

REFLECTIONS

June 2008

TAAPCS regular meeting brings renewed energy

The most recent regular meeting of TAAPCS was held May 23 in Red Deer, AB. There were 31 guests in attendance, including representatives from Alberta Education.

Successes highlighted at the meeting included Alberta Education's positive response to our request for enhanced Board and administration funding, steadfast government relations work which has enhanced the TAAPCS profile within the provincial legislature, healthy enrolment in member schools, increased involvement of Board members, amazing student presentations that occur at each meeting and, most importantly, an increasing sense of community in the charter school movement.

"The greatest take-away for me was the knowledge that charter schools are part of the larger context of excellence in public education and that together, our advocacy makes a difference to students, parents and staff," said Judy Gray, TAAPCS Co-Chair and Principal of Calgary Girls' School.

Priorities identified in the meeting were a renewed focus on research and innovation within charter schools, the development of a statement of preferred future for charter schools,

the consistency of the 3 P's message, the importance of advocating for legislative and policy changes, and the continued relationship-building necessary to influence change.

Joe Frank and Murray Donaghy, Alberta Education representatives, provided updates on behalf of the province, including news that the new Education Minister, David Hancock, intends to undertake a broad public consultation on our education system in Alberta. This consultation would likely include discussions about the future of charter schools. Also, the Deputy Minister

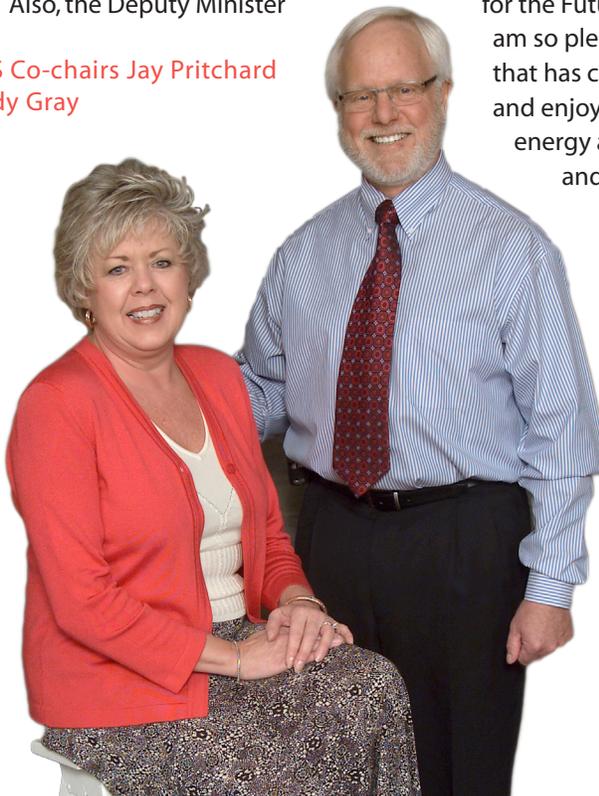
has asked for a comprehensive review of the policy manual with the goal of simplifying these documents for school authorities and the public.

Continued efforts will be made to acquire new facilities, to increase enrolment caps and to encourage all TAAPCS members to be active in the Association. Work will also continue on launching the new TAAPCS communications materials including a web site, brochure and newsletter (including this addition of *Reflections*).

"As we move forward there is much to be proud of and much work still to be done," said Jay Pritchard, TAAPCS Co-chair and Foundations for the Future Superintendent. "I am so pleased that we are a group that has come to know, respect, and enjoy one another's intellects, energy and sense of hard work and fun."

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.

TAAPCS Co-chairs Jay Pritchard and Judy Gray



For detailed minutes of past regular meetings go to: www.taapcs.ca





Calgary Girls' School celebrates five years

The Calgary Girls' School (CGS) celebrated its fifth anniversary on April 17. As part of the celebration, the following speech was presented by Sydney Herauf, a CGS grade 7 student whose story is a testament to the incredible work being accomplished by Alberta Charter Schools.

