

Connect Charter School Parent, Student, and Staff Interviews

Susan Chomistek – June 12, 2017

The eighth annual superintendent interviews of parents, students, and staff members were conducted over several weeks in the spring of 2017 as a component of the ongoing school evaluation process. 40 parents were interviewed between March and May, 2017. In May and June, grades 4 to 9 students as class groups (24 classes - approximately 612 students) were interviewed. I was pleased that Dr. Phil Butterfield was able to join me for all of these sessions. As well, 42 teachers and support staff were interviewed. The feedback generated through the two questions, "*What causes you to believe that Connect Charter School is a very good school?*" and "*What suggestions for improvement would you like to offer?*" has been organized as commendations or recommendations for further consideration, on the basis of common themes, which were identified through a thematic analysis process. The frequency of common themes is indicated in parentheses and denotes the percentage of respondents who mentioned the theme during the interviews.

Parent Interview Responses - Key Themes

The following major areas of commendation (with a response rate of 18% or more) were identified through the parent interviews:

1. The teachers and support staff are very dedicated and the quality of the teaching is excellent (92.5%) - Representative comments include:

Love that the teachers are engaged and excited about they want to get across to the kids; Observing teachers and staff interacting with students and with very few exceptions it is very respectful and each of those teachers or staff have found a way to like or enjoy each of those kids and is truly invested in them as a learner. That impresses me. I am deeply in awe of Connect teachers and staff to be really engaged with each kid in a meaningful way. That is completely foundational and if you didn't have that, it wouldn't matter what outdoor trips what trips you had, what place based learning experiences existed; Staff all care about the students and how they are doing and they try to help them to achieve their potential; Teachers are very dedicated and committed. The energy is different. At the parent teacher interviews, the teachers were very engaged and right there with the individual students learning with them; John Cadman – he is great; Shannon has been a huge support with an assessment and follow up support; Wonderful, supportive teachers who are very approachable; We are so fortunate to have staff who care so deeply about this place – teachers, Mark, Felipe, the other staff, Susan – everyone is so invested in this place and what happens here; Caring, committed staff – teachers, Mirtala, other staff – they all care; I am treated with such respect from the staff; Incredible support from staff – admin, teachers, learning support staff, Shannon; Teachers allow students to demonstrate and support learning in different ways - they empower students; Teachers are engaged with students and their learning. Their style of teaching and learning gives students empowerment. Students are heard and teachers allow them to dive into the learning and what they are interested in; Positive staff. They bring energy to the classroom. Like that they have specialized teachers. Having teachers who teach math and sciences and humanities

specializations. Many of the teachers have Master's degrees and great experience in their subject area (2); Engaged and committed staff who have new approaches to curriculum. They use innovative ways to deliver curriculum which is connected to real life. They are engaged with students and they care about the curriculum. Students understand as they do not make the subject matter too pedantic and they care on a personal level. Rick Fawcett has really helped our child – you can tell he cares about kids; People in the building are so approachable – there is positive energy and the authentic feeling where you know that people really care. Teachers are approachable and accessible; Teachers are very kind; Dedicated teachers (2); Our child has had some very strong teachers; Teachers really know what they are doing. Trust them 100%; Amazing year with the teaching pod – the teachers really celebrated our child and created a stimulating and challenging environment; Teachers use variety in the way they teach so the students understand and they honour different learning styles. Our child is so involved in all aspects of his learning (2); Teachers have a supportive collaborative approach. Ongoing discussions with teachers on how to help him; Teachers are really trying to do a great job. They show students different perspectives; Teachers create a safe space where ideas can be explored, and those ideas outside of the norm are free from judgement; I believe the teachers are excellent and foster a great community of learning. They model a growth mind set and the kids learn to be themselves; Teachers and all staff caring about my child has made a difference. Her confidence has been built up because of coming here. My child is able to express her knowledge in different ways; Teachers focus on developing themselves as professionals and they see great capacity in every student as a learner; Teachers are dedicated and really care. They are not just here for the paycheck; Teachers are great – they respond to communication so quickly and really have an open-door policy. They check in with us often; Relationships my kids have with their teachers. As a parent, I can tell that the teachers really care; Love that the teachers are specialists and very knowledgeable; Very passionate teachers – this makes the kids passionate learners; Really like that teachers are subject specialists and have expertise in their area.

2. Connect Charter School is a great school (62.5%)

I have never heard other kids talk with such passion as the kids at Connect do. Students are so loyal and rarely do you hear the kids say anything negative about the school. They articulate it well. They care. The fact that they care is important. The academic side is very strong. Super happy with the school as the students are so engaged. I love the way there are activities integrated from grades four through nine- this is important; Everything; Our school has a small school feel. People take the time to learn about each other. It is the subtle things that make the school great. There is openness and transparency and a community feel where everyone knows that “kids are first”; My kids are so happy to come here. Interactions with other kids are not causing them stress. The year has gone by so quickly because every day is so different, and it just flies by; There has been a great culture created at the school where everyone works toward the vision of developing extraordinary citizens. This drives the success of the school. Developing positive relationships are obviously valued – student to student, teacher to student, teacher to parents. The culture of mutual respect is seen in all of the programming –peer mentoring, Family Groups, service learning and social justice. Everyone is working towards the vision.; Our son loves school.

He feels engaged every day. There is a real sense of community and a sincere caring for each other – students to staff, staff to students, students to students. There is a philosophy that we are responsible for ourselves. Students are responsible. If they drop something they pick it up. In too many places we make excuses. Connect requires their participants to respect themselves. Respect each other. Respect this place; There are so many reasons why my husband and I love this school; This school has been great for our kids. They are constantly looking at how to make things better; The philosophy of the school matches our approach and we appreciate that. I like the sense of community both within the building, but also beyond the borders (Peace Festival, Mini Me to We) making sure our kids are responsible citizens; This is a great school; We are so happy with the school. We have two children here- both with very different personalities, and they are both thriving. Any students who come from Connect are excellent students and well adjusted. They have confidence; I love this school (2); Connect School takes its practice seriously. When I first went to the school, there was such a respect for the students. We spoke to the custodian; he likes the kids. We knew the custodian was part of a family. We spoke to a bus driver; he was happy to get the route. There is a long list of people who want to go to the school because they are treated well by the staff. There is a feeling that everyone belongs and has a part to play and they are listened to. We will definitely keep our kids in the school. There are smaller class sizes and a strong sense of community. Our kids love it here and feel valued and feel they are part of something special. When our oldest son came to the school, at the end of the first week, he came home and said that he felt he fit in; Offers above and beyond what other schools can offer (2); There are so many reasons this is a great school. The school culture weaves through everything so the reasons are almost intangible. There is a community of trust and openness and safety; Our son loves school. Independence is developed here; My kids are happy to go to school. They are keen to learn and have great experiences; This is a great school. Honestly, I think it is almost the vibe I pick up from the students. When I am in the school I feel like we have this vast array of student personality types, different learners and I feel like each one of those students feel like they belong at CCS and that they are empowered to take control of their own learning; School is very forward thinking with respect to students, education, the administration, governance; The school excels at organization; Students, admin, parents, teachers – boils down to an amazing dynamic place; Awesome school: Culture of respect and trust

3. The outdoor and environmental education program is excellent (58%)

Our kids have really loved the trips and have commented on what they have learned; Have appreciated the new places that our child gets to go to; Outdoor education program encourages students to try new things; Stuff that they do – sleep away camp in the first month. Built connections; Camps have been great because she can express herself with the things she knows and is good at; Going to Weaselhead and other OE opportunities; Overnight trips are great. We appreciated how the grade four students were paired with the grade eight students at Kamp Kiwanis. There was so much growth for our child; School has a strong focus on outdoor education and stewardship towards the environment; Outdoor education is fantastic; The outdoor education trips we already do have purpose and value; Opportunities for outdoor education; Value the emphasis on outdoor education; this is really important to us; Outdoor ed. program (7); Focus on outdoor education and an

active learning environment; Activities and time spent outside of the classroom (2); Field trips

4. Connect Charter School provides a well-rounded program through the core courses, the performing and visual arts, physical education, the electives and the leadership programs (55%)

