



**THE ASSOCIATION OF
ALBERTA PUBLIC
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

“Equity: The Final Frontier”

TAAPCS Annual Report
2006-2007
October 25, 2007

Prepared by Meredith Poole,
TAAPCS Secretary-Treasurer

www.taapcs.ca

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE – Judy Gray and Jay Pritchard, TAAPCS Co-Chairs 2006-07

The 2006-2007 year has been a productive one for The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools. Unprecedented gains have been made in several areas in support of our mission and objectives - our individual accomplishments, and the enhanced profile of our member schools and our association with the public and with government, have added strength and soundness to the validity of educational choice in Alberta. In the words of the Honourable Ron Liepert at the FFCA 10th Anniversary celebration, “The (*charter school*) experiment is over. You have proven yourselves.” The Minister’s words would indicate that we have earned a legitimate place on the public education landscape.

But the situation is not all rosy. Charter schools are still faced with difficult issues to overcome, facilities and funding being chief among them. The legislation which may have been adequate 13 years ago seems less appropriate for today’s circumstances. Changes are needed in order to level the playing field for all public education alternatives. Much of this year’s effort has been devoted to this purpose, so the theme for this annual report was adopted from the title of the TAAPCS October 30, 2006 presentation to the Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment:

“Equity: the Final Frontier”

WHAT IS TAAPCS?

The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools is currently comprised of 12 member schools, located throughout the province, which are united in support of the following mission:

“Working together to support choice and innovation in public education.”

The Association has been in existence since 1998 and over the last few years has held three meetings annually for the purpose of furthering four primary objectives:

1. *To promote and facilitate public charter school education in Alberta.*
2. *To speak with one voice on behalf of public charter schools in Alberta.*
3. *To provide a forum for public charter schools to meet in support of common goals.*
4. *To advocate for continued innovation and choice within public education.*

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 2006-2007 YEAR

- ❖ Charter School Conference
- ❖ Progress in Government Relations
- ❖ Excellent Charter School Study Results
 - ❖ Informative Newsletters
 - ❖ Funding and Finances

- ❖ The 2006 Charter School Conference was held in Edmonton on October 5 and 6, and was attended by a whopping 375 participants. Organizing an event of this magnitude is no small feat, but it was capably done by Suzuki Charter School, with incredible entertainment provided by them and by some of the students of the Boyle Street Education Centre. These kids treated us to some amazing singing and dancing, the likes of which many of us had never seen “live” before!



Our keynote speaker, former Edmonton Public School Board Superintendent Angus McBeath, spoke of the importance of ensuring that charter schools and choice continue to flourish within Alberta.

The conference sessions were informative and educational, from those which highlighted the uniqueness and innovative practices of our member schools, all the way to “getting on the political radar screen” – advocacy and influence on the legislative process. This latter focus likely helped to provide impetus for another major accomplishment of the 2006-2007 year.....

- ❖ Progress in Government Relations – Particular attention was paid over the course of 2006-2007 to enhancing our relationships with government, particularly at the political level. For the first time, our Board Chairs have united to explore avenues to greater political influence, and a Government Relations workshop was held in Red Deer in September for 25 interested Board members and/or their delegates. Our current Education Minister, the Honourable Ron Liepert, seems well-disposed to the idea of legislative equity for charter schools, and two meetings have already taken place with representatives from his department to lay the groundwork for some significant amendments to the School Act and the Municipal Governments Act. It is hoped that this work will form the basis of substantive improvements for charter schools in the areas of facility acquisition, permanency, financial parity, delegation of authority and accountability, and in access to government initiatives offered to other public schools. All schools have been encouraged to develop relationships with their MLA’s.



Your association also took a leadership role in disseminating information about the various candidates in the fall 2006 Conservative Party Leadership election. Although we did not endorse any particular candidate, all were asked for their answers to certain pertinent questions and their responses were distributed to members. Voters’ decisions were better informed as a result of this effort.

In the area of curriculum, Pier de Paola, Almadina Superintendent, was appointed to and ably represented TAAPCS on the Alberta Education English as a Second Language Advisory Committee to assist in the implementation of a comprehensive ESL strategy.

- ❖ Excellent Charter School Study Results – Although the findings of this study commissioned by Alberta Education have not been made public, it has been encouraging to note that charter school PAT scores compare very favourably to those province-wide.

PAT Results*	2002 Acc %	2002 Exc %	2003 Acc %	2003 Exc %	2004 Acc %	2004 Exc %	2005 Acc %	2005 Exc %	2006 Acc %	2006 Exc %
Charter School Results	89	31	87	27	90	31	91	32	91	33
All Schools Summary	77	18	77	19	76	19	76	19	76	19
Difference	+12	+13	+10	+8	+14	+12	+15	+13	+15	+14

*Numbers above represent averages over all disciplines and grades.

In addition to these impressive results, gains in PAT scores from the 2003-2005 years to 2006 were significantly higher than the average for all Alberta schools: charter school gains averaged 2% in the acceptable and 3% in the excellent categories, while the

provincial average lost 1% on acceptable scores and stayed even in the excellent category. We can be proud of our achievements!

- ❖ Informative Newsletters – This year a major step forward was taken in the area of communications with the redesign of our newsletter (titled “*Reflections*”) and the development of a one-page “Fact Sheet” which gives basic, point-form information about charter schools. Members were encouraged to incorporate the new fact sheet and our brochure into their school’s public relations packages and to disseminate them as widely as possible in order to increase awareness and understanding of charter schools and of TAAPCS.
- ❖ Funding and Finances – Membership dues for the 2007-2008 school year were approved at \$1000. per school for two representatives, with a fee of \$100. for each additional attendee. As well, we applied for and received funding in the form of a \$20,000 grant from Alberta Education to supplement the dues and help defray the costs of our Education Advisory Committee Meetings in Red Deer. To this point, the financial burden on a few schools has been excessive in terms of travel, meal and substitute costs for these meetings. A budget incorporating this grant was developed and approved by the membership in January.

At the end of the 2006-2007 year, TAAPCS finds itself in a favourable financial position:

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Opening Balance			\$4,645.02
Revenue		\$35,000.00	
Expenses	\$12,719.96		
Bank Balance at Aug. 31, 2007			\$26,925.06

The efforts of TAAPCS members are reaping dividends, and with enhanced government relations, community recognition and member involvement, we anticipate another productive and rewarding year in 2007-08!

Thank you from your TAAPCS 2006-07 Executive:

Judy Gray, Co-Chair
 Jay Pritchard, Co-Chair
 Meredith Poole, Secretary-Treasurer