

Charter School Education Plan 2023 – 2026

# Message from the Board Chair

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce the Alberta Classical Academy's first Education Plan with this message on behalf of our Board and all stakeholders.

Alberta Classical Academy was approved in January of 2022, and as of the writing and approval of this plan anticipate that close to 800 children will be engaged in Classical Learning for the 2023-2024 school year, with campuses in both Calgary and Edmonton. We are extremely proud of what has been accomplished to date and very excited for the future of classical liberal arts education from K to 12 in Alberta.

The stated purpose of the Alberta Classical Academy charter is "To deliver a classical liberal arts education that equips students with the virtues, knowledge, and habits befitting free citizens." Throughout this document readers will see various elements of the elaboration of our charter purpose. Our stated mission involves the pursuit of truth and wisdom, and our efforts as a charter school community are directed to those ends.

In arriving at this point in the very first year of our existence, there are many people to thank. Our leadership team has proven to be a dedicated group of educators and professionals who have worked tirelessly to institute the beginnings of classical education in grades K to 6 at our St. Angela campus. Teachers and support staff, from day one, have committed to developing their understanding of classical education and to implement it with their students. Our parents have demonstrated tremendous support for the direction the school has taken, and our students have engaged enthusiastically in the expanded curriculum and in the culture in our school. I would like to thank our Board of Directors, a completely volunteer group of parents and community members with a demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, classical education, who have also spent countless hours contributing to the governance of the school. We have also appreciated the support of the Minister and the folks at Alberta Education who have been so supportive. Finally, Alberta Classical Academy owes an enormous expression of gratitude to Caylan Ford, our Foundress and initial Board Chair, for her tireless efforts in establishing and gaining approval of the Charter.

We are looking forward to the future!

Francis Fast, Board Chair

## Accountability Statement for the Education Plan

The Education Plan for Alberta Classical Academy commencing September 1, 2023, was prepared under the direction of the Board/Board of Directors in accordance with the responsibilities under the *Education Act* and the *Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act*. This plan was developed in the context of the provincial government's business and fiscal plans. The Board has used its performance results to develop the plan and is committed to implementing the strategies contained within the plan to improve student learning and results. The Board approved the 2023/2026 Education Plan on May 16, 2023.

Francis Fast, Board Chair

# Charter School Profile

#### Vision

The vision of Alberta Classical Academy is "To develop well-cultivated and virtuous men and women who are committed to seeking truth and wisdom, who contribute to the authentic common good of their communities, and who recognize the perennial reality of truth, goodness, and beauty as the guiding light of human affairs."

## **Philosophy**

Our philosophy begins with the assertion that truth, beauty, and goodness exist as objective qualities, impervious to time or human opinion. Knowledge of these is what constitutes wisdom.

#### **Our Charter Essentials**

We believe that truth exists, and we are committed to seeking it diligently and courageously. This commitment is expressed through a culture that values open and civil conversation, free inquiry, and intellectual humility, and that encourages a sense of philosophical wonder. With Plato, we hold that the pursuit of truth is entwined with the practice of virtue. Where there is truth, there is goodness and beauty. Knowledge of them is what constitutes wisdom.

The highest aspiration of education is to foster moral excellence. Our goal is to help students cultivate the mind and the heart, impart a love of virtue, and form the habits of temperance and self-mastery that will enable them to live good, healthy, and purposeful lives.

Students thrive in an environment that provides stability, order, belonging, and love. We understand that structure and high expectations are not incompatible with the spirit of leisure or the pursuit of freedom, but a precondition for them. Through immersion in a well-ordered environment, pupils can learn to order their own souls well.

Teachers are leaders in the classroom and in the school community at large. They impart knowledge and expertise to students, model good conduct, encourage respectful dialogue and inquiry, and create and uphold the school's culture. At the Alberta Classical Academy, learners will pursue an academically rigorous and content-rich program of study in teacher-led classrooms. Emphasis will be placed on what is known as "explicit instruction" (sometimes called direct instruction).