Do appreciate the diversity in programming as there is such a good balance. Our daughter is very artistic, and that program is great. Outdoor ed. is an amazing component that helps them as human beings. Sports for life are a focus – another great program; Students learn about real world matters. For example, right now I am learning about the wetlands with my grade five student and the potential impact of the ring road. The students went to a conservation site, and they then had an opportunity to contemplate what they saw. This will help them make decisions as they get older. In another area, our child learned about the election process and government. Everyone is so involved and they learn about the process in a way that is mimicked at the school; Phys. Ed. program is great with the variety of activities the kids are involved in; Diverse learning opportunities; Electives – backpacking Amazing Race, biking. Good variety; Love Fine Arts. Hear often from my child – I am so excited. I have art tomorrow. Our son is artistic and this is something he appreciated years and years ago. He can nurture his talents. There is such a variety available to them in art - clay, metal, photography. They can explore and they have the tools available to them to do a wide variety of projects; Range of opportunities in Phys. Ed, PVA, and electives (2); Respect for the Fine Arts and the way there is a marriage between the Fine Arts and the sciences; Different programs fill so many needs – technology, outdoor ed, the arts; Electives, even in grade four, are great; PVA provides a great outlet for kids who are not as academic and we like how the arts are incorporated into math and science (2); My kids get really unique experiences – going to the zoo to understand the biomechanics of flight by watching birds fly, many other examples; Privilege to have students being exposed to electives in the younger grades – they really look forward to it; Drama program (3); Love the art program. Ms. Emin was talking about a new machine and she is so excited about it. She encourages kids to have their own take on their art, and she is encouraging and positive and proud of the students. Art is amazing; Program of Studies in this school is very engaging; All of the performing and visual arts programs are excellent; Variety of electives

5. The use of technology in the school significantly enriches learning and teaching (38%)

Use of technology as a tool. Our kids were taught how to use technology effectively, knowing it is not the only tool. They also write and draw. There is a much better balance than six years ago; Technology (11); Access to technology to enhance my kids' learning; Appreciate the technology because it is supported here and teachers know how to use it effectively; My kids really benefit from the technology in the school

6. The emphasis on learning and teaching through a disposition of inquiry is highly valued (35%)

What drew us to the school and continues to resonate with us is the experiential focus - the hands-on learning, the inquiry-based approach, and the extension to the learning; Teachers really buy into the inquiry based model and are empowered to teach well. This results in staff being happy and students being happy and learning; With the inquiry model, students really understand; Learning through deep inquiry (2); Emphasis is on inquiry based learning

and non- traditional approaches (2); Students working hands on with the learning and really understanding; With all four of our boys, the inquiry based model has worked well; Creative way things are taught through inquiry; Inquiry based and hands on learning is great for our children. They are stimulated and challenged; Approach to learning. Inquiry based learning; I am always impressed by the sophistication of their thought processes that they are learning at school. I like how they are encouraged to think deeper; Dynamic, holistic approach – learning through inquiry

7. The administration provides strong leadership for the school (33%)

I have great trust in the admin as they are strong and know what they are doing; Administrators are very responsive to parents. They find constructive ways to resolve issues. There was a note in the washroom – please know that we care; Feel really listened to by admin; Administration is very innovative; Admin really supports students; Dedication of administration; Phil is great; The admin creates a real community here and I have always felt very respected by them; Appreciate how our admin are innovative and yet they still listen to parents; Administration are very engaged with the students and listen to them; Admin recognizes and nurtures amazing talented teachers; Students, admin, parents, teachers – boils down to an amazing dynamic place; Admin knows and trusts students

8. EXPO is a valuable expansion of our programs (33%)

Excited about the potential of EXPO and how this programming can support even deeper learning in the students; Layer rich use of technology with amazing outdoor education experiences and, coming in the fall, EXPO takes everything over the top; Love new program; Excellent about EXPO as it is extending what we already do; Love the new direction the school is taking; I am excited about next year and having more opportunities with the experiential learning; From the very beginning stages of EXPO, I felt that students and parents were listened to; When EXPO was introduced, it was surprising. Appreciated how parents were listened to, the approach was modified, and our voices were heard in the planning process. We are really happy with it now. We are a small school, so these things can happen. I love the innovative part of this; There was a realization that what we had worked and we are trying to take this thing that is developed and grow it; EXPO is the right approach. It is going to be great for our school; Love the way the school renews, reinvents, and refreshes. With the expanded experiential approach next year, it will take the learning to a whole new level; EXPO sounds like a wonderful program and it will bring energy to the school (2)

9. The emphasis on developing students as ethical, respectful, and responsible individuals is highly valued (20%)

Our child has been taught how to take risks and be responsible for his learning through a growth mindset; Leadership programs the grades 8 and 9 students do. They help in mentoring students and leading groups. This is powerful for the younger students and for the leaders. Peer mentoring is another area which benefits both the student and the mentor. There is an increased confidence and it gave our son a sense of giving back and it solidified his understanding of some of the things that he was teaching; Students have a strong work ethic and learn presentation skills and are taught responsibility for their learning; Students are self-motivated; Students come to school and are happy to be here.

They are responsible; The biggest growth since our child came to this school is the courage in taking risks (2); Kids are really good and support each other

10. Parent support is very valuable (18%)

Parent community is great - they have a good understanding of what the school is trying to do and they are there to give support (instruments, bouldering wall, audio system); Dedicated, unselfish parents; Parents are considered partners and welcome in the school; Volunteer part is really important. Hard to get the volunteer opportunity. You have to fight to get the spots. This is very unique. As a volunteer, the trips are so fun. Because of the volunteering I got to know more of the parents and the kids. It makes a stronger connection and it helps the whole school; Relationships with the parents is very positive. There is an openness and a transparency and parents are really valued; Parent volunteers; Opportunities for parent involvement. Be as involved as you want to be.

11. Other

There are no hidden costs. Our child gets many opportunities for a limited amount of money; It really is never just an ordinary day; Appreciate diversity at the school (3); Positive about the French option; Other people raving about the school; I love the bikes and the clubs; Our son's class uses Fresh Grade. I like that fact that I can see assignments; Feel this year that overall communication is more timely and more specific; Students; Really like the looping system, particularly in grades six and seven; Like the calendar and coming back in August – the kids are ready (2); Like the exposure our child is getting to the older kids. They are really great; One fee and then you do not have pay more; Like content on the report cards (2); Parent PVA group; Better fit for our family; Coming into grade four was a seamless adjustment for our son. All of the kids were integrated so well (2); Fun lunches and hot lunch days (3); Number of professional visits in terms of specialized services. (2); Bean bag chairs; Amazing how the student voice is really listened to (2); Family groups (2)

The following suggestions for further consideration (with a response rate of 4% or more) were identified through the parent interviews:

1. Different approaches to assessment and reporting should be considered (18%)

Similar assessment/grading between grades; Prefer percentages in the older grades. There is too great a range in a 3; Don't like the report cards, specifically in the core subject areas. A paragraph is not specific enough. In math, for example there are so many outcomes, and a 3 does not tell me much. The CBE report cards are much more defined and there is more information on assessment, on participation, and on community engagement; Explain assessment better; Need percentages in grade nine before the students transition to high school; Assessment practices need to be addressed. Having a 3 is too wide a range. It is difficult to see if there is improvement. Is that project at the top of the 3 or bottom of the 3? It can be demotivating for a student. Our child really tried hard on a project and got a 3. He didn't work hard and got a 3. His response - why should I work; More comments within assignments not just rubric.

2. Enhance communication processes (13%)

More communication on how my child is working; I wish that the school would use a uniform mode of communication. Edmodo, Fresh Grade, Power School, Google docs...this

gets confusing and time consuming to have all these platforms. Just from the parents' perspective a more uniform approach would be nice; We need a cleaner method of communicating. I don't want different platforms and different ways of communicating and from multiple sources; Would be helpful if there were not multiple forums for communication (webpage, portfolio page); We need a generic learning management system. The communication piece is so important.

