



CONNECT
CHARTER SCHOOL
PARENT HANDBOOK

2017-2018

WELCOME to Connect Charter School. As a publicly funded charter school, we are extremely proud of the role we play in Alberta's public education system. We thrive on research-informed educational practice and innovative approaches to teaching, learning, and leading. The *Parent Handbook* provides an overview of the most significant elements of the school and may also lead to more questions... thus is the nature of inquiry, and one of the key reasons for our existence. You are encouraged to review the handbook with your child (ren) who attend Connect, in order to establish common understanding of our school's purpose and how we can work collaboratively to develop extraordinary citizens and foster student success in multiple ways. As you review the handbook, make note of any outstanding questions you may have, and direct them to your child's teacher or the school leadership team for a response. Ongoing communication between school and home is essential to successful learning, and it is our commitment to the Connect Charter School community to ensure that the information pathways between student, parents, and teachers, remain open and effective.

Thank you,

Phil Butterfield, EdD, Principal

Shashi Shergill, Assistant Principal

Chjris Hooper, EdD, Assistant Principal

FAST FACTS..... 4

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW..... 6

 INTRODUCTION 6

 WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?..... 6

 RESOURCES..... 7

 CONNECT CHARTER SCHOOL VISION, MISSION AND GOALS..... 7

Vision..... 7

Mission..... 7

Goals..... 7

 SCHOOL TEACHING APPROACH 7

Inquiry-Based Learning 8

Inclusive Education Practices and Student Services 9

Technology 11

Outdoor Education..... 10

SECTION 2: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 12

 REGISTRATION, WAIT LIST AND ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS..... 12

SECTION 3: GETTING TO AND FROM CCS 13

 TRANSPORTATION BASICS 13

 HOW TO ADDRESS PARENT CONCERNS ABOUT BUSING..... 14

 DROP OFF, PICK UP, AND PARKING..... 14

SECTION 4: GETTING “IN TOUCH” WITH STAFF AND STUDENTS..... 15

 REGULAR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND HOME 15

 WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN 16

SECTION 5: GETTING INVOLVED AS A VOLUNTEER 17

 SCHOOL COUNCIL 17

 PARENT SUMMIT CONFERENCE 17

 PARENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT CONNECT CHARTER SCHOOL..... 18

SECTION 6: GETTING INVOLVED AS A STUDENT 18

 CLUBS 18

 SPORTS/INTRAMURALS 18

 STUDENT LEADERSHIP 19

 PEER MENTORING..... 19

 COURSE ELECTIVES..... 20

SECTION 7: SCHOOL POLICIES AND PRACTICES 20

 A. STUDENT LATES & ABSENCES..... 20

Sign In/Out Procedure 20

 B. CLOSED CAMPUS..... 20

 C. CLASS SIZE..... 20

 D. FEES..... 21

Enrichment Fees..... 20

Transportation Fees..... 21

Lock Fees 21

 E. STUDENT ASSESSMENT 21

 F. SCHOOL CLIMATE 22

 G. CODE OF CONDUCT **ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**

 H. DISCIPLINE..... 23

 I. CRISIS MANAGEMENT 22

 J. STUDENT HEALTH AND MEDICATION 24

 K. LUNCH & FOOD AVAILABILITY..... 25

FAST FACTS

5915 Lewis Drive SW Calgary, Alberta T3E 5Z4

P: 403.282.2890

F: 403.282.2896

email: General Inquiries: office@connectcharter.ca

Busing Inquiries: transportationatconnect@gmail.com

Website: www.connectcharter.ca

Superintendent

Susan Chomistek (ext. 232)

susan.c@connectcharter.ca

Principal

Dr. Phil Butterfield (ext. 122)

phil.b@connectcharter.ca

Assistant Principal

Shashi Shergill (ext. 125)

shashi.s@connectcharter.ca

Assistant Principal

Dr. Chris Hooper (ext. 116)

chris.h@connectcharter.ca

Inclusive Practices Coordinator

Abby Saadeh (ext. 233)

abby.s@connectcharter.ca

Secretary-Treasurer

Myra Penberthy (ext. 121)

myra.p@connectcharter.ca

Admin Secretary

Nola Shewfelt (ext. 100)

nola.s@connectcharter.ca

Office Assistant

Susan Miller (ext. 120)

susan.m@connectcharter.ca

Office Assistant

Laurie Kangas

laurie.k@connectcharter.ca

Phone Number to report an absent or late student

403.282.2890

School Times

8:40 – Buses Arrive at School

Grade 4 – 7 Schedule

8:50 – 9:00	Homeroom
9:00 – 9:40	Period 1
9:40 – 10:20	Period 2
10:20 – 10:35	Recess
10:35 – 11:15	Period 3
11:15 – 11:55	Period 4
11:55 – 12:10	Lunch
12:10 – 12:40	Lunch recess
12:40 – 1:20	Period 5
1:20 – 2:00	Period 6
2:00 – 2:40	Period 7
2:40 – 3:20	Period 8
3:20 – 3:30	Homeroom

3:30 – Dismissal

3:40 – Buses Leave School

Grades 8 – 9 Schedule

8:50 – 9:00	Homeroom
9:00 – 9:40	Period 1
9:40 – 10:20	Period 2
10:20 – 11:00	Period 3
11:00 – 11:40	Period 4
11:40 – 11:55	Lunch
11:55 – 12:40	Lunch recess
12:40 – 1:20	Period 5
1:20 – 2:00	Period 6
2:00 – 2:40	Period 7
2:40 – 3:20	Period 8

3:30 – Dismissal

3:40 – Buses Leave School

School Calendar

The complete calendar for the current school year may be viewed on the school website at www.connectcharter.ca

Section 1: OVERVIEW

Introduction

Connect Charter School - formerly known as Calgary Science School (CSS) opened in 1999 as a publicly funded autonomous charter school. The Connect Charter School board governs the school; the superintendent, principal and two assistant principals handle administrative duties. The school serves 616 students in Grades 4-9.