In addition to explicit instruction, teachers will integrate the Socratic method into their teaching, encouraging students' sense of philosophical wonder, and inspiring intellectual humility and curiosity. The Socratic method supports courageous and civil conversations in the pursuit of truth. Truth-seeking is an explicit commitment of the Alberta Classical Academy and is inseparable from the pursuit of goodness and beauty.

The curriculum at the Alberta Classical Academy schools will be delivered using the trivium model, which comprises grammar, logic/dialectic, and rhetoric. Although each element is present at all grade levels, the emphasis shifts as students progress through their studies.

Students at the Alberta Classical Academy will develop an expansive moral vocabulary. They will learn to recognize and identify a variety of virtues, understand their varied manifestations, and use them as reminders of what is good and noble. Students will strive to embody these virtues in their own lives, both through habitual practice, and through active self-reflection.

For more information on the ACA Charter, please see <a href="https://www.classicalacademy.ca">https://www.classicalacademy.ca</a>

## Introduction

Alberta Classical Academy began as Calgary Classical Academy, and was approved in January 2022 by Minister of Education Adrianna LaGrange. We commenced classes in the St. Angela school in the community of Bridgeland in Calgary on August 28, 2022. In our first year, our Calgary campus has 294 students following a classical curriculum in grades K through 6.

In December 2022, Charter amendments including a change of name to Alberta Classical Academy were approved by the Minister, along with an approval for expansion to Edmonton. In the fall of 2023, ACA will operate schools in both Calgary and Edmonton, and will grow to approximately 900 students on three campuses from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

In our first year of operations, we have concentrated our growth efforts and educational plans on a number of practical goals and educational planning directly connected to the implementation of the charter. Some of the key developments:

- Accessing, improving and equipping educational facilities is an ongoing challenge for charters. With the support of Alberta Education and Calgary Catholic we were able to lease the St. Angela facility, make leasehold improvements, add numerous items to reflect our classical orientation, and equip the building for an effective K to 6 program.
- The hiring and development of a team of educators and support staff that is committed to classical education and to developing their own capacity to deliver the program has been an exciting, inspiring and successful exercise.
- The development of the classical curriculum, supported by the direction of the Board of Directors, with an enhanced social studies program involving cycles of history and geography, a Great Books program, and multiple second language options has been, and will continue to be, a priority focus for Alberta Classical Academy.
- In our first year, we are fully implementing both the new English Language Arts and the new Mathematics programs for K to 6, and have been piloting and providing feedback to Alberta Education on the new K to 6 Science program.

Our first year experience thus informs our first Education Plan, which is developed in the sections that follow.

## Engagement

Alberta Classical Academy has been highly engaged with our local and expanded community, and has worked to facilitate stakeholder engagement and to value and be responsive to stakeholder feedback and input on a range of topics throughout the school year. Our commitment to engagement is being realized through various avenues and informs a variety of priorities and concerns. This engagement has informed the development of the Education Plan as well. Engagements include:

#### **Student Engagement**

- Ongoing student input and leadership (clubs, cultural events/sharing, school assemblies)
- Student data from the Alberta Education Assurance Survey informs the School Education Plan.
- Plans for student advisory council / student focus groups regarding learning (intellectual) and culture/ virtue (moral) development

 Information garnered from the student engagement process will help inform teacher practice and school activities

## **Staff Engagement**

Our staff are an integral part of our feedback loop. Through weekly staff meetings and assigned time to work on curriculum development, they are contributing to the development of the school and as a consequence are developing professionally as well.

- Weekly staff meetings set priorities related to visioning, curriculum and school culture
- Professional growth conversations with staff held twice yearly, focused on setting personal and professional goals that are aligned with school priorities/ future plans to link teacher growth plans to action research framework
- Staff surveys are conducted to establish needs and priorities related to professional development
- Various in-school committees have been established (curriculum mapping, curriculum committee, school culture and virtue, assessment & reporting, report card development etc.)
- Staff engage through consultation and input into existing curriculum maps created by board of directors / foundress
- Staff data from the Alberta Education Assurance Survey inform the School Education Plan.
- Staff are invited to complete school-based surveys to provide input into the plan and operations.

