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The CASS Connection  
The official magazine for the College of  
Alberta School Superintendents  
Spring 2010

Published for:

**The College of Alberta School  
Superintendents**

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Edmonton AB T5K 2J8

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Published by:

**Matrix Group Publishing Inc.**

**Publications Agreement**

**Number 40609661**

**Return Undeliverable Addresses to:**

**52 Donald Street**

**Winnipeg, MB R3C 1L6**

Toll free Phone: (866) 999-1299

Toll free Fax: (866) 244-2544

[www.matrixgroupinc.net](http://www.matrixgroupinc.net)

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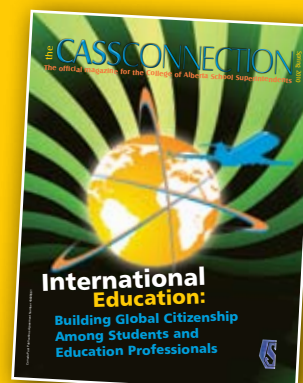
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### ON THE COVER:

This issue of *CASS Connections* focuses on Alberta students and teachers who travel abroad in exchange programs, and the international students who come to Alberta to experience the province's education system, people and culture.







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# Message from the Minister of Education

The Honourable Dave Hancock | Minister of Education

Alberta's students will graduate into a global economy that will require them to compete with the rest of the world in order to succeed. Their future success will not only result from their ability to compete, but also on their ability to collaborate and co-operate with individuals from other countries and different cultures. This situation exists whether those individuals are across the ocean or down the hall. The key to being able to do so will be their ability to communicate effectively on a personal and professional level.

Today's students are better connected to each other than at any other time in human history. They can contact each other instantly and can create virtual social networks which span the globe. But, just as watching a television show about swimming in the ocean is not the same as actually getting into the water oneself, face-to-face relationships are still the ones that have real depth and meaning, and they are the ones that can last a lifetime.

The basis of effective communication among individuals from different backgrounds is the ability to identify and understand different points of view. Understanding how culture, history and education have formed the attitudes and behaviours of others helps to build relationships that break down communication barriers. International education, in all its forms, is one of the best ways we have of arriving at that kind of understanding.

Language is the repository of culture. Students who learn another language also learn something about those who speak that language. In doing so, students also learn something about their own cultures and how they think about things. This is true for the Alberta student who learns a second language and it is true for the foreign student who comes here to study. In a time of increasing global interconnectedness, the more our students know and understand the world, the better able they will be to respond to its opportunities and demands.

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Going out of our way to encourage students from other countries to study in Canada is part of Alberta's strategic investment in our future. Our foreign students usually return home at some point. When they do, they carry with them the personal and professional connections they made in Alberta. When the time comes for them to look for foreign collaborators, team members and business partners, they tend to look for them in areas they know. Alberta benefits from that.

Though students are the primary focus of international education, it is their teachers who enable them to succeed. That is why the teacher exchange is a critical component of our international education strategy. First-hand knowledge of other cultures and teaching methodologies makes them better teachers.

One of our education objectives is to help create global citizens. Alberta's ability to engage effectively with the international community and exert positive influence in world affairs requires knowledge about the culture, conditions and aspirations of citizens in other countries. International education plays a pivotal role in helping us impart that kind of knowledge to our students. ■

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# President's Message

**Greg Woronuk**  
President  
College of Alberta School Superintendents

**T**he Winter Olympics hosted in Vancouver gripped this country in a singular focus as few events in our nation's history ever have. One of the Canadian initiatives that drew some attention was the "Own the Podium" initiative that saw millions of dollars spent to support Canadian athletes in their quest for medals.

One perspective on the "Own the Podium" program is that it had some significant success in an event like the Olympics. When it comes to international education it is not about "Owning the Podium" as a single nation, rather broader goals such as promoting inter-cultural dialogue and understanding through education and encouraging global citizenship are paramount.

We in Canada have various approaches and perspectives on international education due to the provincial mandate for education. This issue of *The CASS Connection* will focus on the Alberta perspective and will highlight a number of significant initiatives by the province and school divisions. There are some tremendous success stories (Edmonton Public, Calgary Public, and the Rotary Exchange Program, to mention just a few) out there.

When one considers that one fifth of the world's population are still illiterate (two thirds of these are women), there is much more that needs to be done. The need is so great that legal hurdles as well as health and safety issues have not impeded various organizations from moving forward with international education programs.

One organization that has been on the international education scene for a long time is the United Nations. Their Millennium Summit in 2000 and Impact Education initiative ([impacteducation.org](http://impacteducation.org)) set out actions, targets and standards that the world is striving to meet. Another such organization is Rotary which has promoted and supported student exchanges between countries for decades.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner will have a different skill set than those learners of previous generations. There will be a significant role for international education experiences as we move forward in developing responsible global citizens.

I commend all the school divisions, administrators, government organizations, teachers, parents and students who are already committed to achieving this goal. ■

## UPCOMING CASS EVENTS

### 2010 Special Ed Symposium

Dates: May 6-7, 2010

Location: Capri Centre, Red Deer, Alberta

### 2010 Team Leadership Academy

Dates: May 12-14, 2010

Location: The Rimrock, Banff, Alberta

### 2010 Summer Academy

Dates: July 5-7, 2010

Location: The Rimrock, Banff, Alberta

### 2010 Start Right

Dates: July 5-9, 2010

Location: Old College, Olds, Alberta

### 2010 Leading for Learning

Dates: July 11-14, 2010

Location: Old College, Olds, Alberta

### 2010 HR Symposium

Dates: November 4, 2010

Location: Sheraton Cavalier, Calgary, Alberta

### 2010 Issues Forum

Dates: November 5, 2010

Location: Sheraton Cavalier, Calgary, Alberta

*For full details  
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# Making Connections:

## International Education in Alberta

International education is the sum of all programs and initiatives that promote an understanding of the differences and connections between the world's people. Also referred to as internationalization of education, it is defined as:

... [the] integrat[ion] [of] an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service function of a [school]. An international dimension means a perspective, activity or service which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of an institution of... education. *Jane Knight (2008) Higher education in turmoil: The changing world of internationalization. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pg 21.*

This is a technical definition. It's well-founded and smartly phrased, but in many ways it does not capture the essence of international education programs and initiatives in Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system. A more vivid picture might look something like this: International education is:

- Exchange students discovering new places, mastering new languages, and realizing that they can adapt to a new culture, family and way of life;
- Teachers incorporating international examples and perspectives into their lessons;
- Classrooms eagerly awaiting a reply from their partner school half a world away;
- Districts conversing with their counterparts in other countries about shared educational issues; and
- School communities welcoming international students to Alberta.

