



CONNECT
CHARTER SCHOOL

EXPO

Experiential - Place-based - Outdoor

— Parent Information Session —
March 22, 2017

Charter School Expectation

The expectation for the educational services offered by charter schools is that they will be different from what is locally available. Charter schools must demonstrate the potential to improve the learning of students. In general, charter schools complement the educational services provided in the local public system. They represent an opportunity for successful educational practices to be recognized and adopted by other public schools for the benefit of more Albertans.

Charter Schools' Handbook, Alberta Education (2002)

The Essence of Experiential Learning

I hear and I forget

I see and I remember

I do and I understand

Integrity of Connects' charter mandate

- In keeping with the intent of Connects' charter and goals, it is imperative that research-informed practice and innovative programming determine future directions for the school.
- Creating meaningful, relevant, and authentic learning opportunities is a primary consideration for teachers and school leadership, requiring staff to make connections beyond the walls of a traditional school setting.
- Developing extraordinary citizens that understand their place in the world.

Update on stakeholder consultations & feedback

- Staff retreat (Feb. 16-17): further discussion on the rationale for implementation of an EOEP and specific rotation models generated healthy debate and resulted in a decision to move forward with a program that maintains class sizes at 26 students and 4 classes per grade, thus ensuring specialist teaching positions and student/teacher relationships remain at the core of our grade structure;
- Two more student focus group sessions were convened to gather questions from classes and develop a *Frequently Asked Questions* list for guided discussions;
- An ad hoc committee of School Council has been convened to provide additional feedback and advice to school leadership on program implementation.

Intro Jaime and Cynthia here.

Parent Advisory Committee Perspective

- Committee comprised of parents - volunteered to provide feedback and support for EXPO program
 - Represent a cross-section of ages and grades
 - Link between the parent community (positive and negative voices) and the school
- First met February 15; reviewed program evolution based on parent/teacher/student feedback. Provided parent perspective.
- Initiatives: Grant research, potential fundraising, program renaming contest, program ambassadors at Student Led Conferences and Place-Based Education (EXPO) week

What's best for students?

- opportunity to enrich curriculum by using people and places as sources of knowledge *
- when students go directly to the source, "where subjects begin", they learn to see school as more useful *
- learning to "read the world" involves a knowledge that includes action, personal understanding and a way of being in the world *

* *Reading the World Not Just the Words*, A. Demarest, Green Teacher Magazine

What's best for students?

- children with diverse learning needs thrive in settings where learning aligns with their cognitive strengths and capacity
- enables personalized learning by giving students voice and choice while still ensuring adherence to the program of studies **
- instruction can be interdisciplinary and students are challenged to see the world through ecological, political, economic and social lenses and allows for deeper transfer, application and understanding of content and skills**

** *What is Place-Based Education and Why Does it Matter?* GETTING SMART in partnership with eduInnovation & Teton Science Schools

Teacher Sustainability and Succession

- reinvigorating for teachers, inspires active learning, can generate enthusiasm as they learn in new situations
- reinforces the power of inquiry, teacher's role becomes supporting students in their search for a solution
- important for PD days to reflect planning time for grade teams
- scheduling both curriculum partner planning time as well as pod-partner (cross-curricular) planning time
- mentorship opportunities for teachers who have regularly utilized PBE in their practice
- opportunity to provide professional learning for substitute teachers so they gain confidence and competency to assume teaching roles within the program

Risk management practices and ongoing considerations: student safety

- current plan formalizes what we already do, risk management practices will remain consistent with current practice.
- staff, student and parent training around preparation for spending extended periods outside the school
- collaborating with the Outdoor Council of Canada to develop and refine outdoor leadership training modules for staff, parents, and students
- ongoing work of Connect Charter School Board Operations Committee to develop a *Risk Management Policy*.

Organization and logistics

- 4 day schedule with every other Friday being a Connect Day (Day 5);
- Pods off site together (ie: 4.1 and 4.2) to take advantage of cross-curricular opportunities but flexibility in place for other arrangements if planned ahead of time;
- Grade Groups: **4 & 7, 5 & 8, 6 & 9**. Allows for some cross grade collaboration, specifically in regards to Science and Social Studies outcomes that circle back at different grade levels;
- Create as many opportunities as possible within local community to reduce transportation costs.