3. Improved or stronger academic standards (13%)

Introduced to homework and assignments earlier. They cannot avoid this when they are in higher grades. They can then get into the habit of studying earlier. They can see this is part of their learning curve. Give the students tips on studying, how to achieve goals, how to memorize. (2); I hope the students are well prepared and transition well into high school. They do not have homework. Will they be able to balance everything when they go to high school and university; Need more foundational knowledge; Need more rigour. This is the real world. They also need to do final exams. Love the system but it is not congruent with the public system.

4. Other

If I think of anything, I will let you know; Develop a leadership elective where students can help with activities around the school like setting up chairs, inventorying the van. Have students more responsible for other activities like checking the tents; We live in an oil and gas environment. I would love to see these kids be challenged to not believe that pipelines are bad. We need a very balanced perspective on oil and gas and on the environment; French as a second language; Absolutely zero tolerance for cell phone use during teaching time with both teachers and substitute teachers. Texting, too, should not be tolerated. I include students in this, too. If there is an emergency, parents can call Nola; We need more volunteers, but we need to give them more notice. Two or our parents are already working on a year-long calendar. Parents need more notice for scheduling; The idea that we are preparing students for high school should go away. We are preparing them for life and for ongoing learning. We need to prepare them by using what the best practices in assessment and learning are, and these are the ones that we are currently using; I would like a better explanation of inquiry and what it looks like in different subjects and different grade; Don't like looping at grades eight and nine; Timely return of assignments – book report in January. Got this back in March; More of an emphasis on sports teams with a variety of teams like soccer, rugby, football. Students need exposure to other sports; Ensure that communication is with both parents; Bridge between grade seven and eight or lower and higher grades - students that have mostly used computers/iPads often struggle with neatness and fine motor skills and can have issues in older grades when there appears to be a bigger emphasis on neatness and written work; We need to be able to engage and reach out to new parents and make them also committed to the school and to keep the involvement going; Something that has concerned me for a couple of years is our band program. Combining the grades six and seven classes has turned kids off band. The second year is just a repeat and it has undermined our program. There is not something exciting to encourage students to go on from grade six. I believe it is a scheduling thing or a numbers thing. We have seen a real drop off. Andrew is an exceptional teacher. He has had great student teachers, connections at MRU, band workshops - all of these are good. Lose them for grades 8 and 9 which is too

bad because music does a lot of things for kids socially - working with a group to achieve things, helps with math and reading; Ensure Family Grouping activities are comparable. Some groups always have very meaningful and engaging activities (2); Ensure grade eight science concepts are all covered; With the blanket exercise, the one perspective was very well covered. Ensure that all perspectives are covered, but I think the teachers try very hard to do this; I have no suggestions for improvement; One of my children was bereft that we did not have a Science Fair this year; Consider enlarging the font on the report cards (2); More shrubs at the entry way to add colour similar to what is done with Clem's Garden; Motivation of some teachers has dwindled; Ensure that you always keep the core values of the school; Security of facility; Bigger school; Run an after school club for after school care; More clubs on top of the clubs for sports; High school (3); Need a place for FAQs for grade four parents; Continue to support children in unique ways; Technology can be a distraction; Need more work with students on ethical use of technology; Would be nice if the year schedule were more aligned with CBE; Remote communication for parents for evening information sessions. Evening meetings can be difficult for some parents who live a long way away; Encourage participation by making it more accessible; Sometimes educational assistants create material rather than teachers; Would like to see even more leadership activities for kids in the middle grades.

Student Interview Responses - Key Themes

Connect Charter School students from grades 4 to 9 were interviewed as class groups. The students were asked two basic questions: *What causes you to believe that the Connect Charter School is a very good school? What suggestions for improvement would you offer?* It is interesting to note that, without exception, in every class the students identified learning through the disposition of inquiry and meaningful, real-life learning opportunities; outdoor and environmental education and school field trips; the use of technology to enhance learning and teaching; dedicated teachers and staff members; the environment both within and outside the school; and the well-rounded program through the core courses, the performing and visual arts, physical Education, and the electives as special features of their learning experience. These themes were, in their view, what make Connect Charter School a good school. When interpreting the student data, it is important to consider that the students were interviewed as a class group, and if one child commented on an area, it is recorded as a class response and not an individual response. The following areas of commendation with a response rate of 100% or more were included:

1. Learning through inquiry and meaningful, real-life learning opportunities (100%)

Inquiry encourages us to think deeper in our work and not just skim the surface. Level of inquiry and the freedom we get in our learning; Teachers ask how they can enhance our learning and take different approaches to getting us there. We have different learning opportunities and we are unique in many ways such as using inquiry; Number of big projects with an inquiry base where we have to end with a product that shows our learning; Most of our learning is hands on and we really go deeply into the learning like our wind tunnel project. Inquiry and deeper learning; Get to experience things hands on which is more impactful than sitting in a classroom Explore topics deeper so we understand all sides and all

perspectives of the issues; Exploring topics in depth helps us with the understanding and inquiry based learning helps us to learn on our own; Way we learn. Teachers have done a pretty good job of making us critical thinkers; Inquiry based learning. The info graph work that we did was so engaging - we don't do a lot of textbook learning, learning is hands on – we interact with what we are doing like going to the Weaselhead; Education here is not like with other schools – we don't use text books, it is very creative and very in depth. We explore different ways to approach or to solve problems; Teachers teach differently here – we explore ideas. Very open ended – there is not just one way to solve a problem; Inquiry based, different ways of teaching, and hands on learning; Learning experience – you have to discover information for yourself; you are not just told the answer

2. Outdoor and environmental education and school field trips (100%)

Outdoor education trip. This year everyone was new and we went to Camp Riveredge and it was a good opportunity to experience things like this earlier; Experiential learning going on field trips and doing things there as the lab and not from a text book. We have more freedom such as with our outdoor ed. program at a time when people often don't have as much of a connection to the outdoors; Overnight trips where we experience new things and learn about nature and the wild or about the wetlands. We don't just learn information from a book, we experience it; Overnight camping trips like Fort Steele in grades five and seven and other opportunities like the Weaselhead and Glenmore Reservoir; Opportunities to go on camps and overnight trips. If we are learning about the wetlands, we actually look at them; Overnight trips such as Camp Sweet, Fort Steele, and Bamfield; Trips that we go on – Bamfield, outdoor ed. winter elective; More freedom – outdoor ed. program; We get to go outside to do a lot of work. Trips such as Fort Steele and Bamfield; Outdoor education and outdoor activities. Camps – Fort Steele, winter camp; Cool camps and field trips that we get to go on; Trips – Camp Sweet, winter camp, Fort Steele, SAHT, outdoor ed. electives. We get to go outside to the Weaselhead to learn about our environment

3. Using Technology to Enhance Learning Experiences (100%)

Technology enhances our learning and gets us to delve into topics, read for more information, and get our hands on more parts for our learning; iPads - very accommodating for different learning styles; Technology in science such as the GIS which is an interesting tool which provides us a variety of opportunities to learn skills in different classes. Technology makes it easier to do your work as you don't have to search through a textbook. 3D printer and stage lights; Productive use of technology; Technology based school. Technology is there for us to use; iPads and laptops (2); Technology (4); Technology to advance student learning; Events like technology to advance student learning