Our facility is the Clem Gardner campus leased from the Calgary Board of Education in the community of Lakeview. Our lease runs for the length of any current Charter, and is subject to extension when the charter renewal process is complete. The campus was formerly an elementary school that was converted to accommodate our middle school program. It houses 24 homeroom classrooms, one gym, an indoor activity center, four specialty classrooms (art, drama, music, science lab), a mini shop, a full service learning commons (library), as well as administrative offices.

The school sits on a large parcel of land, which hosts a playground for younger students and enables all students to play outdoor sports. The schoolyard is adjacent to the Lakeview Community Centre and our students have access to the skating rinks during Physical Education in the winter. The school and schoolyard are wheelchair accessible.

What is a Charter School?

Public charter schools are autonomous public schools of choice that provide the Alberta curriculum, and each has a unique focus or delivery method to improve student learning. Currently, Alberta is the only province in Canada that has charter schools. Following approval of a charter school application, the Minister of Education grants a Charter. After demonstrating success according to the terms of the charter, a renewal of the school's charter may be granted by the Minister.

Charter schools:

- Are attended by choice
- Charge no tuition
- Have no religious affiliation
- Employ certified teachers
- Are locally governed; each has its own school board
- Encourage parental involvement

- Have a unique focus or delivery method
- Must teach mandated provincial curriculum
- Must administer Provincial Achievement Tests and any other tests the Minister prescribes
- Are not part of the large public boards in urban areas.

Resources

Charter Schools Handbook

http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/charter_hndbk.pdf

The Alberta Association of Public Charter Schools

<http://www.taapcs.ca/>

Connect Charter School Vision, Mission and Goals

Vision

Preparing our students as extraordinary citizens.

Mission

Promote innovation and the ongoing development of exemplary learning, teaching and leadership practices within an active inquiry-based learning community.

Goals

1. Promote exemplary learning, teaching and leading through a disposition of inquiry.
2. Enhance learning and teaching through the appropriate and effective use of technology and maintain an intentional, authentic and innovative perspective in the use of technology.
3. Engage students in meaningful, real-life learning activities in a variety of rich learning environments, with a focus on mind, body, emotions, creative spirit and ethical citizenship.
4. Provide environmental, outdoor and global education learning opportunities for students to experience and appreciate the world outside of the classroom and to develop social, leadership and stewardship skills.
5. Foster a culture of collaboration and caring relationships of mutual respect with students, staff members and parents sharing a passion for learning; together and from others, in the classroom, within the school and beyond.
6. Nurture thriving classrooms and other learning environments where teachers are informed by research and where students and teachers explore and develop deep understanding as active researchers.

School Teaching Approach

Connect Charter School employs Alberta teachers who hold current, valid certification. Two teachers are assigned to each pod of two classes - one specializing in math/science and one specializing in the humanities. The Connect Charter School teacher/student ratio is 26:1 in grades 4-7 and 25:1 in grades 8 and 9. Specialists are employed to teach music, art, drama and physical education and are not counted as part of the student/teacher ratio.

Teachers are encouraged to develop innovative approaches to teaching that facilitate learning in their classes through dynamic programs. Teachers work as collaborative teams to establish an effective school learning culture. The Board supports and encourages teacher professional development in the philosophy of life-long learning.

As a means of defining and understanding the characteristics of Connect that foster student success, frameworks for exemplary teaching, learning, and leading have been developed that address the fundamental questions of: Who are we?, What do we do?, How do we do it?, and Why do we do it?. The exemplary frameworks represent an important component of our school culture, emphasizing the importance of establishing trusting relationships, developing empathy for others, and developing the skills of collaboration within a disposition of inquiry. The frameworks may be viewed in their entirety at <http://connectcharter.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ExemplaryFrameworks.pdf>.

Inquiry-Based Learning

Inquiry-based learning is the platform for teaching, learning, and leading at Connect Charter School and is central to our core programs of study. Inquiry processes are infused into teaching and learning in all disciplines, and are at the heart of social studies, science, math and language arts.

Inquiry-based learning starts with a question. It may be a question that the teacher poses, or a question that comes up in classroom discussion. Even the simplest sounding question can develop into amazing inquiries requiring a journey that is often messy and complex. Good questions honour what children have to offer and allow them to contribute to the resolution of issues, development of ideas or solution of practical problems that genuinely matter to them.