It is all of these things and more. Above all, international education aspires to generate thoughtful dialogue between the educational community in Alberta and communities elsewhere in the world.

The interconnected nature of the world today makes international education more valuable and relevant on a global scale than ever before—including that businesses are increasingly looking for graduates who are

internationally savvy, cross-culturally competent and multilingual. Students need not pursue international careers to be touched by the broader global community. Modern communication and transportation technologies already bring Canadians into contact with ideas and people from other places. To be well-informed and active citizens, Alberta graduates must understand how they affect—and are affected by—happenings in other parts of the world. When asked about their hopes, dreams and aspirations for future learning, Albertans who participated in *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans*, placed clear emphasis on global perspectives and world citizenship. The following link will take you to a Wordle summary of 10 *Inspiring Education* community conversations that took place across the province in 2009: [www.inspiringeducation.alberta.ca/whatweheard.aspx](http://www.inspiringeducation.alberta.ca/whatweheard.aspx)—we strongly encourage you to check it out.

International education enables students to become more knowledgeable about the world, its people, systems, issues and opportunities. It also helps students to further develop the skills necessary for the future success of this province, this country and this planet, including the ability to: think critically and creatively, problem-solve,

*By Alberta Education*

communicate effectively across cultures, build relationships, collaborate, self-reflect, as well as build and share knowledge.

Alberta Education establishes policy, sets standards, provides strategic leadership and sets the framework for international education, in collaboration with foreign educational authorities, federal and pan-Canadian bodies, and other provincial ministries, to enable international education activities and initiatives in the province's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system.

On the international stage, Alberta Education actively collaborates with other governments on various education issues and initiatives. Also, as part of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), Alberta regularly participates in leading Canadian delegations abroad, and the province is Canada's education representative at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where it has the privilege of chairing the Education Policy Committee.

For more information on international education in the province, please visit [www.education.alberta.ca](http://www.education.alberta.ca) (click on Students>International Education) or contact the International Education Services Branch at (780) 427-2035. Toll-free access is available by first dialing 310-0000. ■



# Success Stems from The Rotary Youth Exchange Program

**T**he Rotary Youth Exchange program operated as an informal Rotary program from 1927 until 1972 when Rotary International recognized Youth Exchange as an international activity that promotes global peace and understanding. Since 1972, the program has grown to include more than 66 countries and involves about 8,000 young people in exchanges each year.

The purpose of the Youth Exchange program is to provide students with the opportunity to travel abroad, to live with a host family, and to experience life firsthand in a different country, school, and social environment. They learn a new way of living, a new language, and a great deal about themselves. As they are learning, they are also teaching the people they meet about their country, their culture, and their ideas. They are young ambassadors, helping to bring the world closer together and making lifelong friends in the process.

Students have described the Rotary Exchange as a “life changing” event. Some comments from students include:

*“Along with learning a different language, meeting new people, traveling and seeing some of the most beautiful sights, I am learning about different cultures and how there’s really not a right way or a wrong way of doing things, just different ways. For the first time in my life instead of being the majority, I’m the minority.”*

*“Being away from my country has made me realize how different we are from other countries. I am experiencing and learning things about my own country that you wouldn’t experience if you haven’t lived in another country.”*

**The following two articles will show you first-hand the difference this exchange program is making in Alberta... and abroad.**

## THE STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE: THE ROTARY CLUB OF CAMROSE

By Dr. Warren Phillips AND Donna Phillips

**T**he Rotary Club of Camrose has been involved in the Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) program since the early 1980s, hosting approximately 15 inbound students from other countries and sending 20 outbound students abroad. During the 2008-2009 school year, our club sponsored a student to live in Thailand, and hosted a student from Denmark.

Connor spent his Grade 11 year in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the largest and most culturally significant city in northern Thailand. He lived with four host families, attended a school of 5,000 students, travelled the country and returned home speaking fluent Thai.

Thomas came to Camrose from Copenhagen and attended Grade 11 at Camrose Composite High School. He lived with three Rotarian families and had a wide range of experiences, including trips to other provinces/territories, meeting the Alberta premier, driving across Great Slave Lake, ice fishing, and canoeing down the

North Saskatchewan River. His English fluency improved greatly. We acted as host parents for Thomas’s first six months in Canada, and then Donna became his counsellor for the final five months of his exchange.

RYE offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to its participants. They are immersed in another culture for a



LEFT AND ABOVE : Thomas explored Canadian culture when he came here for his exchange.





LEFT AND BELOW: Connor soaked up the Thai culture during his exchange.



year, experiencing it first-hand as a resident rather than a tourist. Close relationships develop amongst the cohort of RYE students in any one region, resulting in a lifelong network of friends from around the world. Students come to understand and appreciate how people around the world live, and almost all return home fluent in their host language. Because of the built-in network of Rotarians, they often have experiences that may be out of reach for a typical teenager (for example, Thomas visited the Northwest Territories and hiked the West Coast Trail). They develop maturity, self confidence, flexibility and independence. Connor's parents remarked, "we sent a boy to Thailand, and he has become a man with insights twice his age." As host parents, we witnessed Thomas's growth in maturity and self confidence and upon his return to Denmark, his parents concurred. "He is now facing his

"Rotary has opened my eyes to the world. It has taken me out of the box I used to live in and the one track mind I dwelled in. I now see the world from a new a better perspective—a more global view and a more informed one. I now realize what is **truly** important in life." *Comments from a Rotary Exchange Student.*

own country with new and more mature eyes," they said.