### **Parent Engagement**

In classical education, the parent is the first educator of their child and as such, a great deal of parent commitment and involvement is purposely cultivated. Our parents have demonstrated both understanding and commitment to the development of classical culture and curriculum, and a very wonderful group of parents have formed our first School Council. They have been both creative and supportive, and have made contributions to the culture and physical spaces in the school. More importantly they have provided our administrative team with constructive and helpful feedback on many aspects of the functioning of the school.

- Open door policy & 10 hours/year of parent volunteerism
- Collaboration with parent community to establish School Council (SC) and parent fundraising society: Calgary Classical Academy Elementary Fundraising Society <a href="https://www.ccaefundraising.com/">https://www.ccaefundraising.com/</a>
- Monthly general meetings,
- Coffee talks between School Council chair, school administration, and parent liaison person
- Discussions regarding school operations and student development and achievement
- Parents and School Council are consulted and invited to provide feedback to the Education Plan
- Plans for parent focus groups and parent surveys to complete school-based surveys to provide feedback regarding Education Plan as well as School Operations
- Parent data from the Alberta Education Assurance Survey informs the Education Plan.
- As a part of our engagement with parents and the community, and the assessment leading to our first annual educational results report, we will be surveying all stakeholders on multiple aspects of the functioning of the school, the curriculum, and the classical approach to teaching and learning.

#### **Community Engagement:**

## Research Community

- We worked in advance of our initial staff orientation with Jodi Devries of the University of Alberta, and subsequently had two days of orientation on the new Language Arts curriculum with her involvement. We are currently planning more professional development related to structured literacy and early phonics education, and are developing a research project with her collaboration.
- A research project with Jackie Leighton from the University of Alberta is being developed on the importance and development of student voice in the pursuit of analytical thinking, expression, and citizenship.
- We have appointment of research lead to help facilitate and shape educational research and liaise with external researchers.
- We have participated in panel discussions and public presentations on the unique aspects of our program, and are proposing several presentations at the TAAPCS Conference in the fall of 2023.
- Our staff and directors have published articles and essays regarding cognitive load theory, the philosophy of education, and the importance of a knowledge-rich curriculum.

### **Local Community**

- From the beginning, we developed connections with the local Bridgeland community, reaching out to the Community Centre, advocating for a heritage school across the street, and inviting them to visit our school. Neighbours seem delighted to have the school occupied and busy once again, and we have local neighbours who have registered their children in our school.
- Students engage in community service through involvement with the Veterans Food Bank, Calgary Firefighters Toy Drive, Carewest Seniors home, Calgary Drop Inn and Mustard Seed, and Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CWFWA) International Women's Day 2023. Our classes have also participated in Intergenerational Storytelling hosted at Calgary Central Public Library
- We have invited journalists and scholars to tour the school, and have contributed to media publications regarding school choice and educational pluralism.
- We are highly engaged with consultations with Alberta Education on various initiatives and strongly involved in The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools.
- We have been involved in the development of a new rural charter in Gwynne, Alberta, and anticipate partnerships with them in curriculum development and research.
- We in engage with various Calgary learning organizations and locations that help to better facilitate student classical learning, such as the Calgary Zoo, Calgary Wildlife and Rehabilitation Society, Telus Spark, Nanny McCluckin's, Bow Habitat, and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra.

#### **Board of Directors**

Our Board of Directors has representatives from Lethbridge, Calgary and Edmonton. As a group, they are committed to classical education, and bring very strong knowledge about classical studies to our discussions of curriculum, school culture and strategic planning in the development of the classical academy.

## Education Plan Domains and Goals

The Annual Education Plan (AEP) is an integral part of the provincial School Authority Planning and Reporting Cycle, and works within the expectations of the provincial Assurance Framework Domains as well as the goals and outcomes of the Alberta Classical Academy Charter.

#### **Assurance Framework Domains**

The primary domain and purpose of the education system is **Student Growth and Achievement**. The secondary domains that support and enable Student Growth and Achievement are **Teaching and Leading**, **Learning Supports**, and **Governance**, and the final contextual domain to consider is the **Local and Societal Context**.