4. Dedicated teachers and school staff members (100%)

Friendly people who work at the school. Dedicated teachers. Get to have good relationships with different teachers. Teachers teach us in a fun way so you can also learn. Teachers are very supportive of our ideas and foster independence. When we are done, the teachers keep challenging us. Teachers and principals are generous to the kids and provide great opportunities for kids. Some kids can't go to school and teachers open up the future for us; Have amazing nice teachers. Teachers listen to us and give us "body breaks" when we need them. Teachers encourage us to do more and push us outside of the box. Supportive

environment where teachers help students out. We have choices in our assignments; Teachers are always there when we need help. We switch teachers, but not too often. Student teachers – we learn and they learn - that is really good. Teachers are so approachable if we need help. People like Ms Shergill who we can go to if there is anything going on. Teachers are open to suggestions. Ms. Mitchell-Flek. Kind reasonable teachers; Teachers and admin relaxed so we actually have a voice. Mr. Schmeichel is a cool teacher. Teachers care about their students and do a good job for keeping us engaged and not bored. Independence is fostered; Value in the relationships that we get between teachers and students. There are strong, good relationships with teachers. Teachers push our learning skills to go beyond what we are learning in a bunch of stuff so we get smarter and smarter; The office staff are kind and the teachers are positive. There are staff that can help kids who struggle with their learning. Our learning is personalized – teachers expect more from different students. Different learning opportunities - we learn from different teachers. Amazing staff – they are easy to talk to and they have good answers. Teachers are nice to us and they trust us. Teachers are very kind to students and we know they care about us. The supervisors care about us, too. Challenged by teachers because I am good at math and I like when teachers encourage us; Teachers give us the freedom regarding assignments and how to show our learning. Teachers teach differently – there are different styles, different types of assignments and this works for me. Great custodians; Teachers buy into the idea of community and they believe in what they are doing. Teachers trust us and put assignments on the school website. Teachers get to know students on a personal level, not just an academic level. Miss James and other support staff. We can work with teachers beyond our grades if they are experts in another area; Staff – all have positive attitudes and care for us. Janitors work hard and give us high fives. Staff and teachers trust us. Teachers are really creative in electives and PVA with crazy out of the box activities such as making movies with creative camera shots. Teachers get involved in PD activities outside of the school to help us and we can do things like the Mayor’s Expo. Teachers are really great at teaching and should get paid more. Teachers are laid back and really nice. Teach math with showing us how to do it and why it works instead of straight memorization; Can learn almost anything here because the teachers have so many different talents. Student teachers. We don’t just have one teacher – we have two teachers that we can bond with. There is always help for people who need help with their learning; Teachers give you time to complete work and they are fun and funny. Staff, principals, caretakers, superintendents – they are all nice. Teachers are open minded to questions. Teachers are really kind – we are never on our own. The principal.

5. Environment both within and outside the school (100%)

Really nice library. Freedom to go where you want – we learn about respect; Fabulous working places. Lockers. Sofas. All of the four-square courts and stuff we can do at lunch. We have both desks and tables. Nice climbing wall. Playground; Lockers. Our library is nice. Woodshop; Boulder wall. Quiet spaces where we can work if we need to. We have lots of space, especially outside. More than one space to extend our learning such as the IAC; The gym and all of the equipment we have access to. Swings and the woodshop and the room in the library to make movies and to have a quiet place to work and to record; Nice environment that we are working in – no apple cores or garbage around. Little things make

a difference like the furniture and the posters that are related to our learning. Our creations are displayed around the school so others can be inspired; There are different places where we can learn on the same floor. There is sunlight in every room through windows or solar tubes; Water fountains are different – we can fill water bottles, and this starts at grade four and ends at grade nine. Vending machines. All of the playground trees and Clem’s Garden. Wiggle cushions, standing desks, and “hush ups” on the chairs so they slide quietly. Options about where we sit helps our learning - stand up desks, soft pillows, floor, desks. Rooms are big enough so we have space to walk around; Our facility is well taken care of. Such a great environment; Playground. Design of school as it is a wide space. More than one soccer net and three baseball diamonds. Vending machines; Colour in the library. Different work places that are provided – library, music rooms. Paintings in the halls and stairwells. We are able to customize our classrooms; School is very clean and the Learning Commons is big and you do many things in there. Our school and playing fields are nice and big so we have opportunities to do a lot of things

6. Connect Charter School provides a well-rounded program through the core courses, the performing and visual arts, physical education, and the electives (100%)

Gym, DPA, PVA, electives- we have so many choices in all of these areas. The school is organized into humanities and math/science – we get to learn ubiquitously about everything; Opportunities for us to have different electives. Number of sports that are available to us. EXPO activities – even more hands-on learning. Bikes are great. Grade six band; We have variety in our schedules. Do a lot of sports like quiddich, lacrosse cricket. Get to go on field trips and have guest speakers coming in for different cultures and having the pow wow. PVA and PE programs - amazing teachers to teach them and we go into a lot more in depth learning than other schools. Cycling. PE; Music program, electives, and a good amount of physical activity each day. Like variety of games we get to learn in phys. ed. – pickle ball, lacrosse, net ball. So many different units in a year; Lots of activities in the mornings and at lunch – dodge ball, the climbing wall. We are learning about today’s issues that affect every one of us - in humanities we learn about politics and issues and dive into them to learn more and in science we do things that affect us every day in our lives. Electives such as woodworking and CO2 powered cars. Electives gives you small breaks so this improves your learning. Focus on core subjects like how we can connect the topics to democracy and politics and how we run it. We have elections and voting on what we want and we are allowed to make the choices; There is a high level or standard for our learning and this makes it easier to transfer to other subjects. We have opportunities for different sports. Humanities keep us updated on current events. Over the past two years, our humanities teacher has made us love books. Projects that we do are similar to high school projects. Choices for electives are interesting and prepare us for high school. We know what we are learning and how to apply it in the real world and school prepares us for this - fake news is an example; Electives and all of the other options that we are given. We have different clubs and we can access the school boundaries. PVA and PE. We learn different sports - net ball; EXPO is very positive. PVA – drama. We get to choose what PVA we are in and the electives we are in – there is a wide variety of choices. Option classes in general are good. There are a lot of clubs to join and just extracurricular activities in general. Sports. In gym, we get to do extra activities – biking, longboarding, pickle ball; We get to go places

like SAIT. Electives where we get to work in programming. Access to industry standard software. Choices that we have in options and PVA. Nice to have new gym equipment. Bikes; Electives give kids more opportunities. We learn above and beyond what is usual - learning history of Canada. PE and PVA. EXPO; Different selections of electives. Bikes. Phys. Ed is good here and you get to learn new skills. Cool activities in the units – simple machines, debates. Electives and the variety of choices that we have – cooking, coding, Agents of Change. PVA and PE programs with amazing teachers to teach them. Cycling. PE; PVA and electives – have a nice balance of more artistic and outdoorsy activities – there is something for everyone. Humanities – like the way movies are presented and then studied. Fleet of bikes and cross country skis for activities. PE sports and games you have never heard of – net ball and pickle ball – plus activities such as long boarding and biking. Choice with our novel study each month – we are given a category, then we can choose our own books and reflect on them. Great experiences with EXPO. PVA.

The following additional areas of commendation (with a response rate of 67% or more) were also identified.

1. Opportunities for collaboration and leadership (83%)

Peer mentoring is positive for both sides - taking on the role helps develop good relationships with someone from a younger grade; We can make our own clubs and have experiences with how to lead and be a role model. Peer mentoring. DPA student leaders get to choose the game. Students given many opportunities to make decisions; Get connected with students from older grades who help us; Peer mentoring. Learning from other people; Given so many leadership opportunities. Older students are allowed to be leaders for tours and camps; With sports teams and clubs such as dodgeball club, we get to have fun with students in older grades; Leadership opportunities such as in DPA; If students need help they can get it from a peer mentor; Peer mentoring. Grade nine leaders; Students have a lot of activities to interact with each other. Time to work with others instead of individual assignments Students can organize clubs. Grade nines have an opportunity to create activities for Peace Festival. Peer mentors and leaders have experiences to go to Fort Steele and Camp Sweet.

2. Culture of mutual respect in the school (83%)

Amazed at the community of respect here; Our community is a very unique and caring community. Everyone has their own group and no one is friendless. Our school is respectful; Our school is based around mutual respect. It is easy to bond with friends and build relationships. It is really clear that no one should feel afraid or nervous; Trust that we get and freedom in the school. Very friendly community; Learn about respect because it is so important and kindness; Love culture of mutual respect – it makes us feel safe; Culture of mutual respect. We have a total community with the people in other grades; Community where people always are doing small acts of kindness in every grade. There is a culture of mutual respect – people always feel safe here and the grade nines are so supportive; We share our respect in so many ways – when we sing O’ Canada, Peace Festival, Terry Fox; Like how the school really cares about the students. We don’t have rules for the sake of rules.