As RYE is an educational exchange, participants attend high school in their host country. Although most do not earn credits applicable to their high school graduation, they do gain new skills and knowledge. Students return home fluent in another language, they become skilled at public speaking, comfortable meeting new people, and develop a deep understanding of and appreciation for different cultures and ways of life.

High schools and their students also benefit from hosting exchange students. For example, Camrose has few citizens of visible minorities, so exposure to exchange students allows its students to gain insights into other cultures. Because RYE students are often top academic students, they are able to enrich classroom discussions as Thomas did in Social Studies 20-1 classes. In Thailand, Connor helped Thai students to improve their English skills.

Exchange students also enrich their host parents, hosting Rotary clubs and

the community at large. Rotarians tend to be older, and having a vibrant young person attend weekly meetings and participate in club activities bridges the generation gap. Every week, our Rotarians very much enjoyed Thomas's humorous and interesting reports and Connor's emailed updates. As a host family, we learned about another culture, and expanded our family ties to include Thomas and his family as well. While exchange students become friends with fellow students and their families in host communities, they are also teaching the people they meet about their country, their culture and their ideas. They are young ambassadors, helping to bring the world closer together.

Firsthand experience with a different culture is a powerful force in the promotion of international understanding and peace. The world becomes a smaller, friendlier place when we learn that all people, regardless of nationality, desire the same basic things—a safe, comfortable environment for our children and ourselves. Every year, Rotary Youth Exchange exposes thousands of young people to other lands and cultures. This plants the seeds for a lifetime of international understanding. ■

*Dr. Warren Phillips retired in 2007 as Superintendent of Schools for the Battle River School Division. He spent 37 years in public education in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Donna Phillips has worked as a high school teacher, public librarian and researcher. She has served as her Rotary Club's Youth Exchange Officer since 2004 and very much enjoys the relationships she establishes with both inbound and outbound exchange students. This past year Donna and Warren were host parents for six months and experienced the exchange program from a different and equally rewarding perspective.*



## THE PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE: THE OILSANDS ROTARY CLUB IN FORT MCMURRAY

By Ken and Karen Sanderson

**W**hat a wonderful way to experience education in another country. Living with approximately four families over their year provides the opportunity for the student to see how different families live in the host community. Just as each family in Alberta may have their own traditions/customs, so do the host families.

For example, our daughter stayed in the home of a Buddhist priest and his family. Their home was attached to the Buddhist temple. She was hosted there over the Christmas period and, although they did not celebrate Christmas, there was an understanding of the meaning of Christmas to Kara-Lyn.

Our family became involved first with Rotary when our daughter was sponsored by the Fort McMurray Rotary Club to go to Japan for the 1993-1994 school year. She was hosted by the Rotary Club of Izaka in Japan, which is a hot spring resort community just outside of the larger center of Fukushima, about three hours by car north of Tokyo. Kara-Lyn went to a Catholic girls' school in Fukushima which meant riding a bicycle to the train each morning and then taking another bicycle to go from the train to the school in the city.

Over the course of the year she did some academic work but primarily she was able to participate in the cultural programs that are very important in the Japanese culture such as tea ceremony, flower arranging and learning to print the characters of the language. One of her host fathers ran a private school teaching abacus in which Kara-Lyn had a successful learning experience. She became

very fluent in Japanese and, to this day, is able to converse with Japanese tourists in our community.

While Kara-Lyn was in Japan we were able to visit her and tour various communities, including the hot spring/ski resort of Nozawa-Onsen, Hiroshima, Kyoto, Nara, Nikko, Sendai and Tokyo. We also visited two young women who were living in Japan teaching English. They were able to share their experiences and perspectives with us as well.

Following Kara-Lyn's return to Canada, she did a report to the sponsoring Fort McMurray Rotary Club. What an experience it had been for her! Ken and I were approached to become Rotarians and readily accepted the invitation. We have been heavily involved in the Rotary Youth Exchange program ever since.

As members of the Rotary Club (initially, the Fort McMurray Club and now the Oilsands Rotary Club in Fort McMurray) we have been involved in the recruitment of students for the program as well as being host parents. We have hosted students from South Africa, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Denmark,



Thailand, Brazil and Chile. We have kept in touch with the students on their return home, have visited several of them and have hosted several on return visits to Canada. Our closest connections have been made with the students who had family come to visit while they were here in Canada. We very much enjoyed hosting those family members as well.

We visited our South African "daughter" and her parents and brother over Christmas one year. A few years later, Kara-Lyn was asked to be part of her wedding ceremony in South Africa as well. Our "Dutch son" has been back to visit us and we have been to the Netherlands to visit on three occasions—one of which was to help him celebrate the completion and final presentation of his Master's degree in Logistics (in English!). We visited the "Great Dane" (our Danish student) prior to attending the Rotary International Convention in Copenhagen in 2006. He returned to visit Fort McMurray with two of his friends this past summer.