## **Alberta Classical Academy Charter Goals and Outcomes**

The measurable objectives and improved student outcomes to be achieved by the Alberta Classical Academy are as follows:

- Students will grow in virtue, demonstrate exemplary moral character, and relate to each other in a spirit of friendship and good will.
- Students will achieve academic success and personal excellence in all programs of study.
- The school will contribute to the education system in Alberta as a whole and enhance education research and delivery.

Our charter goals and outcomes will be integrated within the goals and outcomes of the assurance framework domains.

# Assurance Domains and Charter Outcomes

## **Assurance Domain: Student Growth and Achievement**

## **Charter Goals:**

- Students will grow in virtue, demonstrate exemplary moral character, and relate to each other in a spirit of friendship and good will.
- Students will achieve academic success and personal excellence in all programs of study.

#### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- Students will be able to identify virtuous behaviour and its antithesis, both in literature and in their own lives.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of the meaning and applications of a range of virtues.
- Students demonstrate moral growth, as determined by both the subjective assessment of parents and teachers, and through their own self-assessments.
- Parents will indicate high levels of satisfaction with the development of virtuous and conscientious behaviour in their children.
- Students will show continuous improvement in reading, writing, numeracy and arithmetic as they progress from kindergarten to grade six.
- Students will indicate continuous improvement in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies related to the Alberta Curriculum and ACA's expanded programs of study.

- Students will achieve mastery of a broad knowledge base, as set out in the Alberta Curriculum and the ACA programs of study.
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students will be successful

## **Strategies**

#### Virtue

- Continuing development virtue framework informed by and aligned with virtues identified in school charter and prominent educational research (<u>University Birmingham</u>, Core Virtues, etc.) in consultation with 'experts' in field (e.g. Aristotle, Confucius, Laozi, Boethius, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius)
- Instructional design infuse opportunities into teaching and learning/classroom lessons for students to explore the nature and manifestations of virtue
- Termly grade team 'virtue plans' integrated into daily teaching & learning
- Teach and model self-awareness, self-regulation and self-advocacy as it relates to virtue or golden mean (scale of reference)
- Rituals and inculturation used as a means of instilling virtuous habits
- Ongoing, active curation literature/great books lists and resources aligned with virtue framework for each grade K - 6
- Teacher professional development and professional growth (e.g. a teacher-directed book club with readings of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Plato's Republic and Gorgias, Confucius' Analects, Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, etc.), with generative dialogue and collaboration to connect philosophy with practice
- Provide ongoing assessment feedback to students to reflect continuously on their progress, identify strengths and areas of need, and set new goals related to virtue development to support them in applying their learning in daily life
- Opportunities for student self-assessment (e.g. virtue journals, teaching goal setting and continuous improvement)
- Staff development assessment policy (with community consultation) outlining the process of virtue assessment for reporting
- Report cards include prominent reporting on students' moral and character development
- Students engage in community service-learning projects
- Whole school and classroom culture high behaviour standards reinforced by virtue education.
- Opportunities for student self-assessment and reflection together with parents

### Academic/Intellectual development

- Utilize our distinct knowledge-rich classical curriculum and pedagogical approaches, including explicit/direct instruction, structured literacy approaches, Singapore Math, and a chronological approach to teaching history, to develop and implement effective and efficient learning experiences for all students.
- Examine current research to improve and/or update the curriculum and program of studies in keeping with the classical tradition of education and use a research lead (designated teacher) to this effect
- Engagement with community partners to promote and enhance teacher growth and educational practice in key areas of instruction such as reading, writing, numeracy and arithmetic

- Curriculum design and mapping initiatives continue to leverage vertical team collaboration amongst staff and board members, focused on key knowledge, skills, concepts (scope), and prerequisite skills to be taught (sequence). Continue to refine curriculum mapping and alignment year to year.
- Implementation of structured literacy program based in research on the science of reading
- History curriculum emphasizes context, perspective-taking, appreciation for elders and ancestors, and avoids a shallow presentism. This helps students develop an understanding of causality and a sense of gratitude and humility.
- Work towards adopting a series of internal standardized assessments/system of universal screeners to track student progress across academic domains.
- Alignment of new Alberta ed math curriculum with Singapore math dimensions program, instruction in grades K - 8
- Implementing a model of inclusion/student services with a dedicated SLS team of internal and external agency support to help promote and support students' academic development
- Staff engage in professional learning to support the implementation of the new Alberta programs of study.
   Enhanced formative and summative assessment practices to accurately measure student
- progress and inform teaching and learning