3. Student Voice is Valued (67%)

Our opinions are taken to make our school better; We like doing this survey because we get to improve the school; We like that students are listened to - what we can keep and what should stay the same; Appreciate the student input in so many areas - renaming sports teams, EXPO; Our opinions are taken into account; People listen to us to improve our environment; If something is happening that we think is unfair, we can talk about it; Students have input

4. Family groups are very important (67%)

Family Groups – relationships between students in different grades - as I am in the middle it helps us to see how the older students choose and plan the activities; Family Groups - see people from other grades; Family Groups – collaborative different tools that are not accessible to other schools; Family Groups – opportunity to hang out with older students; Family Groups (2); Family groups bring us together; Family groups so we can bond with other grades

5. Other

Keep on improving the school every year - keep the school up to date on learning and on making it fun; Parents; Learn tools for life, not just for school; Office allows us to put skateboards and scooters in there; Movement breaks; Our parents are encouraged to get involved; Easy to make friends here. Like the other students. Positive attitude about going into a new class; If someone has a talent, we are allowed to express it and create clubs or go on unique field trips; Shorter summer so we don't forget what we learned. Fall break; School year balanced. Breaks during the school year helps us; Fresh Grade – easy to organize; No dress code; PD days – we have a day off and the next week teachers have a plan for activities; Everyone is really happy and that makes the place better; Diverse and have so many different people and activities; Looping in grades six and seven; It is fun here. That changes you; Freedom that we have in our work makes us feel safer in the learning environment; Balance in our day to day- schedule mixes things up so we are not repeating the activities; Keeping the class sizes down to 25 students helps develop a good community – you know the people better; Nice place and where you want to be. It is a fun place; Spirit Week; Running club, climbing club; Debating; Clubs we have; Lots of space to do things; Get together with other classes; Amount of professional development opportunities that helps the teachers do their jobs better; Fund raising program – we don't raise funds too often; Different coloured equipment for DPA; Get to go to the same high schools; Schedule is actually organized; Interact with other classes; Students can make clubs and have freedom to pick what you want to do; Not given tons of homework – get what you can do in class and if you need improvement you can do extra work outside of class; Opportunities to take part in different activities like clubs or teams; Classrooms are sorted in areas of the school so that you get to see people that you know; Have two classes which we switch around – get to know different teachers; Our school works hard to develop the school so it is perfect for everyone's needs; We can go anywhere on the field so we can see our brother in grade nine; Get to walk to field trips instead of going by bus; Bake sales and vending machines; Fidget toys hats, heelies; Smaller classes relative to other places; Other people want to come here; Opportunities to try out for school sports; School is clean and our calendar is organized and we are ready to do the next thing; We are a charter school so we get privileges; More free time; Apple based school; Fun lunch (2); Fun lunches and snack lunches; 6 day schedule;

Location of the school; Lots of buses; Balanced school year; People from all over the city attend our school; Variety of instruments; Shorter summer vacation so we can have more days off later in the year; Can work in the hallways or stairwells; Not too many rules; More students; 15 to 20 minutes of reading; Don't have to walk in a straight line; Allowed to enter the school when we first get here; Don't have to go through doors that are only for girls or boys; Variety of sports around the school; More events in the school. Get to go more places; Variety of gym equipment- tread mills; School teams; Fundraisers and bake sales; Schedule is so organized; Have all the supplies we need

The following suggestions for further consideration (with a response rate of 58% or more) were identified through the student interviews:

1. Outdoor space enhancements (100%)

Small greenhouse so the grade fours do not have to grow tomatoes in the science lab; Make one part of the field that is turf; Nets on the soccer goals; adding a track around the perimeter of the field; Repaint backboards for outside; Consider expanding Clem's Garden; Add more benches and plant some bright flowers; Add basketball backboards on the walls of the school; Move the bike racks so they are not as close to the school; Repair basketball nets; Add tennis nets, greenhouse; Nets on basketball hoops; Nets for soccer; more equipment on play structure; Clean out composting bins; Put new nets on basketball hoops; Spinny thing in park fixed; Nets on soccer standards; Greenhouse; Box behind the fence with kick balls inside of it; More tether ball poles; More four square courts on the west side; Better glides, more swings, and more monkey bars; Clem's Garden is sometimes muddy, so can we replace the stepping stones and the plaque is missing from it; Dandelions in the park; Small climbing wall outside; Rope structure outside for climbing; Rebuild spinny thing on playground; Basketball nets outside; holes in the field; Repaint the lines in the basketball court; Add other play structures and make sure equipment works; Nets on the soccer nets; add a few more trees around the path; Expand Clem's Garden a bit; Add more tables or benches where the pavement is; Buddy bench; More trash cans; Put a basketball net on the fences; Different basketball courts designated for different grades; Add spinny thing; Get new tether balls or fix the ones in the courtyard; More trees and bushes in Clem's Garden; Fix basketball nets; Football posts; Repaint hopscotch lines; Fix up the courtyard by the sheds; More organized games so that the larger games can be played instead of five people games; Repaint four square court; More swings; Add on another bike rack; Update the basketball nets; More trees in the fields; Expanding the park for the younger students; Go over the paint for the games by the parking lot; Extend Clem's Garden into the horseshoe area; Turbo javelin; Basketball court – paint a three-point line; Small area in field where there is a planned activity every lunch hour; More plants and nature; More playground equipment; Buddy rock where people can go if they are lonely; more swings; More spinny things; Have some water outside on hot days

2. Indoor space enhancements (100%)

Cafeteria; Microwaves in classes; Overhang on the climbing wall; Vending machine with healthier snacks; Fix locks on washrooms in girls' washroom; Bigger windows; Take care of

the heating issue in the classrooms; Microwaves; Canadian flag; Security cameras; More lockers so every student has a locker; Space between lockers; More equipment in gym like ropes; Repair flickering lights; More technology like Apple pens; Colour lights; Blinds on windows; Suggestion box; More breakout spaces; Better sound equipment in the classroom; Repaint the lockers similar to our logo; More sunlight in the upstairs classrooms; Repainting the stage black; Lighting track above the stage; Repaint the cabinets in front of the stage; Study hall where we can work quietly - perhaps in the IAC; More chairs for assemblies; Get new vending machines that are more reliable; More water fountains; Better sinks in the classrooms with automatic shut offs; More consistent furniture in the classrooms – all tables in every class or all desks in every class; Cafeteria; Water fountains in classrooms; Place to build stuff; School store where they sell merchandise; More whiteboard space; Locks in washrooms; Have a gymnastics unit put in the school with ropes and ladders; Another supervised quiet place in the school; Have a soundproof room; Some form of secondary Wi-Fi for phones; More fans in the summer when it gets hot; Heating and air conditioning in the school; Study hall for everyone – a period during the day; Update the sinks and taps in the washrooms; More vending machines; Pressure is really high on the taps; Remove the white fountains or have them working again (2); Heating in building; New chairs and tables; Exercise balls; Some kind of cafeteria; Sanitary product dispensers that work and ones that are up to date; Free Wi-Fi for the kids; Stalls that lock in the bathroom; More spots to put stuff away when we go to Phys. Ed; More places to have multiple people and sit and talk with friends; Microwaves in the hallways or classrooms; Lights switched out that are not good; Repaint the school inside and out; Bigger lockers; sketchy corner by the band room; Stairwell in the library – make it accessible; Heat upstairs; Men’s washroom needs a redo; Lid over fire alarm; Room for voice recording assignments; Maintenance issues – lights, clocks, cupboard doors; Need an area where it is quiet after the Learning Commons has changed; Bell in our classroom is really loud; An ability to open the windows in the classrooms; “Hush ups” on all the chairs; Compost bin for each classroom; Salads in vending machines and other healthy foods

3. Changes to school electives (58%)

More student choice for electives; Outdoor ed. elective every term; Advanced electives more often; Elective to prepare for high school; Vote for electives; Outdoor electives options for everyone; No mandatory band for grade 6; More people who can get into specific electives and make clubs if students cannot get into an elective; Different electives for the younger grades; Give even more choices for electives – perhaps a film making option

4. Changes to family groups (42%)

Double periods for Family Groups; More Family Group classes; Change the Family Groups up; Two blocks of Family Groups; Family Groups changed back to what it was before; Better to have fun with other grades rather than to work with other grades. Re-examine the balance; Family groupings are good – make food and interact as a family and play games; Family groups should be changed every year so we meet more teachers and students; Divide the family groups in half – four to six and seven through nine; Looking at themes for Family Groups is a good idea; In our FG, the older students don’t want to necessarily do the activities; Need choices in FG so they are more enjoyable; If the purpose of FG is for bonding, then let us have social activities such as games; Mix them up a little so there is less

familiarity; Get rid of Family Groupings – when I am really busy, I would like to do that work instead.

