



**NEW HORIZONS CHARTER SCHOOL  
SOCIETY**

**CHARTER DOCUMENT (FINAL)**

**Effective  
September 1, 2012**

***With Required Changes Approved by  
Hon. Thomas Lukaszuk  
Minister of Education***

***March 1, 2012***

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| THE CHARTER SCHOOL.....                            | 2  |
| VISION, PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE AND GOALS .....        | 2  |
| Vision .....                                       | 2  |
| Philosophy and Educational Foundations .....       | 2  |
| Purpose .....                                      | 3  |
| Goals .....  | 3  |
| Goals and Outcome Measurement .....                | 4  |
| SCHOOL OPERATIONS .....                            | 5  |
| Administrative and Organizational Strategies ..... | 5  |
| Curriculum and Beyond .....                        | 5  |
| Research and Innovation .....                      | 6  |
| Instructional Methodologies .....                  | 6  |
| Student Assessment .....                           | 7  |
| Students with Multiple Exceptionalities .....      | 7  |
| Communication Plan .....                           | 7  |
| SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS .....                          | 7  |
| STUDENT APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION .....            | 8  |
| Purpose And Processes .....                        | 8  |
| Admissions Committee .....                         | 8  |
| Criteria for Admission Decisions .....             | 9  |
| Special Considerations .....                       | 9  |
| Responsibilities of Parents .....                  | 9  |
| GOVERNANCE .....                                   | 10 |
| Governance Structure .....                         | 10 |
| Evaluations .....                                  | 10 |
| AMENDING THE CHARTER .....                         | 10 |
| CHARTER SCHOOL DISSOLUTION PROCESS.....            | 11 |
| TERM OF CHARTER .....                              | 12 |
| CHARTER RENEWAL .....                              | 12 |

## **THE CHARTER SCHOOL**

This Charter, approved by the Minister of Education for the New Horizons Charter School Society (NHCSS), provides the foundations upon which to operate the New Horizons School for gifted children, currently located at 53145 Range Road 222, Ardrossan, Alberta.

New Horizons School currently offers kindergarten to grade nine in a single campus, and may in the future include high school grades and more than one campus.

## **VISION, PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE AND GOALS**

### **Vision**

New Horizons School will enable gifted students to strive for excellence in a positive academic learning environment that fosters social and emotional support for each student.

### **Philosophy and Educational Foundations**

New Horizons School was originally established to best serve the learning needs of gifted children. This continues to be its fundamental reason for existence. The goals of the charter and of the school itself are threefold, i.e., to address the academic, social and emotional needs of gifted children. New Horizons School strives to incorporate the best research and innovations from a growing body of professional and research literature on gifted education into the pedagogical and organizational programs of the school. The often-unique academic and social-emotional needs and strengths of gifted children are of primary consideration in the design of educational and support programs at the school. The school strives to be a renowned center of excellence, respected locally, nationally and internationally – sought after for its programming and its professional knowledge. It seeks to be a successful center of best practice, research and innovation in gifted education, open to partnerships with others within the limits of its resources.

Above all, New Horizons School strives to provide a student-focused, safe, supportive learning environment in which gifted students can be successful and well equipped to engage in whatever endeavours they choose to pursue in the future. The school program is designed to provide inclusive education and to consider the appropriate pedagogy and the individual characteristics of the students. This allows for flexibility in grouping for instruction and activities. At times students will be assigned to work with those with similar achievement levels, but the possibility also exists to group students with different levels of skill/knowledge mastery. These experiences are designed to facilitate students' development in leadership and mentorship capacity, and to ensure that students are able to work with a range of individuals at various levels of ability.

## **Purpose**

In its *Setting the Direction for Special Education* initiative, Alberta Education continues to include gifted students in its definition of students with special needs. By extension, the Government of Alberta's *Action on Inclusion* directive to school authorities states that "all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources." Further provincial documentation states that "quality instruction, with a focus on the unique needs of each child, rather than setting, is the key to success; and "the goal of an inclusive education system is to provide all students with the most appropriate learning environments and opportunities for them to achieve their potential."