"Before embarking on my adventure in Thailand, a year seemed like a long time. Now I realize I have ONLY one year in Thailand. One year to experience everything, to see it all, to learn a new language and way of life. I can't afford to waste time because at the end of the year, I can't go back in time and relive my exchange. That's why I'm living life to its fullest here and taking it all in. There's time to rest when my one short year as an exchange student is over. Then, there will be nothing but time to reflect." *Comments from a Rotary Exchange Student.*





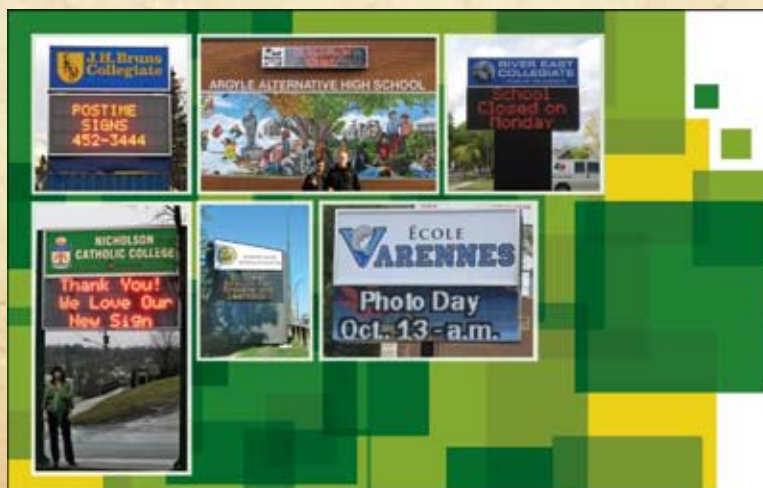
All of these experiences have made us more educated and aware of other cultures around our great globe. Other Fort McMurray Rotarians have also visited former exchange students in such places as France, Ecuador, Switzerland and Germany.

The Rotary Youth Exchange program is definitely the opportunity for young people to be an ambassador for their community and country, teaching people they meet about their country, their culture and ideas, bringing the world closer together and, in

the process, making new friends that may last a lifetime.

The Rotary Youth Exchange program is one of several programs of Rotary International that enables young people to immerse themselves in another culture, participate in the educational experience, as well as make friends both from their host country and with exchange students from many other countries—all of which will last a lifetime and result in greater world understanding and tolerance. ■

*Ken and Karen Saunderson have lived in Fort McMurray since 1972. Ken, B.Ed., M.Ed. in Ed. Admin., was a teacher with the Public School District #2833, a District Vice-Principal, Principal and Curriculum Coordinator, retired in 2002. Karen started her career with a Bs.H.Ec, P.Dt., worked as a dietitian and then with the federal government in Employment and Immigration. She retired from a career as a Financial Advisor in 2005.*



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Marx, Gary. *An Overview  
of Sixteen Trends: Their  
Profound Impact on the  
Future*, 2006

# Toward Internationalization in Edmonton Public Schools

By Ann Calverley

**T**hese days, bringing an international dimension to teaching and learning is important work for school districts across Alberta. Educators refer to this work as *internationalization* and a significant body of research exists describing its characteristics and benefits for learners. Weaving internationalization into the work of our schools leads to enhanced student learning and assists student preparedness for success after graduation. Public education has a significant role to play in producing younger generations of internationalists within a global learning culture.

The research indicates that *internationalization* includes recruiting and educating international students, infusing curriculum with international content, encouraging student and teacher mobility, and participating in international partnerships and projects. In Edmonton Public Schools (EPS), this work has taken shape on many fronts. This includes the ongoing participation of our students and teachers in exchanges to the development of a robust International Student Program. From identifying curriculum reflecting international perspectives to providing English as a Second Language programming and a variety of second languages, Edmonton Public Schools has deepened its work toward internationalization. This article describes several markers of our journey.

## The International Student Program

In 1996 we introduced the first International Student Program (ISP)

in Alberta. The program has grown considerably and in the past 14 years we have served over 4,000 international students in numerous schools across the district. They have attended academic programs for months, semesters and years at all grade levels, and have come from over 50 countries.

Our schools were instrumental in the program's success—principals believed that international students would contribute to their schools by providing excellent role models for the "study abroad" experience. Schools were also provided the resources to effectively support and program for international students. As they do not have "right of access" to education in Alberta, international students pay tuition fees to offset the costs associated with programming. Our administration chose to provide a significant portion of the fees directly to schools serving the students, and any discretionary revenues could be utilized to hire teachers and add programs.

## Homestay program

We have also implemented Homestay services to support our international students beyond school. Homestay staff members are specialized in working closely with students and families, and their tasks include both orienting students to life in a new culture, and managing relationships and communication. Perhaps the most important feature of our Homestay Program is a thorough host family identification process. Families are screened, interviewed, and must obtain security clearances from both the Edmonton City Police and the Department of Child Welfare. Only if they successfully complete this process are they matched with our students.





The Homestay experience provides excellent cross-cultural learning for both students and families, and allows our students to improve their language proficiency and round out their experience by learning about life with a Canadian family. As international students demonstrate courage and determination in accepting the challenges of studying in a foreign country at a young age in a language that is not their first, it is our responsibility to ensure that they enjoy the benefits of safe, secure and accepting home environments. But sharing our expertise with international learners is only one dimension of the EPS story.

### Internationalizing curriculum and learning environments

Our schools reflect the cultural diversity evident in many Alberta communities and accordingly, they have developed programs that build cross-cultural competencies and honour diversity within student bodies. Multicultural days and celebrations of students' cultures and backgrounds featuring displays of costume, dance, music and narrative are examples of value for this diversity. In support of curricular outcomes, schools also organize field trips and study tours to international locations for students and staff.

Further, EPS is one of the few jurisdictions in Alberta with a mandated second language requirement for all students, requiring study of a second language in Grades 4 through 9. Bilingual and immersion programs are available in several languages, and many of these include international partnerships which contribute to the preparation of students and staff for international experiences.

Schools also utilize current technologies to enhance the international learning of their students. Videoconferencing simulates face-to-face meetings between geographically diverse sites, allowing teachers to bring together multiple classrooms, link students with outside experts, and participate in virtual field trips. Most importantly, our multicultural policy provides an umbrella for the development of intercultural understanding and respect for diversity.

### Student and teacher exchanges

EPS encourages student and teacher mobility and exchange. Our primary source of information and support regarding these opportunities is through the well-organized exchange programs of Alberta Education. We also work successfully with organizations such as the Rotary Clubs of Edmonton, and through provincial education exchange agreements.

