



## **Connect Charter School named Apple Distinguished School**

Calgary, Alberta- September 29, 2021 — Connect Charter School is pleased to announce it has been recognized as an Apple Distinguished School (ADS) for 2021-2024. With the goal of enhancing learning and teaching through the appropriate and effective use of technology, Connect Charter School is excited and proud to be recognized with this designation for the fourth consecutive term.

Highlighted in the ADS application was the inspiring Partners In Place project that included Tsuut'ina Nation Education Department and Mount Royal University. Together, the education partners' project titled "Social Problem Solving Through Design Thinking" was a collaboration between the stakeholders that focused on solutions to social problems in various communities related to bullying, mental health and anxiety. The project developed the capacity for students to use design thinking and computational thinking strategies, empowered through the use of technology to support the development of their solutions. All students had Ipads and leveraged their use to support this project.

Apple Distinguished Schools are centers of innovation, leadership, and educational excellence. They use Apple technology to connect students to the world, fuel creativity, deepen collaboration, and make learning personal.

"The essence of the ADS program directly aligns with our charter mandate. It allows teachers to offer different and enhanced learning opportunities for students to explore, engage, create and learn in new and meaningful ways, while teaching through a disposition of inquiry, as outlined in the schools' Exemplary Teaching and Learning Frameworks. Perhaps what has been most exciting about our journey has been the way it has encouraged collaboration and partnerships in education. Collaborative learning opportunities have really inspired our students" said superintendent Chris Gilmour. "The selection of Connect Charter School as an Apple Distinguished School highlights our success in creating an innovative and compelling learning environment that engages students and provides tangible evidence of academic achievement."

In the early stages of the global pandemic, Connect Charter School pivoted from in-school learning to at home learning almost overnight. The feedback from our students and parents suggested that because of our one-to-one Ipad program and because our students were so comfortable using existing technology and learning new technologies to support their learning, the transition ensured all students were well supported. Although all students are now back in school, we have begun a research project in partnership with the University of Calgary to explore the efficacy of the at-home learning program we offered. Results from this research will be available in the spring of 2022.

"We have a fantastic team of educators at Connect who engage in ongoing professional development and goal setting around making learning happen in and through technology", said David Cloutier, Educational Technologist. "This commitment and the work we do with technology helps to equip students for not just the tools, but important skills like computational thinking, critical thinking, citizenship, and creativity."

"With one-to-one tech, our devices are personalized to us – we can see what we've learned in the past, organize in our own way and in one spot, and use accessibility tools to make it fit our needs" noted Lennart, a Grade 9 student who has been at Connect Charter School since grade 4. "One-to-one devices are also great for accessing and creating new information, as well as showing our learning in different ways."

Connect Charter School is a public school with 624 students in grades 4-9 whose pedagogy focuses on teaching through a disposition of inquiry, the meaningful integration of technology to support teaching and learning, and experiential, outdoor learning. It is located on the escarpment of the Weaselhead Naturalization area, which is the home of the Treaty 7 Nations (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Stoney/Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, and the Metis Nation-region 3), and I want to acknowledge that we are fortunate and grateful to be able to share this space, and enjoy our partnership with our Tsuut'ina neighbours.

<https://connectcharter.ca>

Chris Gilmour, Superintendent  
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