Inquiry-based learning acknowledges that fundamental skills must be acquired in order for meaningful inquiry to take place. Essential knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy are pivotal to a student's success when they are guided towards

problem solving through critical and creative thinking. Equipped with foundational skills, students are able to generate thoughtful lines of inquiry to support and deepen their learning. Having a sense of ownership for learning is more than just motivating – it helps children learn by connecting new ideas to what they already know, and it helps them develop the belief that their opinions matter and that they can make a difference. Inquiry-based learning at Connect is supported through the meaningful integration of technology and outdoor education.

The evolution of inquiry-based teaching, learning, and leading at Connect Charter School has been informed and supported by the research and development conducted through the Galileo Education Network. Galileo has created a valuable resource (<http://inquiry.galileo.org>) to gain a deeper understanding of the value of a culture of inquiry that also focuses on authentic and meaningful assessment practices.

Experiential, Place based, Outdoor (EXPO) Program

The EXPO program provides students with opportunities to enrich and extend learning by connecting knowledge and concepts to real world applications. Through a combination of off-site field experiences and experts brought into the school, the relevance of specific learning outcomes becomes apparent. Additionally, through a model of place-based learning, students deepen their appreciation for a sense of community and their role and responsibility as a contributing member of society. EXPO integrates diverse learning experiences, technology, community service, and outdoor education to create long-term connections between knowledge acquisition and application in other settings, thus nurturing students to be critical, creative, and resilient learners in preparation for careers that have not yet been defined.

Inclusive Education Practices and Student Services

Recognizing and celebrating diversity among learners is an important element of a vibrant and rich school culture. Connect continues to evolve as a center of inclusive education, addressing the unique characteristics of students and providing accommodations as required to support success.

A school-based student services program provides support to students, staff and parents in the early identification of social, emotional, behavioural and academic concerns that may present challenges to a student's development or well-being. It is through early identification that a comprehensive action plan can be developed and implemented using strategies and modifications available within the resources of the school.

A full time inclusive practices coach, supported by three educational assistants, support teachers and school leaders in working with parents and the student to ensure that a manageable plan is set in motion including appropriate evaluation steps. If deemed necessary, a recommendation may be made for parents to pursue support or intervention outside the services available at Connect Charter School, through referral to the Calgary - Rocky View Student Health Partnership or other agencies.

In addition to the social / emotional aspects of child and adolescent development, student services provide information and guidance on high school options that support specific student goals. An orientation is held in the fall of each year to ensure Grade 9 students and parents are aware of their options and requirements in preparation for high school registration.

Throughout the school year, Student Services staff offer a series of Parent Information Sessions that provide pertinent and timely information on a variety of topics ranging from homework strategies to making the most of educational technology. Upcoming sessions are published in the Spectrum.

Technology

All Connect Charter School students have access to their own Apple laptop computer or iPad. This one student to one device ratio facilitates inquiry-based learning by providing students with real time, any time access to current information; it allows them to share information digitally with their classmates, their teachers, with experts in the field, and with parents; plus, full time access to technology permits students a variety of powerful ways of demonstrating their learning. While students have ubiquitous access to their own laptop/iPad, that doesn't mean that all of their learning involves the use of technology. Just as there are appropriate times for students to use calculators in math class, thesauri in language arts, or a recorder in music, so too are there appropriate times for the use of laptops/iPads. Our teachers work hard to utilize a variety of instructional practices that best match the learning needs of students and the demands of the particular learning outcomes being taught.

The world that our students live in is different from the world that most parents grew up in; our students are native to a digital world and they are very comfortable working in such an environment. Additionally, the world that we are preparing our students for will be very different from the world right now. Our students must be taught twenty first century learning skills such as collaboration, problem solving,

information management, and adaptability in order to be successful in the twenty first century world of work. Ubiquitous access to technology facilitates the development of such competencies in our students.

Outdoor Education

Each grade level at Connect Charter School participates in two overnight trips during the school year, one short trip and an extended one. These trips vary from year to year and last from two to six days. One of the trips is funded through the enrichment fee that the school collects, while parents pay for the other. School policy ensures that no students will be restricted from participating in outdoor experiences due to financial constraints. Please contact the principal if you require further information about financial assistance.

Outdoor Education Schedule 2017-18

Grade	Activity	Group Size	Duration	Dates
4	Camp Riveredge (Calgary)	52	3 days, 2 nights	September
	Southern Alberta History Tour	52	3 days, 2 nights	May
5	Waterton Lakes	52	3 days, 2 nights	August-September
	Fort Steele History Lab (near Cranbrook)	26	4 days, 3 nights	May
6	Camp Sweet (near Olds)	52	3 days, 2 nights	September
	Winter Camp-Ribbon Creek (Kananaskis)	26	3days, 2 nights	January - February
7	Camp Sweet (near Olds)	52	3 days, 2 nights	August
	Fort Steele Apprenticeship Program (near Cranbrook)	26	4 days, 3 nights	May
8	Owl Camp (Kananaskis)	52	3days, 2 nights	September
	Writing On Stone (Milk River)	50	3 days, 2 nights	May
9	Bamfield Marine Biology Excursion (Vancouver Island)	100	6 days, 5 nights	September
	River's Edge (Cremona)	100	2 days, 1 night	June

Section 2: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS (Policy 6.05)