The purpose of New Horizons School is to embrace these initiatives and provide an exemplary learning environment to meet the special academic needs of gifted children in a congregated setting, while also providing effective social and emotional supports. Our students need opportunities to be challenged, to think creatively and alternatively, and to pursue learning according to their own learning strengths, styles and interests. The social and emotional needs of gifted children e.g., overexcitabilities, perfectionism, are well documented in research and are profoundly important in their growth and learning; hence, this belief firmly underpins our goals for New Horizons School.

New Horizons School provides differentiated programming in a congregated, inclusive setting through the use of customized Individual Program Plans (IPP's) that address students' unique abilities, achievement, learning styles, interests and needs. Program differentiation encompasses a range of supports and strategies including administrative and organizational strategies, curriculum enrichment, instructional methodologies, learning environments and assessment strategies.

## **Goals**

The overarching goal of our program is to facilitate student growth and development in three main areas: academically, socially and emotionally. In accordance with Alberta Education's requirements related to student learning and meeting the needs of gifted students, the following goals and outcomes have been established to address the three goal areas mentioned above.

Students at New Horizons will demonstrate the following outcomes in the context of the three program goals:

### ***Goal 1: Student learning is improved.***

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate mastery of learner outcomes mandated by the Alberta academic curriculum.

Outcome 2: Students will become creative risk-takers academically.

***Goal 2: Students benefit from opportunities for inclusive, positive social interactions.***

Outcome 1: Students will develop positive interdependence skills.

Outcome 2: Students will become creative risk-takers socially.

***Goal 3: Students' emotional needs are supported.***

Outcome 1: Students will develop independence, self-direction and self-discipline in learning.

Outcome 2: Students will become creative risk-takers emotionally

New Horizons School will undertake to:

1. Establish an enhanced, inclusive educational program tailored to the unique education needs of gifted learners;
2. Establish a program that may include such practices as acceleration, extension, enrichment and curriculum compacting so that each student is challenged to perform to potential;
3. Provide learning activities that stimulate students to meaningfully extend their knowledge and skills beyond the requirements of Alberta Education in keeping with student interest and capabilities;
4. Promote specific projects geared to individual student interests and abilities while focusing on in-depth research and the development of strong presentation skills;
5. Provide students with opportunities to experience learning in a variety of ways;
6. Foster an inclusive environment that allows students to recognize and accept their own capabilities, interests and needs while also recognizing, accepting and appreciating the needs and achievements of others;
7. Provide a learning environment that promotes student use of critical and complex thinking and proactive decision-making skills;
8. Create and maintain a safe and caring learning and social environment for all students;
9. Assess student outcomes by using a variety of criteria that may include self-appraisal, teacher-designed assessments, criterion referenced and standardized instruments; and
10. Foster on-going professional development to enable school staff to enhance their ability to meet the needs of gifted students, i.e., building instructional and leadership capacity as well as educational technology innovation.

**Goal and Outcome Measurement**

New Horizons demonstrates attainment of its goals and anticipated outcomes through the use of consistent and predetermined measures (Education Plan, AERR). Provincial

achievement data is used to analyze levels of student mastery of Alberta curriculum learner outcomes – see Goal 1, Outcome 1.

The affective elements of student learning and social/emotional achievements (Goals 1, 2 and 3) are measured using pre-established data that are systematically gathered and include the perceptions of stakeholders including students, staff and parents. Annual education planning will determine which measures are most effective in determining progress toward the attainment of the intended outcomes stated in the charter.

## **SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

### **Administrative and Organizational Strategies**

New Horizons School employs the following administrative and organizational strategies:

1. Flexible ability-related classroom groupings;
2. Small class settings within limits of resources;
3. Tracking of students through student growth portfolios; and
4. Individual Program Plans (IPP's) for all students.