Four Years and Counting: The Sydney Herauf Story, — By Sydney Herauf

The statement “who I am” can't even begin to describe my experiences at CGS. Before I came to this school I found myself clinging to only one group of four best friends. Not showing a lot of independence, the media influenced me on my outlook

on life, and even what I wore. At my last school, sometimes I was internally angry at others if they were a “copy-cat” and took my ideas.

Now, a new kind of patience has been thrust upon me at CGS which helped me improve myself.

In an act of sheer, and utter independence I decided to leave my four BFF's (best friends forever) for a new place. However, I made friends and I learned strategies that allowed me to not care about how models look. I also found my marks improving astronomically

as my experience at CGS continued, I enjoyed being able to try new things. Here I wasn't distracted as I had

been before. The ability to do my personal best with concentration and prestige has helped me continuously to improve my studies.

Overall I feel that CGS has changed me into a person with broader horizons and a vaster outlook on life. I am no longer afraid to express my concern for world issues such as global warming, racism and sexism. I've changed for the better and I know that others can too.



Setting the foundation for future leaders

From April 2007 through October 2007, 77 Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA) High School students participated in a cutting-edge leadership training effectiveness study. Student participants in the study were separated into two groups - those who participated in the the Werklund Foundation's Rapport Teen Leadership Program, and those who did not. Students were compared before and after the training as well as six months after the training.

The study found that students who had completed the training demonstrated:

- » A better understanding of their own feelings and the ability to confidently communicate those feelings and ideas.
- » A greater improvement in their social awareness and interpersonal understanding.
- » A greater capacity to adapt to changes in their environment and problem-solve
- » A higher degree of emotionally intelligent behaviour, feeling good about themselves as well as others, being optimistic and positive and usually believing they are successful in life.
- » A greater capacity to attain goals and grow in competence.

Through their E3 Leadership Training Initiative, the Werklund Foundation brings world-class leadership training and support to high schools to enhance the learning environment, and to enable youth to discover their personal confidence, enthusiasm, passion, focus, and joy of life.



FFCA cont'd

FFCA was the first school to partner with the Werklund Foundation to complete the effectiveness study and has had 140 of its students complete the Rapport Teen Leadership Program. Kurtis Leinweber, FFCA High School Principal Educator, Justin Kool, FFCA High School Associate Principal, and Farah Sarif, a FFCA High School student, were on City TV's Breakfast TV this spring to discuss their participation in the leadership training initiative.

The Werklund Foundation was founded by David Werklund in 2006 to fulfill his lifelong commitment to community, specifically in support of initiatives that facilitate the development of self-esteem, self-worth and emotional intelligence.



Innovations exemplified at Westmount

As is the mandate of all of Alberta's Charter Schools, Westmount is expected to engage in innovative educational practices that improve the overall educational landscape in Alberta. In a dozen years of operation, the school has introduced a number of fresh practices and perspectives that have become part of the fabric of their school.

Admissions practices which recognize the complexity of giftedness. Students are admitted not solely on the basis of across-the-board IQ thresholds, but on a broad range of input from parents, educators, and student interviews, test and assessment activities.

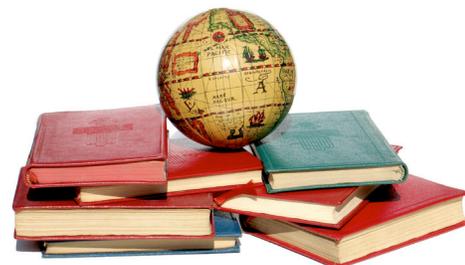
An understanding that giftedness is present at all grade levels, not just in the senior elementary/junior high age range.

An approach to gifted education which applies Multiple Intelligence theory, develops Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to focus on the learning needs of each student, embraces the social-emotional needs of gifted learners, and re-groups students in core elementary subjects according to ability/achievement while maintaining an age-peer home room.