Registration, Wait List and Entrance Requirements

1. Wait List

- a. Children may be added to the waitlist on September 15 of the year they enter kindergarten.
- b. There exist potential exemptions to point (a) above, including:
 - i. Siblings of current students (see procedure 4)
 - ii. Maintaining of the specified minimum gender ratio (see procedure 5)
- c. No more than 400 names will be kept on the wait list for grade 4.
- d. No more than one hundred names will be kept on each of the wait lists for grades 5 to 9.
- e. We will cease to accept names for the grade 4 wait list when the list reaches 400 names.
- f. In order to maintain an accurate wait list, names will be removed from the wait list for the following reasons:
 - i. a parent does not respond to the initial email invitation to attend the information session (see point 3a below).
 - ii. does not respond by March 15 to a follow up letter that would be mailed to the address on record.
 - iii. does not provide the requested documentation by the specified date (see point 2a below).
 - iv. a placement is offered and the parent chooses to decline the spot. The exception to this directive would be in the instance where school administration decides (in conjunction with parents) to delay the admission of a student to the school.

2. Admission Procedures

- a. Prior to admission, parents must provide the following:
 - The child's most recent report card and the final report card from the previous year;
 - Copies of any formal assessments completed within the past 3 years (i.e. – Psycho-educational, Occupational therapy, Speech-Language assessments);
 - An original, authentic writing sample completed by the child no more than 30 days before the specified date.
 - Parent questionnaire
- b. The student will be offered a spot in the school based on their placement on the wait list, as openings occur.
- c. In some circumstances, further investigation will be conducted regarding the suitability of the Connect Charter School program for that student.

3. Parent Information Sessions
 - a. To help parents make an informed decision, parent information sessions will be held in late January or early February, wherever possible.
 - b. Parents must attend the parent information session or make alternate arrangements with the admissions office in order to maintain their child's place on the waitlist, as described in procedure 1 (f).
4. Siblings
 - a. Siblings of existing Connect Charter School students will be moved ahead of non-siblings on the wait list. The order of the siblings on the wait list will be based on the date of first contact with the school.
5. Gender Ratio
 - a. Where possible, the school will maintain a ratio of at least one girl for every two boys in each class.
 - b. Where the ratio in a class falls below the minimum specified ratio, girls will be admitted ahead of boys, based on their placement on the wait list.
6. Appeals Procedures
 - a. Parents may appeal admissions decisions in accordance with Connect Charter School policy no. 2.01 - Appeals

Section 3: GETTING TO AND FROM Connect Charter School

Please refer to the Transportation Handbook for a detailed explanation about **busing**.

Transportation Basics

- Current transportation supplier: Southland Transportation.
- Morning pick up: Students are expected to be at the bus stop 5 minutes prior to bus arrival and will leave promptly from the loading zone once students are on board. Late arrivals should proceed to next or alternate stop. (*see Transportation Handbook for route maps and stops*)
- At school students are to proceed quietly to their classrooms.
- Afternoon Departure: Buses are signaled to leave 10 minutes after school dismissal. If a student misses the bus they should return to the office and contact their family.
- Afternoon Drop-offs: Students are dropped off at regular drop off times and parents are responsible to ensure pick up where applicable.
- While on the bus the students are to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules and regulations of both Southland Transportation Ltd and the Connect Charter School Transportation Handbook. The consequence of

student behavior lies at the discretion of the bus driver and Connect Charter School administration. A School Bus Misconduct Report will be completed as necessary.

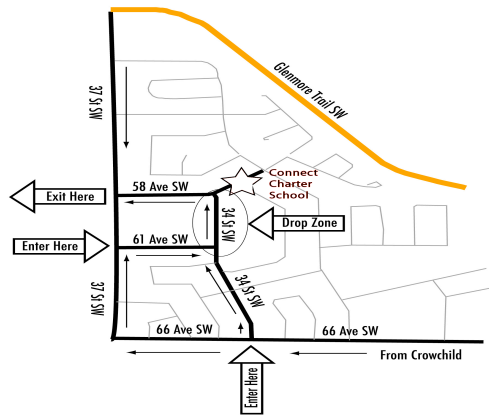
- The possibility of delayed or cancelled service due to winter conditions, road construction, mechanical problems or accident requires parents to develop a back-up plan to transport their children to school. Delays or cancelled service will be reported on our website.
- Routes will remain within 85 minutes ride time wherever possible.
- Centralized stops are created to service as many families in one area as possible.
- Number of passengers per seat: when necessary Grades 4-6 will sit three to a seat, Grades 7-9 will sit two to a seat.
- Items that are too large to fit under the seats or be held on the student's lap will not be allowed on the bus (unless the bus has a cargo bay).
- Written requests for permission for students to ride on a bus other than their own (i.e. visiting a friend, birthday party, etc...) must be submitted to the office. If there is room on the requested bus, the school will complete a boarding pass and the student will present this to the bus driver when boarding.

How to Address Parent Concerns and Questions Regarding Busing

- The preferred method of communication with the Connect Charter School Transportation Committee regarding busing is via e-mail to transportationatconnect@gmail.com.
- Questions regarding routes, schedules, or stops are to be addressed in writing to the Connect Charter School Transportation Committee with a copy given to Southland Transportation Ltd.
- Questions regarding driver behaviour are to be addressed directly to Southland Transportation.
- Parents are to contact the school regarding student discipline issues.