### **Curriculum and Beyond**

1. The Alberta Programs of Studies form the foundation for the instructional program at New Horizons School. Curricula are frequently adjusted (pace and level of instruction) in keeping with the abilities of the students so that student achievements are at an appropriate level.
2. Teachers differentiate their instruction through a variety of strategies to address a range of student learning needs within their classes. These strategies may include such methods as: ability-level groupings across grades and within classrooms, e.g., Mathematics; large and small group activities; extension and enrichment of curricula; and student interest projects, as well as other methods to differentiate programming.
3. Beyond the required curriculum, students are provided with curriculum enrichment and extension activities, including engagement in individual projects and studies designed to address both their unique interests and abilities. These activities may be tailored to small student group settings as well as individual research, demonstration or participation projects.
4. Staff members are engaged in ongoing professional development to gain insight, and expertise to maintain best practices in such areas as the needs and characteristics of gifted children and the variety of appropriate instructional strategies that support the learning needs of gifted students. This may involve meta-strategies such as assessment for learning, understanding by design, restitution self-discipline, differentiation and individual program planning, Autonomous learner models, technology integration, diagnostic techniques and other important teaching/learning strategies.

## **Research and Innovation**

New Horizons School approaches research from a three-dimensional perspective. Each of these dimensions may be used alone or in conjunction with one or both of the others. *(See Research Summary and Bibliography to view research impact on practices.)*

### ***Dimension 1: RESEARCH LITERATURE – BEST PRACTICES:***

Research in the field of gifted education is relatively limited in quality and scope; however, a growing number of researchers and educational writers are publishing research that provides valuable insights into the needs of gifted learners. Current research on best and leading practices for addressing social-emotional and academic needs of gifted children has provided many new innovations in teaching and learning. All strategies are analyzed for their fit with our gifted students and program development at New Horizons School.

### ***Dimension 2: ACTION AND APPLIED RESEARCH:***

Through the engagement of Professional Learning Communities within the school, staff members are implementing innovative instructional and assessment strategies aimed at improving the results achieved by our gifted learners. Through risk-taking and learning, evaluating impact, and sharing both challenges and successes, the school continues to move forward on its professional journey in serving its gifted students well.

### ***Dimension 3: PARTNERS IN RESEARCH:***

New Horizons School values opportunities to participate in research and to share new knowledge with the educational community locally, provincially and internationally. The school has, and will continue to, encourage students and faculty from educational institutions to conduct ethical research within our community. While we have been involved in research with postsecondary students on a limited basis, we are open to opportunities to participate in acceptable research with academic researchers. This is especially in cases where the potential for learning would have positive impact on teaching and learning for our students and professional practices of our teachers.

## **Instructional Methodologies**

New Horizons School uses, but is not limited by, the following instructional programs, resources and methods to address the needs of gifted students both in a congregated setting and on an individual basis where appropriate:

1. Differentiation strategies;
2. Pre and post assessments;
3. Individual student interest projects;
4. Course/curriculum acceleration, compacting and extension;
5. Annual IPP's that allow students, parents and teachers opportunities to set goals;
6. Extensive use of technology in the classroom; and
7. Group interaction to promote interpersonal skill development.

## **Student Assessment**

The following strategies are used to measure and track student achievement:

1. Student work processes and products;
2. Formative and diagnostic assessments
3. Teacher-developed (group and individual) assessment tools;
4. Teacher observations;
5. Provincial Achievement Tests; and
6. Standardized achievement tests;

## **Communication Plan**

The Board ensures that the school's achievements and educational innovations are communicated in appropriate ways to specific stakeholders. Stakeholders include the Minister of Education, parents, staff, other educators and the general public. Specific achievements and innovations include provincial achievement test performance, student retention rates, parental and student satisfaction data, awards, and innovative teaching practices shared through conference presentations.

Communication strategies include publishing the Education Plan/AERR and other relevant documents through the school's website, school newsletters, notices and feature stories in local newspapers, and staff and board participation in conferences. Copies may be sent to school jurisdictions and public/separate school board organizations and local governments.

New Horizons School maintains an open invitation to other school authorities, educational institutions, school and district staff members, parents and other interested parties to visit, tour and meet with school staff and administration. The focus of such visits is to increase overall understandings of the school philosophy, instructional practices, research findings and applications, and other educational matters. The school has hosted several school and school district representatives, as well as municipal, provincial and federal representatives.

