September 19, 2013
- November 22, 2013
- March 13, 2014
- May 30, 2014



#### **EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 2013-14**

- Co-Presidents: Judy Gray and Jay Pritchard (resigned February, 2014)
- Co-Vice Presidents: Yvonne DePeel and Don Falk
- Secretary-Treasurer: Meredith Poole
- Executive Director: Dr. Garry Andrews (ex-officio)



#### FACILITIES AND LEASES

For a number of years TAAPCS has placed a priority on receiving assistance from Alberta Education regarding our facility needs. Increased assistance is being provided both in the form of extended lease arrangements as well as in the acquisition and improvement of facilities for a number of our schools. We appreciate the support of Alberta Education in this regard.



# SCHOOL LEADERSHIP LEARNING INITIATIVE

2013-14 marked the second year Alberta Education provided funding for the Leadership Learning Initiative for our schools. As in year one, the focus for the sessions was on the seven leadership competencies expected of leaders in Alberta's school systems. Approximately 40 administrators/lead teachers participated in three formal seminars and multiple individual sessions. The evaluations which were received by facilitator Dr. Jim Brandon were universally positive. An article concerning this project was featured in the spring 2014 edition of the CASS Connection. It is entitled "Understanding System Leadership Links to Student Success" and was authored by Drs. Jim Brandon, Garry McKinnon and Dale Bischoff. A third year of this initiative will take place during 2014-15. Again, we appreciate Alberta Education's support for this endeavor and offer a special thank you to Dr. Jim Brandon from the University of Calgary who has served as our facilitator for this initiative.



# **CONFERENCE 2013**

On October 25, the Calgary Girls' School played host to our provincial conference which was entitled "Charter schools living the challenge of transforming education". 547 delegates were in attendance to hear Deputy Minister Greg Bass and keynote speaker, Dr. Ruben Puentedura open the event. In addition to the opening addresses, 45 breakout sessions, many led by our own staff members, were offered, 17 of which were repeated a second time for a total of 62 sessions. The evaluations were very positive. Since facility costs were minimal, registration fees were able to be set at \$50 per person, \$25 for student teachers. The revenue for the conference was \$26,275.00 and expenses were \$25,503.34 so the net profit was \$771.66. Appreciation is extended to the conference's planners and presenters with a special thank you to the Calgary Girls' School for being such gracious hosts. The next conference is being planned for 2015.



#### HALVAR JONSON AWARD

To recognize outstanding contributions made by individuals to Alberta's charter schools, an award named after former Minister of Education, Halvar Jonson, was created by the Association in 2012. The recipient of the 2013 Halvar Jonson Award was Marc Prefontaine. After serving as a teacher and administration in the Edmonton area, Marc moved into the Department of Education and served in numerous senior positions until his retirement in 2012. Throughout his tenure in the Department Marc became well acquainted with charter schools and in doing so, was very supportive of our efforts. Thank you, Marc.



Karen Spencer, Marc Prefontaine



#### CHARTER BOARD DIRECTORS

The Charter board directors met three times during 2013-14. Jolene Kochendorfer (Board Chair, Valhalla Community School) served as chair. Meeting topics related to: increasing director involvement at TAAPCS' meetings, developing a brief common message to convey to those unfamiliar with charter schools, presentations to caucus, board professional development needs, social media, by-laws, and understanding inclusive education funding.



# RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

As in the past, the government asked for responses to a variety of topics during the past year. In that regard, we provided responses to the Education Act's Regulations Review, the Task Force for Teaching Excellence, and amendments to the Municipal Government Act. As well, we submitted a revised request for consideration of more equitable inclusive education funding. In consultation with Alberta Education personnel, we were very involved in developing a "Charter school evaluation strategy". Finally, in addition to formal submissions and/or responses, our executive had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Jeff Johnson, Minister of Education and Mr. Greg Bass, Deputy Minister, on several occasions to provide verbal feedback to Alberta Education's initiatives. We appreciate the many opportunities we are afforded to provide responses to government projects.

#### UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY RESEARCH



Garry Andrews, Dianne Gereluk, Jay Pritchard, Eugene Kowch, Judy Gray

On February 5, 2014, Drs. Dianne Gereluk and Eugene Kowch of the University of Calgary presented their final report, entitled <u>The Impact</u>, <u>Capacity and Adaptability of the Alberta Public Charter School System</u>, to members of our association. This report was commissioned to examine our "system" (i.e. association) to identify our strengths as well as those areas which might need attention as we mature as an organization. Numerous discussions, both formal and informal followed the report's presentation.

In general, the research led to positive conclusions about the success of our individual schools. They were in fact held up to be excellent examples of what 21<sup>st</sup> century schools should or could be. However, while the schools were seen in a positive manner, the association was seen as less so. The authors concluded that the schools operate very autonomously, but successfully, and the association's impact upon them is not overly significant. Thus the impact we have on the greater community is less than optimal, although the report does indicate that we have the expertise and capacity to do so. Follow-up to the report and its recommendations began in May, 2014 and will continue throughout 2014-15.



#### **COMINGS AND GOINGS**

During 2013-14, we bade farewell to several of our Association members, and we welcome several newcomers. First and foremost, we acknowledge with heartfelt thanks the contributions of our former Co-President, Jay Pritchard, whose exemplary leadership contributed so much to the success of our association; he will be greatly missed. We also lost Superintendents Garry McKinnon (Connect), Lee Lucente (Suzuki) and Sue Ditchburn (Calgary Girls'School) for whom the lure of retirement proved irresistible. We now welcome to our Charter School Superintendent contingent Roger Nippard (FFCA), Susan Chomistek (Connect), Lynne Paradis (Suzuki) and Dianne McBeath (Calgary Girls')

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Under separate cover, a statement of our financial situation is provided. The year end results are positive. Appreciation is extended to our Executive Officers who, along with our colleagues at each school, provide exemplary service to the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Garry Andrews, Executive Director October 24, 2014