  Students pursue systematic studies in music, classical dance, drama, and fine/studio arts
- Maintain cumulative review and assessment by employing universal and targeted screener at regular intervals to monitor, evaluate, and plan for student instruction and growth
- Students acquire foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, and studying indigenous cultures from around the world
- Programming will be developed in collaboration with community members (elders, first nations) to expose children to the traditional lifestyles, practices, and oral history traditions of plains First Nations peoples.

## **Measures/ Evidence of Outcomes**

- Alberta Education Assurance Survey Results
- Percentage of students in grades 6 and 9 who achieve Acceptable Standard
   or Standard of Excellence on the Provincial Achievement Tests exceeds the provincial averages
- Survey of teachers and parents regarding student capacity to identify and model virtuous behavior across contexts
- Student and parent surveys of personal growth in understanding and application of virtuous behaviour
- Local measures of growth in reading, writing, numeracy and arithmetic
- Results of regular academic screening using provincial screeners/ tools
- Assurance survey results
- Demonstrated understanding and acknowledgement of alternative cognitive systems throughout time and place (e.g. Indigenous ways of knowing)
- Self-reflection/appraisal of work
- Interview and observational data
- Data for the various clubs and activities in the school and in the communities
- Percentage of students K 8 performing at or above grade level on a variety of school-based assessments, including in reading fluency and comprehension, composition, mathematics, and historical and scientific knowledge.

## Assurance Domain: Teaching and Leading

## **Local Goals:**

- Teachers feel supported in their teaching and in their professional growth and development.
- Teachers will grow in their understanding and application of effective explicit instruction, classroom management, and the classical curriculum.

#### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- Teachers will indicate that they feel supported in their growth and development.
- Regular staff meetings will include regular professional development opportunities.
- Teachers will have time and opportunity to contribute to the development of curriculum maps, grade level planning, and vertical planning.
- Teachers will indicate that they feel strongly led and supported by the school leadership teams.

## **Strategies**

- Summer orientation sessions will be held for new teachers, with a balance of practical and philosophical training to support teacher growth.
- Philosophical Training is supported by the Classical U courses and resources, with a free subscription provided for each teacher
- New teacher mentoring and peer coaching program (i.e. pairing new faculty with teacher mentor).
- Professional Development will be focused on school improvement outcomes and leverage action-research mode in the teacher professional growth and development process.
- \* Regular classroom visits from school leaders, with a focus on supportive coaching.
- Establish and support a collaboration and professional development calendar that supports collaboration 1) within grade levels, 2) across grade levels, 3) across campuses, 4) within subject specializations, and 5) across disciplines.
- ♦ Teachers are surveyed on areas where they feel more professional development is needed.
- Teachers will have the opportunity to contribute to school improvement goals and curriculum development.
- Align teacher and leader growth, supervision and evaluation procedures to the TQS, LQS and SLQS as well as with ACA's distinctive expectations of classical educators.
- Offer practicum opportunities for pre-service teacher candidates introducing them to our pedagogical approach and classical curriculum.
- Establish a model of 'diversified leadership' amongst staff to provide opportunities for teacher leadership in various school initiatives.
- Professional learning funds will be accessible to each staff member to align with Professional Growth Plan goals and School Education Plan goals.
- Opportunities to develop understanding of local and global Indigenous histories and traditions.