33% of instructional time for math/science

33% for humanities

Increase from current 31.25%

Maintain 1010 hours of instruction (AbEd recommendation is 950)

Leadership in Education

- Opportunities for teachers and leadership team to present at conferences (Partner Research Schools Conference, Calgary - August 2017; Association of Experiential Education Conference, Montreal - November 2017);
- Connect! Blog amplification;
- Connect will resonate as a leader in innovative educational practice and will share/mentor other teachers and school leaders;
- Demonstration to Alberta Education that Connect is innovating and leading the way;
- Research Opportunities - partnership with MRU;
- Internal leadership and mentorship opportunities among staff;
- Parent, teacher, student accountability pillar surveys.

Stakeholder Engagement

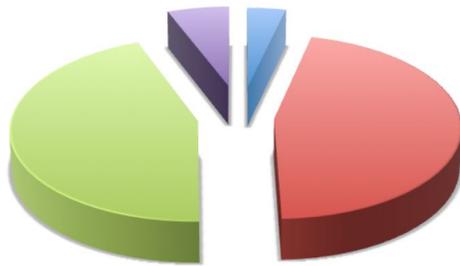
- Continual feedback from Parent Advisory Committee
- Student Focus Groups
- Ongoing staff reflection
- Feedback from community partners
- Research data on efficacy of the program and recommendations for future directions

Financial Resources and Integrity

- no additional students will be added for 2017/2018 (no additional revenue)
- enrichment fees increased from \$525 to \$575
- blending of current budgets (Field Studies, Enrichment, Outdoor Education etc) to EXPO
- Corporate partnership opportunities; sponsorships, and targeted fundraising initiatives led by parents (Connect Parent Society & School-Based Fundraising) for sustainability of the program, and to purchase a bus;

Show pie chart

Connect Charter School Enrichment Cost Recovery
2017/2018 School Year
Budget: Parent \$575, Connect \$100
Total \$675



■ Student Agendas & Supplies (\$25)

■ EXPO (Outdoor education, Field studies, Enrichment) (\$310)

■ Student Ipad & Laptops (\$300)

■ Electives (\$40)

Measures of success

- student achievement and confidence in primarily front matter of curriculum - (curiosity, inventiveness, respect, cooperation, value life-long learning, engage in active inquiry);
- real-life skill development for the students (time management, information management, communication etc);
- appreciation for the connections of curricula to applications outside of school;
- student, parent and teacher feedback (conversations, surveys etc);
- establishment of positive community partnerships;
- increase in number of speaking/presenting opportunities for staff and leadership team;
- Blog visits;
- increase in numbers of schools/districts viewing Connect as a model for inquiry, experiential, and place-based education (as measured by school visits, speaking invitations, mentorship requests and consultations);

Next steps

- Consolidate community partnerships that support place-based education and the goals of the program to extend and enrich inquiry-based learning opportunities;
- Explore fundraising possibilities to provide resources (transportation, site costs, materials for field experiences);
- Provide release time for teachers to conduct long-range planning and coordinate specific units of instruction with off campus venues;
- Continue to communicate details of the program with current and future Connect students and parents on a regular basis and through a variety of media (website, blog, Spectrum, weekly updates);
- Consult with the Parent Advisory Committee on implementation steps, communication, and program requirements that will benefit from parental input.

Corporate and Community Partnerships

- Community partnerships (Camp River Edge, MRU, UofC, ...)
- Corporate partnership opportunities
- Grants subcommittee
- Parent meeting April 18th from 6-7pm in the Learning Commons
 - Explore corporate and community partnership opportunities

What's Next?

How can parents help the school reach their goals (curricular and financial) for this program?

Lend your expertise:

- Grant writing
- Subject experts
- Partners
- Sponsorships
- Corporate / Personal Donations
- Your ideas are welcome

Resources

<http://www.gettingsmart.com/placebasededucation/>

<http://www.ourcurriculummatters.com/index.php>

<http://placebasedbasics.weebly.com>

http://www.promiseofplace.org/what_is_pbe