Drop Off, Pickup and Parking

The following routes are available for dropping off or picking up your children safely in the Drop Zone located on the east side of 34 Street between 58 Ave and 61 Ave.



- Please do not drop off or pick up your child in the staff parking lot
- From Crowchild Trail: enter on 66th Ave and turn north on 34 St. and exit to 37 St. via 58 Ave or leave via Lakeview Dr.
- From 37 Street: enter on 61 Ave and exit on 58 Ave
- Lewis Drive is designated as a BUSES ONLY zone.
- The Staff parking lot is designated for Staff parking ONLY.

Section 4: Getting “In Touch” with Staff and Students

Regular Communication between the School and Home

Phone, Fax and Email

There are several avenues for reaching staff at the school. The main number at the school is 403.282.2890; the fax number is 403.282.2896. The office staff can take messages or forward you directly to a teacher’s voice mail. All teachers have an email address and invite you to correspond with them via email at any time. All email addresses are published on the website in the “Contact Us” section.

Contacting Students

In order to contact your child at school, please call the office and request that a message be relayed to the student. Except in emergency situations, students will be called to the office to receive messages at morning recess, lunch recess, and the end of the day. **Students are not permitted to use cell phones in class and may**

only retrieve voice and text messages outside of school hours.

Spectrum Newsletter

The school publishes a monthly digital newsletter called *The Spectrum*. In it you will find highlights of the prior month's activities at Connect Charter School, strategies to support student learning, and notices for upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. A PDF version of *The Spectrum* is posted on the website each month and is a great window into school life.

School Website

Many valuable resources are available on the school website. At www.connectcharter.ca you will find an easy to use and comprehensive resource for all aspects of school life, including virtually all of the supporting documentation that underlies the publication of this handbook. You can also get current information on bus scheduling and/or delays, upcoming events, and provide input to the school on any concerns or issues you may have. A Parent Resource tab on the website also contains pertinent information about upcoming events, workshops and childhood development.

Who to contact if you have a concern

Open, direct, and honest communication between school and home is a key element of student success. It can sometimes be unclear for parents who they should contact to address a particular question or concern. Generally, parents should contact teachers directly regarding any classroom issues. Email communication is a wonderful way of quickly touching base with a teacher or school administration regarding simple, non-contentious issues. If the concern or issue is of greater significance, or the likelihood of misunderstanding is great, a conversation over the telephone or face to face with the person is always best. Additionally, parents are strongly encouraged to address questions about a particular classroom with the teacher before bringing the matter to school administration. The chart below summarizes what channels to follow, given a particular question or concern:

Nature of Issue or Concern	Who to Contact	Appropriate Means of Communication
Homework and other general classroom concerns, questions	Classroom teacher	Email, phone, face to face
Teacher expectations or behaviour	Teacher first. If not resolved then school administration	Phone or face to face

Nature of Issue or Concern	Who to Contact	Appropriate Means of Communication
School programs, policies, or procedures	School administration	Written, phone or face to face
School administration expectations or behaviour	School administration first. If not resolved then Superintendent	Written, phone or face to face

Teachers and administration are available to address questions, concerns, or issues. In particular, there is no need for parents to wait until report card times to ask questions of teachers regarding student progress. Teachers at Connect Charter School appreciate open channels of communication with parents, as ongoing communication between the school and home is always in the best interests of the students.

Section 5: Getting Involved as a Volunteer

School Council

Connect Charter School has an active and successful School Council, which is governed by (i) Board of Directors Policy #7.02 “School Council” and (ii) operating principles established in consultation with the Alberta School Councils’ Association (ASCA). Membership in School Council varies and includes the principal, teachers, board representatives and volunteers from the parent community. The Executive of Council includes the President or Chair, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. All positions are for one-year terms (although they may stand for re-election/affirmation), must be filled by parents of children currently attending the school and are volunteer positions.

School Council generally meets once a month in the evening and is currently focused on increasing parent involvement in policy development at the school, improving communications with the parent community and supporting the cultural environment of the school for everyone. Council works closely with the principal in supporting the vision, mission and goals of the school.

All parents and teachers are welcome to attend School Council meetings and may vote on any resolution brought before Council. If there is an urgent or particularly important issue which concerns the parent community, School Council convenes a Town Hall meeting to discuss the issue. Town Hall meetings are held on an as-required basis and may occur at any time throughout the year.

Minutes of past School Council meetings are located in the Family Zone section on the website under School Council and upcoming Council meetings are announced in the *Spectrum*.

Parent Summit Series

School Council hosts a series of parent information evenings through the year to address issues of common concern regarding child and adolescent development and learning. The Summit series attracts knowledgeable professionals in the field of child development as keynote speakers and session facilitators.

Parent Volunteer Opportunities at Connect Charter School

There are a number of avenues available to parents who are interested in volunteering at Connect Charter School. The staff utilizes the resources of the volunteer community in a number of ways, depending on need and the teacher involved. Some teachers utilize parent volunteers in the classroom on a routine basis (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly), but the practice is not widely observed in the school. Many teachers will request help from parents of children in the class on an event-specific basis. For example, nature trips to the Weaselhead occur with virtually every grade a few times a year and may require parent volunteers to accompany the children there and back. All volunteers must complete a registration form (done online in your Family Zone during registration) and consent to a security check by the Calgary Police Service. Contact the office for details on volunteer security clearance procedures.