### Measures

- Alberta Education Assurance Survey Results
- Feedback surveys of teachers regarding school and system leadership
- Teacher retention

## **Assurance Domain: Learning Supports**

#### **Local Goals:**

Interventions with students with special needs will be effective

#### **Measurable Outcomes:**

 Students with specialized learning and social-emotional needs (e.g. ESL) are effectively supported in their social, intellectual, and moral growth

## **Strategies**

- Development and adoption of inclusive education plan.
- Adapt learning environments as necessary to meet learner needs in accordance with the school's philosophical commitments (e.g. students rise to meet expectations vs. teachers lowering the bar).
- Build a strong school culture where all students experience a sense of belonging and experience friendship and spirit of magnanimity and reciprocity, alongside a culture of high intellectual and moral expectations for all.
- Effectively implement a student services model.
- Maintain class sizes at a level that allows for more individualized attention.
- Hire a strong learning support (SLS) team, with in-house Learning Strategist, Educational Assistants, and ESL Assistants.
- Engage with external partners to provide targeted assessment and support services, including registered psychologists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists.
- Hire a trained counsellor and/or family liaison officer servicing all campuses.
- Use ESL screeners to identify students requiring additional English language supports and monitor progress in targeted areas.
- Targeted professional development including Level B training for staff
- Adopt and implement a date management system (Dossier) to share and manage student performance indicators and need for intervention
- Use universal screening to monitor and identify students requiring additional supports and interventions.
- Provide full-year mathematics programming as an opportunity to close the performance gap.
- Provide transportation support to include students from all quadrants within Calgary city limits.

#### **Measures**

- Alberta Education Assurance Survey Results
- Inclusive Education Supports Implemented
- Certificated Staff trained (Level B)
- Adoption and implementation of Dossier
- Results from screening tools (Literacy, Numeracy, ESL, Level B)

## **Assurance Domain: Governance**

#### **Local Goals:**

Alberta Classical Academy will be well-governed and managed

#### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- Policies will be developed in a timely manner to clarify and assist in implementing charter goals.
- ♦ The Board of Directors will be satisfied with board governance.
- The Board of Directors will be satisfied with the quality and detail of information received from the Superintendent and executives.
- The Board of Directors will have meaningful input into the curriculum, culture, professional development, and staffing criteria for the school.

## **Strategies**

- Board meetings will be organized and efficient and information will be provided in a timely manner.
- Committees will be formed for policy development, curriculum leadership, human resources, finance and auditing, and development.
- ♦ Board development will move towards an effective policy governance model.
- Increase ongoing communication and collaboration with all stakeholders regarding initiatives and reports, including but not limited to: the Board Policies, Strategic Plan, School Education Plan Priorities, Budgeting, and Campus Transition Strategies.
- Refine stakeholder engagement and feedback processes to inform the assurance processes, including planning and reporting.
- Encourage parental participation in school leadership through involvement with their respective School Councils, Board Committees, Board of Directors, and other volunteer opportunities.

#### Measures

- Alberta Education Assurance Survey Results
- Feedback surveys of board governance, including board self-evaluation

## **Assurance Domain: Local and Societal Context**

### **Charter Goal:**

**The school will contribute to the education system in Alberta as a whole and enhance education research and delivery.** 

### **Local Goal:**

**The charter school will engage with stakeholders to ensure a wide range of perspectives are considered to inform governance and educational planning.** 

#### **Measurable Outcomes:**

Research projects will focus on charter outcomes and demonstrate the charter school's level of performance. Surveys will indicate high levels of engagement and satisfaction with opportunity to contribute to the growth and development of the charter school.

٨

## **Strategies**

#### Charter Goal

- A research project is being developed with Jackie Leighton of the University of Alberta on leveraging children's voices in the pursuit of critical thinking. This project is in its initial stages.
- A research project is being developed with Jodi Devries of the University of Alberta on the classical academy approach to reading.
- TAAPCS research presentations (2023 conference)
- Goal of contributing to research publications (Alberta Public Charter Schools' Journal of Educational Research, Classical Education Journal publications).

## Local Goal

Surveys will be conducted with stakeholders to gain feedback and understand levels of satisfaction with campus and system leadership, professional development, student achievement, support services, report cards, and bussing.

## **Measures**

- Alberta Education Assurance Survey Results
- Local feedback surveys

## Budget

## Please see link to the ACA Budget at

https://www.classicalacademy.ca/s/2023-05-16-Alberta-Classical-Approved-Budget.pdf

# Capital Plan

## Please see link to the ACA Capital Plan at

https://www.classicalacademy.ca/s/230401-BLIMS-Projects-Web-Access-for-Capital-Plan-Submission-WAP2000-Summary-Report.pdf