5. Make provision for more interschool and intramural sports teams (33%)

More sports teams for younger grades; Introduce more school teams such as baseball and soccer; Grade four girls sports team; Flag football team; Soccer team; Sports teams for younger students; More selection of sports teams - soccer, football, rugby; Change the sports team name; Longer seasons for sports teams; Junior teams need more playing time; More teams like soccer, lacrosse, hockey, football

6. Other

School dances; More access to the gym during lunch; Trading cards game (TCG) club; More access to Adobe Creative Cloud; Driver's Ed for grade nine; Edit Wikipedia – have a day for this or an elective; More school social events; More sports days through the school year; Free time day for activities in the field – hula hoop contest, bouncy castles; Card zone where you can play cards; More options for research; Period for French or Spanish; Bit harder curriculum; Class pet; "Teach the teachers" zone where kids can teach teachers, if we have learned a new app that they might be interested in; More student teachers; Fewer students in one class – hard for teachers to teach as many students; Get to choose activity through a draw; Need more opportunities to use the woodshop and more supervisors; Look at our team name; More fidget spinners; Grad held at the golf course again; Longer break between classes; Allowed to leave the school for lunch; Longer break between gym and PVA classes to get to other subjects; Preparation for high school – more homework; Learning strategies needs to be more purposeful; Expand DPA time; Replace Mr. Sub with Wok Box; Scheduled work blocks; Shouldn't need supervisors in the gym; More supplies during the year; More student teachers; More intramurals; More assemblies that we can participate in; More input in the yearbook; Elective for yearbook; New jerseys for sports teams: Longer outdoor recess; Nice to see classes outside our pod groups more; A longer eating time at lunch; Make recess longer; More work periods; In DPA, mix up classes; At the end of every year, make sure people have friends in their classes for the next year; Teachers should make other clubs; More field trips; Instead of Fort Steele every year, switch it up a bit; Go outside for lunch every day; Class pets; Change learning strategies to more electives or Family Groups; More time for PVA; Ability to go off campus during the lunch break; Improve the debate team and other teams; Lunch break longer; School hours changed so there is a later start – others wanted it to stay the same; Gym strip to change into; More time for electives; More clubs and supervisors; Let the grade nine students do a quote in the yearbook; Eat with other classrooms; Chopsticks instead of forks; Mandatory activity if you don't complete things; New jerseys; More water guns; Bigger tests sooner so there is less anxiety in preparing for high school; Room to catch up on work instead of going to Family Groups; Changes in test taking – have big tests rather than just little ones; Open campus at lunch; Test or check ins so teachers know where we are at; In gym, there is so much goal setting and there needs to be follow up; Longer breaks between classes; Don't know why we have the circus unit- would like baseball instead; If we do a sport outside of school, substitute this for gym. Gym has turned into assignment class and all of our marks are based on our goals; At the beginning of the school day, a lot of kids are playing on the playground and I would recommend for there to be a teacher to supervise; More assemblies; Sports seasons longer;

More comments when marking; For band and PVA, have the option to leave and join during the year; Class pet; Add different DPA equipment like kits; Grade six band only part of the year; Pep rallies; More supplies for PVAs; Longer summer break; No band in grade six; Longer time for lunch; More choices for Fun Lunch; More units in phys. ed.; More technology; More classrooms per grade so we have more people who can experience the difference this school makes; Connect Charter Voice; More different subjects; Even more hands-on activities because I really like them; Invite other schools or classes to do things with us; Have band for younger students; More overnight trips; More books in the library; At the end of the year when teachers choose classes, they should ask the students; More planned activities together with the grades 5 and 7 at Fort Steele; Need more groupings such as grades 8 and 6, 9 and 4. Mix these up with the trips. Engage with other grades; Dances; Better noise cancelling headphones; Connect with all other groups in the same grade; Kids to decide on field trips; Able to start peer mentoring in grade six; Peer mentors so everyone has someone to help; Buddy day – at the first day of the school year, buddy a younger student up with an older student; Add more art; Friend request in the classroom – we would still do work; Once a week work period – have these more often

Staff Interview Responses - Key Themes

Informal interviews were conducted with 42 staff members and the following major areas of commendation (with a response rate of 12% or more) were identified through the staff interviews:

1. The supportive, caring, and collaborative culture is a key to success (88%)

Our culture is what makes us a good school, the idea of school connectedness with students, staff, and parents as well as our commitment to excellence in education and being innovative. Focus on relationships; Love the idea of the culture of mutual respect and this is what our school is; True collaboration with built in time; Great school because of the opportunities, the freedom to choose and the collaboration; Highly supportive environment where people have enough resources to do what they need to do, support from the Board, admin, parents, students, and other staff, and the belief that “We are all in this together.”; Thrive on nurtured relationships that are sustained over time and that exemplify the qualities of our teachers; Much enthusiasm in the school; Sense of community and it is great to have students from all four quadrants of the city; The culture of mutual respect is awesome and rare. Additionally, collaboration between teachers is very authentic and benefits the students; Respectful culture; There is a feeling that we are all in this together. That makes the school a really good place to be; Supportive culture that starts with leadership and trickles down to students and parents; All kids feel welcome here; Freedom for teachers and students to make decisions and to experiment. This environment really enhances learning for students; Working together in a highly collaborative culture and being able to see support ; Community of greatness – everyone works together to develop students who are critical thinkers; Staff are passionate here and everyone supports each other; There are new initiatives and innovation and the school is always moving forward with everyone working together; As a staff, we collaborate both within and with outside institutions to push our practice. The staff is positive; Supportive school which encompasses the Board, the School Council, the students – everyone; Teachers are willing to connect

inside and outside of the walls of the school. I appreciate the openness and collaboration; General culture in the school between students and teachers is the key. Both teachers and students want to be here; Collaboration and the thoughtfulness that goes into planning; Changes in the school are dynamic, ongoing and effective because everyone is working towards a common cause. People are engaged and involved from the Board through to the students; I have the flexibility to explore different practices and am encouraged to try new things; Sense of community; Support for taking chances for teachers and the amount of resources is the key (electives, bikes); Trust that is placed in me by staff means a lot. I am encouraged to try new things that I believe will be an even more effective way to enhance student learning; We are supported in trying new things. The greenhouse is an example of this; Really do develop extraordinary citizens. We have so many awesome things that we do well. We must remember to celebrate these; There is a small school atmosphere here. The school can be more responsive and there is a feeling of support and responsiveness; This is an easy place to come to work because of the culture; Excellent opportunities to collaborate both within our grade and with other experts in the school; As a staff, we are fairly collegial and work well together doing what is best for kids; There is always momentum and continuing to do what is best for students. There has never been a question about that. Now we are moving further and higher and getting better and this is being supported; Supportive community. Everyone knows they are cared for – students, teachers, parents. It feels different walking through the doors; Love the collaboration time and the very student centred approach within the school. Clubs, leadership activities, teams – everyone is working together for the students

2. We have a very capable and highly dedicated staff (76%)

Staff have the capacity to recognize the needs of the learners and to adapt their teacher to meet the students' needs; People who work diligently; Teachers are always willing to improve; Teachers really respect the students and this is huge; Staff morale is very high because staff feel positively about the school; Staff take risks, try new things, and find a new lens to look through; Appreciate the people with whom I work; Staff who are willing to try new and innovative; Exceptional staff who are incredibly strong and are passionate about what they do. Turnover is very low; Teachers change and adjust based on student learning and give the students opportunities to develop the skills to become amazing humans; Teachers are always trying to improve; People here are really great to work with; Jessica, Abby, Shannon. The whole support staff does so much to help our students; Our staff is not content with the status quo; Grade 4 teachers are transitioning kids well; Staff prepare students for the world they live in and also prepare them to change their world; Staff is so dedicated and committed to going above and beyond. There is never a feeling that failure is a possibility; Staff are always looking for ways to make learning richer and more meaningful; Teachers and the other staff are really the icing on the cake. Coordination between the Inclusive Practices Coach and teachers is really valuable; Great people on staff with expertise and varied backgrounds; Teachers are incredible. They are so hard-working and talented. We have a community of mentors; Staff are committed to student success and focused on continuing to improve student engagement; We have a lot of grey matter on our staff; Teachers care about their jobs and they care about the kids; Krista is excellent and really helped with my transition to make it as smooth as possible; Really like the

collaboration across humanities and math/science. I learn much from my teaching partners; Everybody really cares about kids and their well-being; I just adore the custodial staff; Teachers are able to deal with the complexities of being off campus and this provides good learning opportunities for students; Teachers set a high bar to do a good job. When we do not feel we are achieving, we strive to do even better. The expectation is that we will all work to do things better; Awesome teachers who really care about the students; Fantastic teachers here – I have learned so much from them. With there being so many awesome teachers, I would like to see even more sharing of great ideas. I would like to share the assessment practices, how people do report cards.