A challenge we continue to face is that we receive many more requests for international students to study here than from district students to participate in overseas exchanges—this is a common trend among public school districts in Alberta. To address this, districts are working with Alberta Education to provide accreditation to Alberta students for international projects and overseas study. Our goal is to improve the participation rates for all Alberta students in these valuable educational experiences.

### Capacity building

Opportunities to work with learners from other countries is powerful professional development and when these opportunities are available, our staff are encouraged to participate. Our experiences in international development work include contracts with the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) to contribute to a Strategic Planning Project in Vietnam,

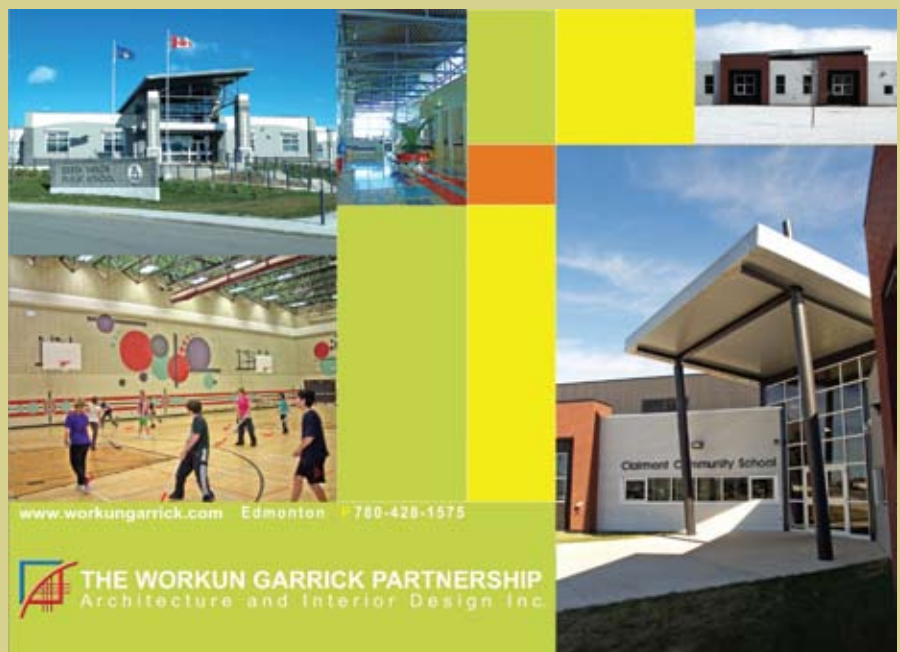
as well as a project in Doha, Qatar to staff and fully resource school offering kindergarten through grade 8. We also continue to provide teacher professional development programs to learners from countries such as Mexico, Korea and Spain.

### Provincial support

Alberta school jurisdictions are supported by the province in the work of internationalization. In addition to implementing their *International Education Strategy 2000*, Alberta Education has created an International Education Council. Comprised of representatives from school districts across Alberta, the council provides leadership to international work in Alberta, and has collaborated on resource development including a *Guide to International School Partnerships*, a video on studying in Alberta, and the recently completed *Handbook for International Education Administrators*.

As the work to internationalize moves forward, we believe that the students and staff in Edmonton Public Schools are already reaping the benefits! ■

*Ann Calverley has taught at all levels of schooling, served as ESL consultant and Supervisor, Curriculum and Programs. She developed and manages the International Programs unit for EPS.*



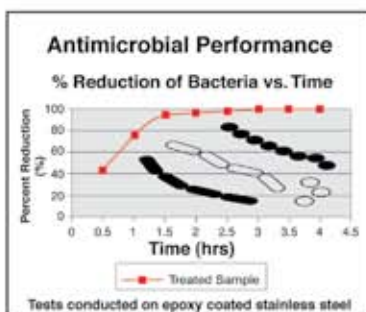


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# The International School of Macao: Alberta's First Accredited International School

*By Real Hryhynchuk, Principal*

**T**he International School of Macao (TIS) was established eight years ago to provide the students in Macao the opportunity to study at a high quality Canadian school. Macao, a former Portuguese colony of 30 square kilometres, is an hour away from Hong Kong by jetfoil. It was returned to the Chinese as a Special Administrative Region in 1999 and has since become the gaming capital of the world, home to some of the largest casino resorts on earth. With the growth of the gaming industry came an influx of expatriates and the need for international education.

TIS is the first out-of-province school accredited by the Ministry of Education in Alberta. Employed at the school are 60 expatriate teachers from Canada (24 from Alberta), Australia and South Africa, and 10 local Mandarin teachers. The school has approximately 800 students with 45 percent of the students being local students from Macao, Hong Kong, or Mainland China and 55 percent coming from countries all over the world. The student population at TIS is composed of students from 38 different countries giving it a flavour different from many international schools that often serve student populations primarily from the country in which they are located or accredited. TIS is a truly international school and this mix of students and cultures at TIS creates both opportunities and challenges.

Students have the opportunity to learn, grow and make friends with students from many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. They are exposed to many different languages, customs and traditions that can enrich their education and help them

learn to respect and appreciate those different from them. In this respect, we are an Alberta school with an advantage! Having been a teacher and principal in Alberta, I can say that as Albertans, we don't teach our students enough about the world and Asia in particular. The growth and change in this part of the world is nothing short of spectacular and will, without a doubt, shape the 21st Century.

The ongoing challenge of an international school like TIS is to make the Alberta curriculum relevant and meaningful to all students, regardless of their country of origin. Most of our students have never been to Alberta or even Canada and may not know much about the country. This makes it important for teachers to be mindful of the context in which they are teaching the curriculum and find ways to connect the content to

the backgrounds and experiences of the students in their classes.

