

## TAAPCS looks toward a bright future

A group of TAAPCS members had the pleasure of getting together at the most recent regular meeting on October 23 and 24 in Calgary. As always, those in attendance at this meeting were reminded that the most valuable aspect of TAAPCS membership is that the collective voice of members can and does make a difference.

A clear, overarching theme of how the Association will define the future of Alberta charter schools was the focus of many discussions.

“Member school representatives greatly enjoyed getting together in one room to share ideas and successes,” says Jay Pritchard, TAAPCS Co-Chair and Foundations for the Future Charter Academy Superintendent. “What is powerful is that we are developing a solid common ground around where the group sees Alberta charter schools moving, and how we can move in that direction together.”

Discussions determined that, as we move forward, it is key for all members to use consistent messages in order to build our strength using one voice. Permanence remains our number one theme in all discussions with elected and departmental officials, and we encourage all our member schools to convey this message.

Also, a predominant topic discussed at the meeting included the ongoing visioning exercise. The Association is working to develop a clear vision for the future of charter schools. Ken McNeill, Calgary Arts Academy Board Director, presented a proposal on the subject at the TAAPCS regular meeting in October. Members are encouraged to read this document, and responses from each member school’s Board are requested as soon as possible.

Another interesting initiative on the horizon is the upcoming Principal’s Day, which is a shared event between the Association and Alberta Education. All charter school principals will be invited to come together for a full day to consider a number of topics of mutual interest. This meeting can only add to the cohesiveness of the Association efforts as a whole.

Also, Westmount Charter School kindly offered to lead the planning committee for the Charter School Conference October 23, 2009. The committee will work toward creating conference sessions that are of interest to the educational community at large, including the Minister of Education and his department. All member schools are expected to have representation in the planning process.

“This is an important time for charter schools,” says Judy Gray, TAAPCS Co-Chair and Foundations for the Future Charter Academy Principal. “With a clear vision of our future and active engagement from all TAAPCS members we have the recipe for success.”



Members from Suzuki, Westmount Charter School and Calgary Arts Academy



## Tribute to David Panas

It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to one of our newest members, David Panas, Mother Earth's Children's Charter School (MECCS) Superintendent, who passed away on October 28, 2008.

David was committed to life-long learning and welcomed his recent association with MECCS as a new adventure. He demonstrated great leadership and was a man of integrity, compassion, and wisdom, and, most of all, he believed in people.

“David was the breath of fresh air that our school needed,” says TJ Skalski, MECCS Principal. “He was the right mix at the right time and was able to inspire us all with hope for a valiant future.”



David recognized the potential of MECCS, embracing its vision of a brighter tomorrow for First Nations children. He understood its uniqueness and recognized the importance of deep-rooted traditional Indigenous knowledge being gifted back to the community. He foresaw the significant impact this unique educational opportunity would have on generations to come.

Discussions with MECCS students and staff are ongoing to determine an appropriate memorial to David. TJ closed with these words: “He will forever be remembered, and we trust that he is watching over us as we continue our journey forward.”

## A fond farewell to Patrick Maguire

Patrick Maguire, Calgary Arts Academy (CAA) Superintendent, is moving on to his next adventure after working with CAA for the past three years. He will be able to live in his primary residence full time now and will take on a new role as a Returning Officer for his provincial constituency in Nanaimo, B.C.

Patrick is recognized for his strong leadership and organizational skills, but his sense of humour and ready laughter will be missed the most by all who had the pleasure of working with him. The CAA Board of Directors sincerely appreciates Patrick's dedication to CAA and its principles. TAAPCS wishes Patrick all the best in his future endeavours and thanks him for his active participation with the Association.



## New Horizons has a new home

After much work and even more patience, New Horizons School (NHS) has moved into a new building. The story of this move stands as an inspiration to all charter schools as we move forward.

“The most important learning for NHS during this process was to be creative in seeking solutions, and to be open to new possibilities and to working closely with provincial representatives to get things done in a cooperative and positive way,” says Jim Rigby, NHS Superintendent. “When open minds and creativity combine, great things can be accomplished.”

The New Horizons Charter School Society (NHCSS) had been leasing a former school building from another organization in Sherwood Park. That lease was coming to a conclusion and was not available for renewal. In light of this development, the NHCSS Board found it necessary to find new facilities in order for the school to continue offering programs to its students.

The Board had been searching for a long-term facility solution for the past several years but, despite its concerted efforts and many hours of discussions and research, had not been able to resolve this issue. The Board requested that the Minister of Education assist with the process of finding another facility for NHS. This resulted in Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS), coming forward with a potential solution for housing NHS programs at one of its existing rural school sites, in combination with new modular classrooms. The Board reviewed the proposal and entered into a joint Letter of Understanding with EIPS and this proposal was accepted by the Minister of Education in the early spring of 2008.