The Parent Volunteer Committee coordinates many opportunities for parental involvement within the school. Some of these voluntary commitments are related to class activities, field trips, special events, and outdoor education. Other opportunities arise when specific skill sets or expertise may be required and parents are enlisted to fulfill those needs. Parents interested in exploring volunteer opportunities may contact the Connect Charter School Volunteer Committee by e-mail at volunteer@connectcharter.ca.

Among the volunteer opportunities for parents at Connect Charter School are:

- EXPO field experiences
- Class representatives
- Fun lunch
- Outdoor education trips
- Science Fair

- School Council
- Ad hoc committees of School Council
- Clubs and special events

In addition to a security clearance check, parent volunteers on outdoor education trips will be required to sign an 'Acknowledgment of Risk and Responsibility' form that outlines the details of risk and volunteer responsibility that may be factors on specific trips.

Section 6: Getting Involved as a Student

Clubs

There are a number of different clubs that operate during the lunch hour throughout the year. These clubs change from year to year, depending on interest and the availability of teachers and parent volunteers. Examples of past clubs include chess, drama, music, skateboarding, running, chess and games, debate and peer support.

Sports

Connect Charter School is a member of the Calgary Alternative Athletic Association, which enables teams to compete in a range of sports with other local charter and private schools. CAAA sanctioned sports include: cross country running, volleyball, basketball, wrestling, badminton, and track and field. All sports teams are coached by staff who volunteer their time to ensure students have the opportunities to participate in competitive sports to develop the attributes of teamwork, fair play, mutual respect, and sport-specific skills.

Intramurals

A variety of intramural activities run during the lunch hour from September to May. Grade 8 and 9 students organize and implement the intramural program with support from the physical education teachers.

Student Leadership

Many opportunities arise for students to participate in activities that develop leadership skills and attributes. Elective classes such as *Me to We*, *Mini Me to We*, *Agents of Change*, and *Outdoor Leadership* develop qualities of organization, planning, time management, and community engagement on local, national, and global scales. This may include work for local and international charities, planning and organizing school dances, some school clubs and the Peace Festival.

Peer Mentoring

Connect staff facilitate a peer mentoring program to provide opportunities for students who require additional academic support to receive assistance from older students. Mentors are provided training in offering effective support to their peers and are assigned to a mentee for a trimester or longer, as required. One learning strategies period in a six-day cycle is devoted to peer mentoring for those students involved in the program.

Course Electives

Connect Charter School offers a number of electives on a trimester basis during the school year to students in Grades 4-9. Students prioritize their course selection each trimester and, if they are unable to be placed in an elective of their choice, they will receive priority placement for that elective in the next trimester(s). Elective choices vary from year to year, depending on interest and resource availability. Electives offered in past school years included CO₂ Powered Cars, Film Production, Outdoor Education, Me to We, Game Design, Stop-Motion Animation, Advanced Athletics, Spectrum Graphic Design and Publishing, Underwater ROVs, Robotics, Pottery and others.

Section 7: School Policies and Practices

A. STUDENT LATES & ABSENCES

Please call the main office at 403.282.2890 to report a late or absent child, ideally prior to the start of class. If not reported, the office will follow up with phone calls to the parent to determine the whereabouts of your child.

Sign In/Out Procedure

Parents must sign their child out at the office if the student is leaving during the school day. Students must sign themselves back in upon their return that day. Parents are asked to wait for their children in the foyer by the office after signing out.

B. CLOSED CAMPUS

Connect Charter School is a "closed campus" - this means only those students who are signed out and accompanied by their parent or guardian (or, where appropriate, an older sibling) are allowed to leave campus through the day. We do not accept just a note from parents - to be clear, even if a student presents us with a note from a parent or guardian we will not allow them to leave campus unless they are signed out and accompanied by a parent or guardian. (The exception to this is for students

who live within walking distance from the school and who regularly go home for lunch and have given us a permission note.) Additionally, we will not allow a student to go with a friend or friends who have been appropriately signed out and accompanied by a parent or guardian.

C. CLASS SIZE

All classes are currently capped at 26 students per class.

D. FEES

Enrichment fees

Enrichment fees for the 2017-18 school year are \$575 per student. This fee pays for one multi-day outdoor education trip, the student's iPad (grades 4-6) or laptop computer (grades 7-9), elective course costs, day field trips, and all school supplies. In addition, a lunchroom supervision fee of \$50 and a technology insurance fee of \$60 must be paid annually.

Transportation Fees

Transportation fees are required from students who sign a transportation agreement. Transportation agreements cannot be processed without payment.

Lock Fees

Grade 6-9 students have access to their own locker at school. The students are required to use the combination locks that are provided by Connect Charter School. There is a refundable \$10 deposit fee for use of the lock.

Bursaries

A bursary fund provides financial assistance to families who experience difficulty paying any school or transportation fees. Contact the office or the school principal to discuss the bursary procedure or to request an application.

E. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Connect Charter School uses a four-point marking system:

- 4 – Exceeding Expectations
- 3 – Meeting Expectations
- 2 - Developing
- 1 - Requires Assistance

In addition to the formal reporting processes, there is a scheduled Meet the Teacher night early in the year (typically in the first couple of weeks of the school year) where parents can talk with their child's teachers about the program, classroom

expectations, homework, and more.

Scheduled parent-teacher interviews take place in the middle of the first trimester, prior to the fall break in October. Student-led conferences occur at the end of the first trimester in November and the second trimester in March, but not at the end of the year. If there are concerns that need to be addressed or recognition that is well deserved, teachers will contact parents in a timely fashion to address these issues. **Similarly, parents are encouraged to contact their child's teachers throughout the year through email, phone or by appointment to deal with any questions or concerns that they may have regarding their child.**

Parent-teacher interviews, student-led conferences and on-going communication between parents and teachers are integral components of the reporting process and student achievement at Connect Charter School.

F. SCHOOL CLIMATE and SELF-REGULATION

A Climate of Mutual Respect Emerges When...

- **Expectations are Fair**
 - Unreasonable expectations create points of contention between children and adults.
 - Some rules are necessary. Others sterilize the learning environment and eliminate valuable problem-solving experiences.
 - When it comes to rules, an absolute bare-minimum of them seems best and they need to be reviewed continually.

- **Responsibility is Given**
 - Students run their own lunchrooms.
 - Students initiate and run their own clubs.
 - Students have choice in how and where they spend noon-hour and recess.
 - Students experience increased access to the school and its resources.

- **Problem Solving is Fostered**
 - The playground is seen as a reality-based classroom that is always relevant and meaningful to students.

- Opportunities to increase richness of experience in and outside of the school are seized. The problems that result from these new experiences create a rich learning ground.
 - Every playground incident is viewed as an opportunity for some authentic problem solving.
 - When students are in trouble they are experiencing opportunities for personal growth.
- **Self-Regulation Skills are Reinforced**
 - Teachers and students regularly engage in conversations that foster skills of emotional self-regulation and develop a common language to identify desirable behavior.
 - Ongoing professional learning for all staff and information sessions for parents will ensure the entire school community is conversant with the principles of self-regulation and how to effectively and positively support students in developing skills of self-regulation.

All students who attend our school are **expected** to:

- be diligent in their school studies and complete all assignments on time.
- be respectful of all individuals in the school community.
- accept and conform to the personal and educational expectations addressed in the Code of Behavior (*Care for Yourself, Each Other and This Place*). These expectations hold wherever we are representing the school.
- be respectful of the school site and replace or pay for damages/losses to school property.
- attend field studies and extended outdoor experiences. If unable to attend because of health concerns or legitimate reasons, alternative arrangements must be made with the school.

Connect Charter School follows a three-level process in dealing with student behavior.

All misbehavior and disciplinary action should be documented. The three-step process follows the guidelines of restorative discipline.

Three Step Process	
Step 1	<p>Describing the incident and gaining perspective</p> <p>The person(s) who caused harm describes the incident and accepts responsibility for his/her actions. The person who was harmed describes the incident and what he/ she experienced during and as a result of the incident, including physical, emotional and psychological harm.</p>
Step 2	<p>Describing and discussing the impact of the conflict</p> <p>Supporters of both the harmed and the person responsible for the harm describe their observations and experiences. At this time, supporters may also describe attributes of the harmed that may help him/her overcome the situation, as well as attributes of the person responsible for the harm that may help him/her with successful reparation. Other members of the school/community describe what they have observed and experienced as a result of the offence, and the related impacts. • This stage includes additional open discussion and questions that participants may have for one another.</p>
Step 3	<p>Reparation and re-integration</p> <p>The participants collaboratively determine how the harm should be repaired with action that is meaningful and related to the specific situation. To increase the success of the reparation, the facilitator records the agreement, obtains the signatures of both the harmed and the person responsible for the harm and sets a schedule for follow- up. Participants ensure that the person responsible for the harm is supported and has the capability to complete the reparation and reintegrate into their community</p>

In order to implement good restorative practices, schools are recommended to

- Foster self-other awareness for each situation and encourage expression of feelings.
- Avoid scolding and lecturing and promote respectful sharing.
- Actively involve students.
- Accept ambiguity and proceed in spite of fault or responsibility.

- Separate the wrong deed from the student. Separate the behavior from the student's lagging skill while maintain his/her dignity. However, it is important to disapprove of his/her wrongdoing.
- Regard every instance of wrongdoing and conflict as an opportunity for learning. Also, use these moments as reflection opportunities linked to student IEPs or IPPs.

Youth can be included in all aspects of discipline, including preventing and dealing with conflict. trusting and caring relationships between adults and students.

- Fostering skills to resolve conflict, such as listening, empathy, critical thinking, and self-control.
- Determining what has happened and why by asking questions and listening to the answers.
- Maximizing student involvement in deciding how to resolve problems.
- Resolving problems with open-ended questions, exploring different responses, reflecting on motives, and allowing for disagreement.
- Assisting students in considering ways to make amends for misbehavior, such as replacing, repairing, cleaning, or apologizing.
- Following up to determine whether the problem was solved and or more work needs to be done.
- Encouraging reflection.
- Allowing flexibility for different students, needs, and situations.
- Minimizing the punitive impact when control is necessary to repair the relationship and address underlying issues.