A high school which began with one key question, "What qualities do we want to see in graduates of our High School?" This question has led to an emphasis on humanitarism as a key component to the full social-emotional development of gifted adolescents.

Engagement of the phenomenon of "gifted underachievement". Our cycle III AISI project is focusing on the need for student, parent and school to act in a "tri-partnership" in order to address gifted underachievement, and the Student Services team has been expanded to increase the amount of in-school support available for students in need. Westmount works closely with the Centre for Gifted Education, University of Calgary, to ensure that current understandings and "best practices" are shared between our institutions.

An emphasis on the mentoring of new teachers. Westmount has been a site for many student teachers, and recently certificated teachers are part of an ongoing program of mentoring.



Special programs-within-a-program such as grade 7's Project Earth, and the new grade 8 Renaissance project, which feature an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to core subjects. Also, Advanced Placement (AP) courses have been added at high school, to meet the needs of motivated, high-achieving High School students who want a "head start" on University credits.

An openness to share our innovations with others. On April 11th we hosted 13 British educators in a visit organized by the Centre for Gifted Ed at U of C, and on May 8th will be hosting educators from Brunei who are interested in observing our approach to gifted education.

To learn more about the innovative heart of Westmount Charter School, click on "our innovations" on any page of the school's website at: www.westmountcharter.com



Arts education in action

Calgary Arts Academy's (CAA) annual junior high student performance at Calgary's Vertigo Theatre is a yearly highlight. Although this enriched learning experience is eagerly anticipated by students, staff and parents, mounting an original show is always a challenging task.

The brainstorming begins early in the school year with teachers, students and artists contributing ideas for the show. As the year progresses the storyline begins to take shape. The show is always curriculum based and typically centres on the social studies program.

This year, CAA's show was entitled, *Now Boarding*. The setting was a modern day airport where travelers faced the challenges of customs, immigration and security. Flashbacks to passengers' native countries allowed the audience insight into several cultures including Russia,

Japan, Africa, USA and Canada. Many dance and vocal pieces were interspersed throughout the performance which culminated in the "Safety Shuffle" grand finale. The usual airline safety speech came to life when all fifty-four performers started to sing and dance, giving the audience a humorous perspective on airline safety.

CAA celebrates their fifth year of offering Alberta Curriculum through Arts Immersion. Students have the opportunity to learn through the five fine arts – music, art, dance, drama and literary arts. They are thrilled to have the opportunity to experience so many rewarding opportunities for

teaching and learning in the Alberta charter school system.

Interested educators and members of the community are invited to visit CAA to learn about their unique programming. For more information call: (403) 532-3020.



TAAPCS NEWS AND EVENTS

The future is bright

TAAPCS has been asked by Alberta Education to arrange a meeting with Education Minister David Hancock to discuss issues related to the future of Charter Schools in Alberta. The agenda for this meeting will be jointly developed by TAAPCS Executive and Keray Henke, Deputy Minister. This is the kind of collaborative work that has come to exemplify TAAPCS.

Small school shows big heart

Students and parents from FFCA's Renfrew campus raised \$12,600 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation during their Jump Rope for Heart Day on February 13. Students, staff and volunteers truly put their hearts into making this event such a big success.

Best wishes to Ross Johnston

Ross Johnston, Aurora School Superintendent, is retiring at the end of this school year. Since Aurora School opened in 1996, Ross has demonstrated great dedication to his own school and all Alberta charter schools. The Board is now in the process of searching for a new superintendent.

CAA attends arts education conference

A group of Calgary Arts Academy (CAA) staff recently attended the National Arts Education Association's annual conference held in New Orleans. This prestigious conference was attended by over 3800 delegates from across the US and Canada. CAA staff members were selected from over 1600 applicants to present at the conference for the second time.

Save the date

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

October 23/24, 2008 in Calgary

January 22/23, 2009 in Red Deer

May 14/15, 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