In the 2008-2009 school year, the school had its first graduating class, completing our program from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12. It was an anxious year for us, as we were unsure of how our students would score on the diploma examinations, which are flown here, completed, and flown back to Alberta to be marked. The grade 12s surpassed the Alberta provincial average for the percentage of students meeting the acceptable standard and standard of excellence on the diploma examinations in all subjects.

## **Our first graduates**

The litmus test of the viability of the Alberta program in an international school was whether or not our graduates would be granted direct entrance to universities around the world. As we suspected, the

The International School of Macao.





Alberta high school diploma was internationally recognized and our first group of graduates were accepted to universities and colleges in Canada, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Macao. Not only are we concerned about the post-secondary offers to our students, but we are very interested in how well our students do in university and college.

The results so far are promising. Jenny Chan, a member of the first graduating class who is attending the University of British Columbia writes, "I believe that the Alberta curriculum prepared me very well for university. What I've realized is that I'm actually ahead of the local BC students in terms of Math and the Sciences. Also, even though the departmental exams were extremely stressful, they prepared me for my university midterms and finals because the layout and time allocation of these exams are very similar.

There are two important things that I have learned and gained from TIS—things that I hope other TIS students will be able to take with them when they graduate. Firstly, TIS taught me how to think critically—to not simply accept what's being taught, but rather to question it; to not give-up even when it seems impossible, but to try and try again; and to not just ask for the answers, but instead to look for them myself. Secondly, TIS taught me to take responsibility for my own learning. Therefore, in university I'm not afraid to put my hand up in front of hundreds of other students, I'm not shy about approaching my professors, and I'm not scared to give out suggestions."

### Why Alberta?

We are often asked why the school governors, both from Ontario, sought Alberta accreditation for the school at a time when there were no other Alberta accredited international schools. Firstly, Alberta students' high scores on national standardized tests and the international PISA tests gives our program credibility in an international market. When parents are paying significant amounts of money for their children's education, they want some assurance that the program is high quality. Though most parents here don't know anything about



Alberta Education, they all know about the PISA exams.

Secondly, the diploma examinations also give credibility to an international school. Other well-known international programs such as IB and AP have standardized examinations that students must write in order to obtain their diplomas. Externally marked examinations serve as a quality check on the program that is being offered. Unfortunately, there are many poor quality international schools (many calling themselves Canadian) that issue diplomas based on teacher awarded marks that are questionable at best.

Finally, Alberta Education was very interested in accrediting an out-of-province school and has been a great partner to work with. The accreditation process was a learning experience for both of us and we have always been able to have open and honest discussions when concerns arise, such as the high costs that we are charged for the diploma examinations that our students must write. We look forward to our annual weeklong inspection by officials from the Ministry and rather than seeing the inspection as something intrusive, we welcome it as a professional development opportunity.

### Alberta partnerships

We are keen to create partnerships with educational organizations in Alberta. Last year, we hosted a cohort of five student

teachers from the University of Alberta for their final nine-week practicum. This was the first group of Alberta teachers who completed their final, required practicum at a school outside of the province. Due to the success of the program, we are hosting a second cohort of six student teachers from the University of Alberta in the spring of 2010. Last year, we also signed a memorandum of cooperation with the University of Lethbridge and are working on the logistics of hosting a cohort of their student teachers in the 2010-2011 school year.

We are also currently working with Alberta Education and Calgary Public Board of Education to create possibilities for reciprocal student exchanges and teacher professional improvement leaves, allowing teachers from CBE to come to TIS for a year to teach and work on a research project. We see these partnerships as mutually beneficial, helping to ensure a strong Alberta presence in the school and providing an international experience for Alberta students and teachers.

We are a proud Alberta school and as the trailblazers in Alberta's journey into international school accreditation, have always worked to ensure that the structures we create with Alberta Education and our other Alberta partners work to benefit students and teachers around the world and back home in Alberta. ■



# A New Institute for Second Languages

*By Janice Aubry*

A commitment to excellence and to providing students with outstanding educational experiences that prepare them to be leaders in an evolving global society is the driving force behind the establishment of a new centre for excellence, the Institute for Innovation in Second Language Education (IISLE), at Edmonton Public Schools (EPSB).

IISLE is the first comprehensive institute of its kind in North America to support the development and promotion of excellence in second language education. Its core purpose is the fostering of global citizenship in students and staff through the development of excellence in all aspects of second language education across a wide range of official, international, heritage, aboriginal and signed languages. This institute functions as a hub for the provision of services and expertise to support second language teaching and learning, and the development of exemplary community and world citizens.

What makes IISLE unique is not only its high quality consultant staff that are district, provincial, national and international leaders in second language education, but also the strength and engagement of its partners and the innovations that it undertakes. Foreign governments, especially the governments of China, Spain, Germany, France

and Ukraine, are all active collaborators with Edmonton Public Schools, partnering in a range of high-impact projects and initiatives. Some examples include:

- The Ministry of Education of Spain, the University of Alberta and IISLE have partnered to establish an official Spanish Resource Centre, the only one in Western Canada.
- The Confucius Institute in Edmonton (appointed by the Office of Chinese Language Council International of the People's Republic of China) with its resource library housing over 24,000 Chinese language and culture resources, partners with IISLE to support Chinese language teaching and learning in Alberta.
- IISLE has become the only Associated Centre of Instituto Cervantes (of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain) in the United States and Canada, and the only one in the world housed within a public school district.
- IISLE partners with the Goethe-Institut and the Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (ZfA) to support German language education, through teacher training, international credentialing, cultural events and much more.
- IISLE and Edmonton Public Schools partner with the Alliance française and

l'Academie Rouen to support and strengthen French language teaching and learning. In fact, Alliance française is establishing classrooms at IISLE, and is providing summer language camps for children and classes for teachers.

- A partnership between Edmonton Public Schools and Lviv Oblast Province in Ukraine has been signed and is being implemented to support Ukrainian language and culture learning.
- The governments of China, France, Germany and Spain have accredited Edmonton Public Schools as official language testing centres, to administer their international language examinations.