3. The leadership and support from the administration/leadership team is appreciated (69%)

Administration team is dedicated to helping teachers handle life, not just curriculum, with humility and humour while supporting everyone in the school; Administration gives people autonomy without micromanaging. Recognition to Shashi for her work with student leadership; Communication from Phil has been positive; Admin are supportive of teachers and teachers are supportive of students; Supportive leadership team. They are so positive and constructive and that helps me to be positive and constructive; Support of admin. They listen to and support my suggestions; As a staff, we are trusted by admin. Admin supports me with resources and anything else that I need; Good admin team – I feel very supported; Trust that is being placed in me by admin; Openness that admin has when working through conversations about the culture of our school. They are always trying to figure out how we can do things better. New weekly updates have been great; Admin support. Really like having Shashi upstairs; Support from admin and superintendent; Admin are supportive of teachers; Superintendent (2); We have direct contact with admin and superintendent every day – there are no degrees of separation and this is a model that works; Can go to administration when we need to have difficult conversations. Our ideas are valued and heard; Solid admin support; Support from admin to pursue the development of extraordinary citizens; Portfolio positions are a great asset. Rick. John. Kevin is so approachable and humble. When you meet and plan with him, it is a nice exchange of ideas and building upon strengths. Rick has been amazing and impressive. He is so open to different opinions and ideas. I don't know what we would do without John; Admin gives me the freedom to push my practice and the opportunity for advancement through funds such as the M. Ed fund; Admin is amazing and supportive. They let me take risks and are encouraging; Shashi has made being in classrooms a priority and this is appreciated; Leadership is strong. They give support where it is needed and freedom and independence to take charge; Appreciate having a superintendent who is asking teachers and students their opinions and working to make a better school; Amount of support from admin in how the timetable is structured so there is time for planning; Admin allows us the freedom to do what we think is best; Administrators are excellent in juggling their many responsibilities

4. The students are excellent (55%)

Every class I walk into is phenomenal. The kids are amazing and thoughtful and so smart; Our students are what makes our school good – there are so many reasons they are great- they set high goals for themselves, and then they strive to achieve them. They are smart and aware of themselves as learners and as people; Students (2); Grades eight and nine students are such strong leaders and role models; Students are great and recognize how

they can apply their learning to real life situations; Students are very successful when they leave our school; Students are excellent and there are high expectations for the behaviour and for student work. This creates great people; Students – they have a trusting relationship with teachers; Students are beyond fantastic; Students are excited to be here and to learn; Students are smiling almost all of the time – they want to be here; Students are given freedom and they embrace it and do many innovative and brilliant things; Kids are really great and full of trust in their teachers; Independent students; Critical mass of students who love school and are engaged; Able to build strong relationships with students; Students come to school ready to learn; Adore the students – They want to learn and they are so engaged and excited about learning. I trust and respect the students; Very involved and committed students; Students are so engaged and after they graduate from the school, they want to come back and visit; Students are eager to try new things; Students are willing to accept challenges and try new things which make them uncomfortable. They grow because of this and embrace challenges

5. EXPO is a very positive element of our school (38%)

Risk taking is encouraged. People are willing to give EXPO a try; Looking forward to next year and the interdisciplinary and place based approach; Phil is understanding of the need for support for teachers with the new EXPO program; Learning with the math/science and humanities – the collaborative piece is really positive; We are constantly looking at how we can be innovative. Teachers were involved in the process. We are not stagnant as we are constantly looking for ways to get better; Appreciate the partnerships that are being forged. We are pushing what inquiry means and pushing our practice; EXPO program will be fantastic; Phil knew this was the right thing to do and he really listened to feedback; Excited about the changes we are making in programming; EXPO – really like that we are trying new things; School is in transition and what we are doing is the right thing; EXPO is just the right level of commitment; Excited to do more cross curricular activities with EXPO; EXPO; I am ready for the challenge of EXPO next year

6. Parental involvement and support is excellent (31%)

Parents are a huge part of what makes our school great. The parent community does so much to support the work of our school – so many parents volunteer on a regular basis or for field trips or other off site opportunities, Parent Summit committee, EXPO initiative, volunteer committee, Hot lunches, the list goes on; Parents are supportive and trust their kids are in good hands and they send them to school prepared to learn; Parent involvement is good. They are super involved and super good. Our parents are very academic focused and have a very philosophical approach to education. They value the core objectives but also other aspects of their child's education; Parents (2); Parents work together and are so involved sharing their expertise and time. Very important piece in our school; Parent involvement is great – “Petting Zoo” for learning new instruments; PVA committee; Supportive parents; Parents are really involved and invested; Parents are supportive and want to be here; Parents groups are great; Parents are supportive

7. We have a great vision for the school and clearly we are moving in the right direction (29%)

Place based education makes sense within our mandate; Cohesiveness of philosophy - everyone is on the same page; Scope and variety of programming within our charter pillars.

We have a solid foundation being guided by the exemplary Learning and Teaching Frameworks in taking forward the mandate of our charter; Still a fabulous school; Excited that we are looking ahead to the next version of Connect; Focus on citizenship and developing extraordinary citizens and all the work that takes place to support it; Hands on learning solidifies what students are learning in class. Because of our charter, they are given experiences they might not have otherwise had; I like that we are trying new things with assessment; Commitment to innovation and trying new things (2); Continue to push boundaries of education- complacency is not tolerated; We have a great school because of the programs and the opportunities for students such as electives and the authentic learning experiences

8. The outdoor and environmental education programs and taking learning beyond the classroom continue to be key components of the school learning activities and the success of the school (26%)

Outdoor education program is great as it gives an opportunity to build relationships - teachers to students, students to students, teachers to parents, students to parents; John is doing an excellent job and we need to make sure he has enough release time because he is very valuable; Having bikes available has been great; Outdoor ed. experiences are great. As a teacher, I am improving because of the support I am receiving in this area; Taking our students outside whenever we can and our camps; Location is conducive to strong outdoor educational opportunities; Camps allow teachers to build strong relationships with students; Outdoor education program (2); Field trips; Off campus and place based trips

9. Budget allocation and acquisition of appropriate resource for students is effective (14%)

Site-based financial management makes a difference. As a teacher, I have control over the program and ownership of it and I am given the resources to do what I believe is best for student learning; Resources at our fingertips; Awesome and amazing resources in the classroom; Allocation of budget is positive. I have the freedom to try new things; Fortunate to have the resources we do; Great resources so we can enrich the learning environment and design programs about what is best for students

10. The focus on professional development and ongoing growth is appreciated (12%)

PD opportunities with a school wide focus; Really appreciate the PD days and how EAs are included and valued; Professional development is so valuable. Perhaps part of the Teacher Learning Plans could be, "What PD are you going to access to support your goals; PD; Focus on PD and it is supported through resources