NHCSS supports the concept of reciprocal secondment of interested and willing teachers employed by other local school authorities on a term basis to allow for mutually beneficial professional development and the sharing of best instructional practices. Such secondments would serve to improve communication and understanding between types of public school authorities.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL**

The demographic area served by the New Horizons School is primarily within the boundaries of Strathcona County, which includes the large population center of Sherwood Park, and rural areas of Strathcona County. Qualifying students from other communities may also be enrolled as space and resources permit. Transportation in these latter cases is the responsibility of the parents.

The projected student enrolment for the term of the charter is:

#### **CURRENT FACILITY – PROJECTED ENROLMENT**

| <b>School Year</b> | <b>Projected student enrolment K-9</b> |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>2012 – 2013</b> | <b>200</b>                             |
| <b>2013 – 2014</b> | <b>205</b>                             |
| <b>2014 – 2015</b> | <b>210</b>                             |
| <b>2015 – 2016</b> | <b>210</b>                             |
| <b>2016 – 2017</b> | <b>210</b>                             |

These enrolment projections reflect the limitations of the current school facility, which would restrict the potential growth of enrolment. In order to accommodate a gradual but realistic growth in school numbers, a school facility with a capacity of 300 students is required, as well as suitable physical education and fine/practical arts facilities. The following table reflects the potential for enrolment in an expanded/different facility.

#### **EXPANDED/DIFFERENT FACILITY – PROJ. ENROLMENT**

| <b>School Year</b> | <b>Projected student enrolment K-9</b> |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>2012 – 2013</b> | <b>200</b>                             |
| <b>2013 – 2014</b> | <b>220</b>                             |
| <b>2014 – 2015</b> | <b>240</b>                             |
| <b>2015 – 2016</b> | <b>260</b>                             |
| <b>2016 – 2017</b> | <b>280</b>                             |

### **STUDENT APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION**

#### **Purpose and Processes**

The application and assessment process is intended to assist educators and parents in determining if a child is gifted and would benefit from the special program features at New Horizons School, including those students who may be considered at risk in their current educational program. The program, however, may not be suitable for all learners, including some students with defined special education needs that are clearly outside the scope of the charter for New Horizons.

#### **Admissions Committee**

An Admissions Committee, consisting of the school Principal and two current teachers at the school, will review all applications for admission. The intent of having a tri-member committee is to reduce the effect of bias by any one individual reviewing the applications. The parents/guardians of each applicant will be advised in writing of the

Committee's decision. Applications will only be considered when all required documentation is complete and has been submitted to the Principal in a timely manner.

### **Criteria for Admission Decisions**

The principal criterion in granting admission is a child's intellectual giftedness and need for the program, as well as the likelihood of benefiting from such an educational context. The Admissions Committee uses specific admission assessment guidelines and procedures approved by the Board. The school's available resources and expertise to adequately address a student's special education needs, gifted or otherwise, will be an important consideration for admission recommendations.

If the Admissions Committee decides that a child is not being accepted into the program, the Principal will communicate this decision to the parents. Parents may appeal this decision in writing to the Superintendent. The Superintendent's decision may be appealed in writing to the Board. The parents may have access to appeal the Board's decision to the Minister of Education where the School Act or its successor and/or ministerial regulations provide for such appeal.

### **Special Considerations**

Should there be competition for certain spaces in the program; preference will be given to gifted siblings of children already attending the school. Students from outside Strathcona County would be admitted only as space and resources are available to accommodate their registration.

Financial need will not be a barrier to admission, specifically the costs for the necessary assessments. Upon request to the Principal, and on the basis of demonstrated financial need by the applicant's parents, the School will endeavor to seek assistance for these families.

### **Students with Multiple Exceptionalities**

New Horizons School focuses programming on addressing the special and unique educational needs of gifted learners, including those with dual or more exceptionalities. The school may determine that it is unable to provide a program for a gifted student who also demonstrates other special education needs. The school may not have the appropriate resources necessary to address the needs of the student. In such cases, the school administration will work with the student's parents and their resident school authority to facilitate a more appropriate placement.

### **Responsibilities of Parents**

Parents are responsible for making decisions regarding their children's education and fostering a positive attitude towards learning. By being actively involved in their school, parents support their children to achieve their potential at school. Respectful communication between school staff and parents is critical to support student growth and learning.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Governance Structure**

New Horizons Charter School Society is a non-profit society established under the *Societies Act* and its board is the governing body of the school, operating under the authority of the society's bylaws, the School Charter, the *School Act* and Regulations, and in compliance with its accountabilities to the Minister of Education.