Recognized around the world for its quality programming and leadership in second language education, EPSB has a long history of offering a wide range of languages and second language program types. The district provides bilingual (partial immersion) programs in seven languages, second language courses in 12 languages (Arabic, American Sign Language, Chinese, Cree, English, French, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Punjabi, Spanish, Ukrainian), and a large and comprehensive French Immersion



Program. EPSB has a mandated second language requirement for all students. IISLE serves as the key support centre for these programs.

### **New technologies, new pedagogies, new resources**

IISLE is recognized as a local, national and international leader in many key areas:

**Professional development and training services:** A key service of IISLE is the provision of professional training and support for the development of highly skilled teachers, administrators and educational leaders. Institutes, workshops, conferences and face-to-face consultations are provided in second language pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, differentiation, leadership, program development, quality standards. IISLE partners with post-secondary institutions to provide high quality professional development opportunities for Alberta's pre-service and in-service teachers. IISLE provides training programs to teachers from other countries on an annual basis, and leadership workshops and institutes are also a mainstay.

For example, IISLE is a national leader in second language assessment. EPSB is the first school district in Canada to pilot the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP), and is the official Canadian representative, on behalf of Heritage Canada, to the European Centre for Modern Languages Project, "European Language Portfolios in Whole School Implementation". IISLE provides consultant support and training sessions on these topics to leaders and institutions across Canada.

**Resource centres:** IISLE houses several resource centres, providing teaching, learning, assessment, leadership and cultural resources for pre-service and practicing second language teachers, language program leaders, and the community. IISLE also provides assistance in resource selection, resource development and resource training.

Along with the Spanish Resource Centre and the Confucius Institute in Edmonton Resource Library, new resource libraries, such as an aboriginal resource centre and a

French resource library, are currently under development.

**Cultural activities and events:** IISLE facilitates and hosts numerous cultural activities and events, such as visiting authors, educational and museum exhibits, film festivals and workshops on cultural topics.

**Research and promotion:** IISLE provides information and services to promote second language education and programs, including research information and services to support second language policy, programs and practices.

**Technologies support:** IISLE leads the exploration of the effectiveness of a wide range of technologies and the optimum blend of technologies in both the delivery and implementation of second language programs. IISLE provides development services and teacher training in the uses of these technologies for second language teaching and learning.

**Linkages, connections and partnerships:** IISLE provides a hub for connecting students, teachers, schools, and administrators provincially, nationally and internationally to speakers and educators of other languages through facilitating twinings, penpal/e-pal relationships, visiting and volunteer teachers, technology-based interactions, study opportunities, and other experiences.

**Language assessment and international credentialing:** IISLE's International Credentials for Languages Services (ICLS) works with foreign governments and agencies to provide international examinations and credentials for language proficiency. Candidates can sit for international exams to certify their proficiency in French, German, Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Spanish and Ukrainian. IISLE also provides language proficiency assessments for staff in 12 languages.

### **Our global commitment**

Edmonton Public Schools is committed to developing responsible and contributing global citizens, ensuring the achievement of high levels of English language literacy and mathematics skills, meeting the needs of diverse learners...in short, the district is committed to ensuring bright futures for all students. Key strategies are now in place to ensure this commitment is met: the implementation of second language learning for all students, and the establishment of the Institute for Innovation in Second Language Education. ■

*Janice Aubry is the Supervisor of IISLE. She has been a teacher, consultant, university instructor, and Team Leader for Languages at Alberta Education.*



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# Chinook Learning Services: Building Bridges for International Students and Immigrant Teachers

By Dr. Sandra Janusch



Students and teachers meet together to sing during the International Summer Program.



The latest cohort of teachers to participate in the Transitions to Alberta Classrooms Program.

**O**n March 2, 2010, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) will reach a milestone as it celebrates its 125th anniversary as a public school board. In addition to serving hundreds of thousands of students in its K-12 schools, the CBE, through Chinook Learning Services, offers a range of programs for adult students. These programs include Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), English as a Second Language (ESL), Continuing Education and High School Academic Upgrading (Grades 10 – 12).

In the past few years Chinook Learning Services has also extended our work in academic, language and cultural training to include two unique programs specifically designed to meet the needs of visiting international school groups and local immigrant teachers - the International Summer School program and the Transitions to Alberta Classrooms (TAC) program.

## The International Summer School program

Since its foundation in 2000, the International Summer School program has been

creating unique opportunities for international school groups to strengthen their English skills in the stimulating atmosphere of Calgary.

This annual program brings approximately 100 students to Calgary for a month to gain a better understanding of another culture and language, and to interact with a range of people. The opportunity to practice English is of the utmost importance to these students. "Being in this environment gives us the chance to speak simply," says Flora, a Taiwanese student.

Using the facilities at Henry Wise Wood, the students are assessed and then divided into six classes with different instructional styles to facilitate their various levels of understanding. They focus on English grammar and vocabulary while practicing speaking and comprehension with teachers. This learning ties into discussions on Calgary's history and surrounding areas.

The visiting students also participate in activities and field trips with local high school students who act as cultural assistants. The opportunity to make friends with local teenagers and to practice their English

language skills with them is often identified as a highlight of the program by the international students.

The homestay requirement of the program is a major contributor to student success. "It's an asset to our program that the students get to stay with a Canadian host family," says International Summer School administrator, Michael MacDonald. The host families provide the students with further insight into day-to-day Canadian life as well as providing another avenue for practicing English. Students are encouraged to reflect on their day at meal times and to watch news and movies with their host families as a way to further enhance their language development.

In addition to classroom instruction and relationship building, the students go on day trips that allow them to experience all that Calgary has to offer. They learn about the city's past at Fort Calgary and Heritage Park, take in the natural scenery of Lake Louise and Banff, and get a taste of the annual Stampede and its breakfasts!

Every element of the International Summer program combines to create an



unforgettable experience for these international students. They meet new people and connect with them in a different language in a new and supportive environment.