11. Technology is Making a Difference in the Learning Opportunities for Students (12%)

Kids have access to technology. This opens up ways for them to express their understanding of concepts differently. They can share what they have learned with others – this expands their audience; Technology – the green screens, Apps, Google capabilities, integration of technology into place-based opportunities; Technology and connectivity; Effective use of technology in the school. It is not considered the be all and end all, it is just used effectively; Technology

12. Other

Work of our Board makes a difference. They have a great balance of being involved enough and knowing what is going on. They give staff the flexibility to use their judgement in the daily operation of the school; Student voice is valued through student focus groups and in

many other ways; I have seen a lot of growth in the school in the last five years. There are many things of which I am very proud; Our school has a positive reputation and people want to attend our school. MRU and U of C students want to work here. This is really positive. So many different groups identify this as a good school; Differentiation for students and the Individual Student Plans (ISPs) that are developed and focussed on students' needs; Like the process used for the superintendent surveys and the follow through; Like that we don't have a huge bureaucracy; Do things differently at our school and this is positive; We continually improve the barometer by which we measure relationships; More diverse population with more students from different parts of the city; Environment that supports and promotes student choice in many areas – teachers allow choice, there are choices for electives, choice for staff in given different opportunities; Really like Family Groups: Reduced class sizes; I continue to love my job; Feedback from kids; More diverse population and students from different parts of the city; As we change and grow, there are more non-teaching staff to support students; Flexibility for teachers to try new things; Family Groups; Variety of opportunities for students; Appreciate having opportunities for staff input before decisions are made

The following suggestions for further consideration (with a response rate of 10% or more) were identified through the staff member interviews:

1. Considerations when implementing EXPO (31%)

With EXPO, provide teachers with what they need and trust them; Have PD throughout the school year with EXPO. Start small. PD. Try some activities. Evaluate. PD. Try some more. Evaluate; Moving into EXPO, we need support in developing interdisciplinary work; Ensure there is enough planning time for EXPO units; Need supports in place for extra responsibilities for EXPO (coaching, report cards). Need to consider what we will not be doing. Electives might be very challenging with students and teachers gone. Two electives in a four day cycle is too much; EXPO idea is good, but let's figure out the priority items first; Would have liked to have started with the concept first before getting into the details; Need to analyze and reflect to ensure we are improving; Concern about staff wellness with EXPO next year; We have great teachers who are very dedicated and this can be exhausting, so am concerned next year with EXPO; Stay true to our commitment to inquiry as we move towards EXPO; PD for place-based learning; Perhaps we should look at a school like Langevin who has done excellent work with place-based education and learn from them; Important moving forward that we have effective professional development in experiential learning

2. Consider ways to ensure workload is manageable and there are not too many priorities (21%)

Number of things that are going on at one time. There are so many priorities. Focussing on fewer might allow us to do everything better. Perhaps we could do Family Groups less often even though these are very valuable. Learning Strategies is another area where these could be held less often; Tendency that all schools have to keep adding things. Sometimes less is more; As a school that is trying new things, we sometimes take on too much. Teachers feel a lot of pressure to be innovative and this takes time and foresight; Concerned about overloading teachers; We need to strive for balance, as every year it is easy to get swept up

with new ideas. Revisit what we are doing on a regular basis to make sure we are not doing too much; Pace can sometimes be tough; We need to focus more on fewer things. We are a school that does too much and a staff that does too much, because we want our students to have many opportunities. EXPO. Family Groups. Electives. Trips. Student teachers. We need to prioritize those things and it needs to be clear what comes first; We have a lot of balls in the air. There is only so much time, yet we still want to push our practice and do what is best for all students. Planning for field trips takes a lot of work and this can take away from other work we are doing. How do we manage everything?

3. Enhance communication (17%)

Could we use the monitor outside the office for activities for the day; Need to improve some aspects of our communication; Too many people have access to the calendars. It would be better if we had one calendar and developed a better way to manage it; Better communication; Communication could be enhanced. Right now, it feels that some of the control is being taken away, and teachers like control. A lot of trust is being asked of us; Communication can always be improved; We are taking on more responsibilities and need to have really good communication with teachers so they can be supported

4. Further refine and enhance leadership practices in school (16%)

Admin presence in the classroom. If a teacher is new to the school, there is a great deal of presence. Provide this support to all teachers; Admin are away from the school a lot supporting people on trips. Is there a way we can change this; More admin in classrooms (2); Release time for portfolio leaders is a necessity. They are taking on a lot of administrative responsibilities and need time to support teachers; Nervous about our admin workload. They are working so hard and I don't think it is sustainable; We need more admin in the classrooms

5. Do more to address the special learning and personal development needs of students (10%)

Needs to be more support so everyone embraces the inclusive education philosophy Think we need to work on our ability to be even more inclusive. It is a way of thinking and being. More time and support is need for inclusive practices; To me, the inclusive education mandate remains at the forefront and needs to be the priority so that every student is successful. We need to focus time and energy on that; The counselling position needs to be a priority and should be a full-time position; Teachers having a better understanding of diversity and needs of our students

6. Enhance professional development programs and initiatives (10%)

Professional development has not always been as relevant or productive as it could be; Need to maximize the benefit in our PD activities. Give teachers a voice to present or to learn. Place based education and our charter pillars have to be our focus; Re-examine how we do PD days. What could we be using the time for? Could we put staff meetings at the end of the day; We need to use PD more effectively. Bring in external people

7. Other

When something needs to be changed, we just do it; Don't have suggestions for changes, because when something comes up that will make it better for kids – a new way to learn – we DO just change; Examine our culture and make sure we are staying true to it; Ensure that the strong values and culture of our school are instilled in the students in grade four; Post

trip reporting and review needs to be enhanced; Post trip organization needs review – gear left in IAC, food in staff room. Synchronize trips – Who is responsible for the flow through, the trip approval forms, parent documents? How do we know when a trip has been approved; We should track our kids and see how they are doing; Need a policy on use of computers. With great freedom, there is sometimes a lack of oversight. Sometimes student needs are not being met; Concern about not having a dedicated counselor as this puts more responsibilities on teachers; Concern over lack of planning time with curricular partner. This is so valuable; Need to ensure we are continuing to do the basics well; We lose so much when strong educators leave. We need to find a way to pass on the knowledge; Transparency in all decisions; More school culture building activities; Need to be very open and transparent with hiring for positions; Perceived inequalities in workload expectations; Need to work with parents more to engage them and to help them understand our charter pillars and assessment of student learning; Ongoing feedback loops for continuous improvement; We need to determine where we are going to go with assessment and report cards; Make sure we have the best teachers in the right positions to meet learning needs; More team planning time; Can we reshape Family Groups (7.2 with 5.2); Learning Strategies are cumbersome; Want to get to a balanced ratio between male and female students; Start the year differently with technology – set up the iPads and introduce technology as a whole. Parent orientation for the iPads should provide more information; Need to always be revisiting our culture of mutual respect; In grade four, give more information to parents ahead of time and at the orientation; Would love to see Family Groups as a way to connect in grade groupings. (grade 4 with grade 7, grade 5 with grade 8 and grade 6 with grade 9); As a staff, we are good at borrowing equipment and not as good at returning it; We need someone around every day to deal with technology; Would like to further enhance coordination between Learning Commons and the classrooms. This is such a valuable space and I think it could be used even more; We need to ensure we have balance on staff and go back and reflect and assess on whether the balance is right; Put the calendar up at every staff meeting and go over it; How can we get even more of the Fine Arts embedded in the curriculum; Need to change the attendance. This should not be still being done by hand; Report cards in general need to be changed. Research is out there to support it, but we are not moving in that direction; Will miss the time next year with my curriculum partner; As a staff, we need to have an understanding of what rich inquiry looks like; Need to look at what it is that allows us to continue to be strong without eroding our culture. Staff deployment out earlier; Ensure classroom technology works – Smart Board; Need to be careful we do not take people for granted and that our colleagues are okay; Need discussion at the Board level as to how to be more proactive with government; Not enough tech support; Ensure teachers are evaluated on a regular basis; Too many subs; Would love to have more experienced teachers hired; Need to continue to allow divergent views and to seek opportunities to listen to everyone; Improve facility and furniture; Would like to have mentors outside of our grade groups; Tweet when other people are doing great things