(Adapted from *Implementing Restorative Justice*, (November 2017) State of Illinois)

1. Classroom Teacher

The classroom teacher is responsible for primary intervention in all disciplinary situations occurring in the classroom or playground. If necessary, teachers may suspend a student from one class period as per the School Act, section 19. Teachers are to consult with school administration as soon as possible to discuss any discipline concerns in order to ensure consistent application of natural and logical consequences. Positive classroom management is an outcome of strong planning for a high level of student intellectual engagement. Approaching teaching through an inquiry-based disposition results in far fewer student conduct issues. A culture of mutual respect is maintained in all interactions with students.

2. Administration

Teachers should refer students to the administration for misbehavior, which is recurring regularly or for behavior that is deemed by the teacher to have a negative effect on the learning climate of the school. In dealing with the student, the administrator has a range of consequences to draw upon, from verbal reprimand to home suspension. Parents are to be informed and involved.

3. Administration

For repeated offenses of a more serious nature (fighting, threats, vandalism), administration can suspend the student for up to five days. Parents will be involved in the reinstatement, which may result in a performance contract for the offending students. Referral to outside agencies may be required.

4. Superintendent

For repeated offenses of a serious nature (fighting, threats, vandalism), a student may be referred by administration to the Superintendent for a final decision. The Board reserves the right to expel a student from Connect Charter School should it be seen that continuance in our program leads to issues of safety and security for the school community. Parents have the right to appeal accordance with Appeals Policy 2.01.

I. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Crisis Management Procedures

Developed by a representative committee of staff, parents and administration, the Crisis Management Procedures Manual provides a plan of action to maximize the safety and security of all Connect Charter School students and staff in cases of emergency.

Connect Charter School regularly participates in fire drill procedures so that all students and teachers practice orderly evacuation from the school.

In an emergency situation when Connect Charter School has been evacuated, the designated evacuation site for students would be:

Bishop Pinkham Junior High School
3304 63 Ave SW

The following location has been designated as a secondary evacuation site:

Lakeview Community Centre
6110 34 St SW

Additionally, at least three lockdown drills are conducted annually. Staff are well prepared to assist students in lockdown drills and the school enlists the help of the Calgary Police Service in ensuring that our procedures and responses are adequate.

Parents will be notified of an emergency via phone or email. **DO NOT** phone the school or the evacuation sites. Lines need to be kept clear for Emergency Services Communications and for contacting parents. In order to contact you as quickly as possible in an emergency, **PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL CONTACT INFORMATION IS PROVIDED TO THE OFFICE AND IS CURRENT.** Check our website for information, and keep your phone lines clear to await instructions. Students will remain under staff supervision until a parent or other authorized person can pick them up.

J. STUDENT HEALTH AND MEDICATION

Parents or guardians are responsible for notifying the school of their child's health needs and are expected to provide timely and accurate information about health concerns that could affect their child or students and staff at the school. Health and medical concerns are to be reported annually on the appropriate forms.

The school has a complete student health and safety policy in place, which includes the disclosure of health and medical information, the administration of medication, medical and health-related emergencies, allergies and chronic illnesses, first aid training of staff, suicide prevention and treatment, child abuse and child custody.

Students may have medications administered while attending the school if the appropriate forms are completed; and the student must have the medications to attend school. In the event of a medical emergency, Emergency Medical Services (911) and the parent will be contacted and emergency first aid will be provided until EMS arrives. All staff members receive accredited first aid certification training, according to a schedule determined by the Professional Development Committee and school administration.

Please consult our website in the Publications section for a detailed description of the policy and procedures related to this topic.

K. LUNCH & FOOD AVAILABILITY

PLEASE NOTIFY THE SCHOOL IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY ALLERGIES.

Lunch Supervision

Each class eats lunch in their own classroom from 11:55am -12:10pm (Grades 4 -7) or 11:40am – 11:55pm (Grades 8 - 9). Supervisors patrol the hallway to provide assistance, monitor student behavior and ensure that classes remain in their designated areas. At 11:55am or 12:10pm, children are dismissed from the classroom to the playground until 12:40pm when the bell to resume classes sounds.

There is **NO** special lunch equipment available to students (e.g. cafeteria, microwaves, kettles, utensils). Students are expected to bring their lunches ready to eat and neatly dispose of their garbage, recycling and compost in the bins provided. Occasionally, individual teachers may establish other guidelines about lunch expectations in their classroom (eg. seating arrangements).

All students must pay a fee for lunchroom supervision at the time of registration each year.

Fun Lunch Program

Information will be provided at the beginning of the year for parents who wish to pre-order 'fun lunches' for their child. A variety of suppliers participate in the program to offer a lunch alternative each Wednesday as a fund raising initiative for the school.

Vending Machines

Coin-operated healthy vending machines containing juice, bottled water and Sparkling Water are available for student use during morning and lunch recess. Students are not permitted to access the vending machines during class times.

Summary

The Connect Charter School Parent Handbook is intended to provide an overview of the school program and operations. If you have further questions that are not addressed here, please contact your child's teacher, the office or school administration. Thank you for taking the time to review this information; we look forward to sharing a rewarding educational journey with you and your child.