Between mid-May and early September of 2008, a total of eleven modular classrooms were located and secondary construction was completed, along with parking and the playground. The physical move of NHS programs was a huge project and was completed by the second week of September, at least to the point where school programs could begin.

The project involved a large number of people in all phases in order to make the facility move happen.

Staff members worked very hard to pack materials and furnishings at the old site, and set them up at the new location in order to get programs rolling. Their efforts, along with several parent and student volunteers, made the move happen efficiently and effectively.

“We are most proud of the excellent learning environment that the new facility offers for our students, and for the staff who work so hard to provide programs,” says Jim Rigby.

The new facility will add several new features to the programs for students at NHS. At last, students will have access to bright, attractive classrooms, real gymnasium spaces, a beautiful newly-equipped computer lab, library and arts program room. This will allow NHS to build new dimensions into their programs.



New Horizons students enjoying their new school

“The Board of NHCSS wishes to thank our school community for pulling together to support the relocation of the program,” says Jim Rigby. “They are also highly appreciative of the support they received from TAAPCS and its member schools. The encouragement and focus of TAAPCS in working with the province on a solution for NHS was an important and valued piece of reaching our goal.”

## News items:

### New TAAPCS website

We are thrilled to announce that TAAPCS has a new and improved website. We feel that the new site will help members to better communicate with one another and will present clear, professional and cohesive information to external audiences. To view the new site, go to: [www.taapcs.ca](http://www.taapcs.ca)

### Board input requested ASAP

Please remember, responses from each member school's Board are requested as soon as possible in regards to Ken McNeill's proposal on the vision of a preferred future for charter schools. Comments can go to Meredith Poole at [meredith.poole@ffca-calgary.com](mailto:meredith.poole@ffca-calgary.com).

### AGM Appointments

At the most recent TAAPCS AGM, it was moved that the three existing members of the executive be nominated to retain their positions in the coming year (i.e. Jay Pritchard and Judy Gray as Co-Chairs, Meredith Poole as Secretary-Treasurer). As a result, the existing Executive were acclaimed for 2008-2009. Also, the EAC committee members for 2008-2009 are as follows: Jay Pritchard, Judy Gray, Heather Christison, Ches Cowley, Merv Kurtz, Megan O'Hara, Marie Keenan, Gordon Welch, Kurtis Leinweber, Steve Simmons.

### Government meetings

The Association has made an application to meet with Capital Caucus and Rural Caucus. Also, the Committee of Charter Board Chairs has requested a meeting with the Minister of Education (prior to Christmas) to discuss Alberta Education initiatives in relation to permanent status for charter schools.

### Let your work shine

As discussed at the last TAAPCS meeting, we would like to keep track of members' research, meetings and writings taking place or presented in other provinces and counties. This will help us to build a comprehensive body of work for presentations to government and other decision-makers. Please forward this information to Meredith Poole, TAAPCS Secretary Treasurer at: [meredith.poole@ffca-calgary.com](mailto:meredith.poole@ffca-calgary.com).

### CAA in the news

Eugene Stickland of the Calgary Herald wrote a great article on the Calgary Arts Academy. He focused his article on the benefit of the acquisition of knowledge through the arts, which helps to develop the kind of people who will make this city and this world a better place for all of us.

### New leadership and look for Aurora Charter School

After the retirement of Ross Johnston, Aurora School Superintendent, Steve Simmons has taken on the role. Also, Ian Gray, after many years of teaching at Suzuki Charter, is Aurora's new Principal. To complete their new look, Aurora has just completed its year long renovations and is happy to be in a finished school.

### Fun for all at FFCA

FFCA's Andrew Davison Middle School campus recently built a new playground for their students and the surrounding community to enjoy. The project was an excellent example of teamwork with help from parents, FFCA staff and community residents.

### Setting the direction

You are welcomed to provide your thoughts about setting the direction for special education in Alberta. To register for sessions, obtain info or give input online, visit [www.settingthedirection.alberta.ca](http://www.settingthedirection.alberta.ca).

### Save the date

All TAAPCS members are encouraged to attend the upcoming TAAPCS regular meetings scheduled for the following dates:

January 22/23, 2009 in Red Deer

May 7/8, 2009 in Edmonton

**We know that all TAAPCS member schools have exciting stories to share. To have your latest news and achievements highlighted in the upcoming newsletter, please contact Lara Hamnett at: [lara.hamnett@gmail.com](mailto:lara.hamnett@gmail.com).**