The Board of Directors consists of a maximum of seven directors serving two-year terms who are elected by the members of the Society at the Society's Annual General Meeting. The majority of the Board must be parents of students at New Horizons School. Up to two community members who belong to the NHCSS may sit on the Board.

Subject to the limitations of the *School Act*, *Societies Act* and the Charter, the Board holds ultimate authority and responsibility for the operation and management of New Horizons School. The Board has the authority to ensure that the Charter School philosophy is adhered to and the goals of the school are met. The Board is vested with ultimate responsibility for the finances of the school.

NHCSS contracts Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer services from qualified professionals. The Superintendent is the Chief Education Officer of the school and the Chief Executive Officer of the Board and carries out the duties outlined in the *School Act* and in Board Policies. The Secretary Treasurer is the Chief Financial Officer of the society and is responsible for the overall financial operations of the school and the society in accordance with provincial requirements and board policies.

### **Accountability Practices**

Parents, students, teachers and Board members will be surveyed annually to assess the effectiveness of the various aspects of the school. The Board fulfills its responsibilities for School Authority Accountability through Education Plans, Annual Education Results Reports (combined), audited financial statements, and periodic evaluations conducted in accordance with Alberta Education requirements.

## **AMENDING THE CHARTER**

Matters that could affect the ability of the school to provide effective education or that could enhance program delivery to its students may result in the amendment of the Charter. Any amendment to the Charter shall be done in accordance with the *School Act* and NHCSS Bylaws, and is subject to approval by the Minister of Education.

## **CHARTER SCHOOL DISSOLUTION PROCESS**

In accordance with the Charter Schools Regulation 212/2002 and its subsequent amendments, the Board may decide to terminate the operation of its charter school and to dissolve the charter school at the end of a specific school year, and the following process will therefore occur:

1. Notwithstanding that the term of NHCSS charter has not expired or been repealed by the Minister of Education, the Board shall:
  - i. notify the Minister of Education of its intent to terminate the operation of its charter school(s) at the end of a school year and such notice will be given to the Minister by no later than January 31<sup>st</sup> of the year in which the termination shall occur, and
  - ii. proceed with termination of school operations and dissolution of the charter school only after the written approval of the Minister for the termination of operations has been received.
2. Within two weeks of receiving Ministerial approval for the decision of the Board to terminate the charter school operations, the Board shall provide written notice of its decision to terminate school operations and dissolve the charter to the following stakeholders:
  - a. Minister of Education;
  - b. Superintendent;
  - c. Society Members;
  - d. Principal, teachers and other employees and contractors; and
  - e. Parents and students of NHCSS.
3. Notice of termination of operations and dissolution of the charter school shall provide the reasons for the decision, the effective date of dissolution, and the proposed plan for dissolution.
4. The Board shall proceed to:
  - a. Provide notice pursuant to any rental or leasing agreements for buildings, land, property or facilities;
  - b. Determine a value for any owned buildings, land, property, facilities or other assets;
  - c. Liquidate any owned assets either by public auction or private sale;
  - d. Discharge the liabilities of the school;
  - e. Provide the Society, the Superintendent, and the Minister of Education with a full accounting of the finances of the school;
  - f. Return any surplus attributable to provincial funding to the Provincial Treasurer; and
  - g. Turn over any residual funds to the Society.

5. The Board will work with other school jurisdictions to facilitate the transfer of students to other schools, and thus the Board shall:
- i. provide each registered student's parent/guardian with information on the procedure specified in the Student Record Regulation 225/2006 or its subsequent amendments or revisions for a receiving school to request the student record for that student.
  - ii. maintain responsibility for the transfer of each student's records for a period of three (3) months from the date the Board specified as its last day of school operations, and thereafter, any remaining student records shall be forwarded to Alberta Education.

### **TERM OF CHARTER**

The Minister of Education sets the term of this Charter.

### **CHARTER RENEWAL**

Should the Board request a renewal of the Charter; application shall be made to the Minister in writing no later than December 1 of the final year of its term.