### The Transitions to Alberta Classrooms Program (TAC)

It used to be that immigrant teachers arriving in Alberta faced at least one daunting hurdle before re-entering their chosen profession. That challenge—namely, earning certification to teach in this province—led many to either repeat their university training in Canada or give up on the idea of teaching altogether.

Today, however, immigrant teachers have the opportunity to upgrade their teaching certification through a joint initiative of Chinook Learning Services and the University of Calgary. The Transitions to Alberta Classrooms (TAC) program is an intensive six-month, full time program that provides foreign-trained teachers with a greater understanding of the culture and language of the Alberta classroom. It's the only program of its kind for immigrant teachers in this province.

TAC allows immigrant teachers to contextualize their responsibilities to students, parents, colleagues, the profession and the wider community, and to apply the Alberta curriculum content into meaningful learning activities. The program comprises two essential and integrated components: professional seminars and practicum placements.

The seminars allow student teachers to articulate their experiences as teachers and to practice their English with students, parents, administrators and fellow teachers. Field experiences provide them a context for greater understanding of the rhythm of Canadian school and classroom life, and give them extended time to practice their instructional language. As well, each week specialists from the CBE and U of C are brought in to class to contribute their expertise to the program. This element adds to the richness of the program and the collaborative partnership between the Board and the University.

Now in its third year of operation, the TAC program has educated 32 immigrant teachers, with most of them proceeding directly to their certification, further university training and/or into the Alberta school system.

Formerly a high school math and sciences teacher in her native Pakistan, Farzana Khan came to Canada with her husband in 2001; after seven years as a stay-at-home mother to her young son, she decided to re-enter her chosen profession. "I had sent all my teaching documents to Alberta Education, which informed me I needed an additional 18 credits to be able to teach here," she explains.

"I had heard about the Transitions to Alberta Classrooms program, and applied for it in early 2008. By July of that year, the program allowed me to complete 15 of the required 18 credits, after which I finished an international communications course that gave me my final three credits. Almost immediately, within the first week of August, I got a call from Terry Fox School to see if I could cover a maternity leave in September."

Now, almost two years into teaching at a Calgary junior high school, Farzana is well acquainted with the discrepancies between teaching in her native Lahore and teaching in Calgary.

"The curriculum is not so much the issue as is the difference in cultures," she notes. "In Pakistan, you see, the teacher is always in full command of the classroom, and that's not so much the case here. Because Canadian students make their own choices about whether or not they wish to learn, we as teachers must find strategies to help them make those decisions. At first, I found this difference quite challenging, but slowly, slowly, I have changed the way I teach. In fact, I realized at one point that if I hadn't participated in the TAC program, it would have been extremely difficult for me to stand up in front of a Calgary classroom and teach."

These two very unique programs provide the Calgary Board of Education further opportunity to continue to encourage and support the learning of all students, young and old, near and far. Through this very important work with both international visitors and new Canadians, Chinook Learning Services continues to build important bridges for its students between language, culture, communities and countries. ■

*Dr. Sandra Janusch works as a teacher/coordinator for Chinook Learning Service's International Summer program and currently the Instructor and Field Advisor for the Transitions to Alberta Classrooms program.*



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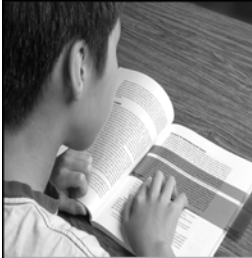
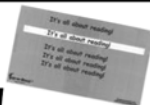
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# Making International Learning a Reality

*The following two Alberta-led initiatives show just what is possible when school boards make international learning a priority*

## **"FACE TO FAITH": BUILDING INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCING**

*By Greg Wooley*

Years ago, when I was pursuing a Religious Studies degree, I submitted an essay on a contemporary aspect of another religion. The essay came back with a lower mark than expected, and a note indicating that I should see the professor. The professor, Dr. Roland Miller, indicated that the essay displayed an admirable knowledge of books and journals, but the mark had been reduced for a very specific reason. "You didn't speak to anyone of this faith," he said. "If you want to understand others' beliefs, you have to speak to them."

Fast-forward to 2010 and you'll see a culturally-diverse group of students at Westmount Charter School, Calgary, actively engaged in a video conference with students from other nations and other faith traditions. The program that organized this conference, Face to Faith, is an initiative of Britain's Tony Blair Faith Foundation, with Westmount the Canadian Lead School.

So far, grade seven students at Westmount have had an introductory video-conference with students from Westhoughton School in Bolton, England, have followed up via supervised skype/email, and plan to have further conferences to deepen this relationship. A videoconference involving high school students is proposed this spring with Eastwood College in Lebanon, and invitations have been extended for Westmount to take part in future video conferences with a school in Jordan and two schools in England.

Westmount's connection with this program began through videoconferencing with the Global Nomads group, which led to an invitation to Neil Robinson and Peter Dziuba to attend the Face to Faith organizational conference in London, England.

Running global, cross-religious video-conferences brings some interesting challenges. An intended conference with the Middle East has had to be postponed to a time of year when the days are longer, since such activity would not be permissible after sundown. And locally, since cultural and religious themes form the core of these videoconferences, parents of prospective participants are fully briefed beforehand about the intended topics of the videoconference.

Alberta secondary school students will benefit greatly from this educational opportunity. In the words of the Face to Faith website ([www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/pages/schools](http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/pages/schools)), "religious literacy...is a vital skill in an increasingly complex, global society. This program "offers an authentic and meaningful environment in which students can develop key 21st Century skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving."

Schools or jurisdictions interested in participating can contact Peter Dziuba at [peter.dziuba@westmountcharter.com](mailto:peter.dziuba@westmountcharter.com) ■

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*Greg Wooley is Communications Coordinator at Westmount Charter School, Calgary.*

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## **A GLOBAL LEARNING STRATEGY**

*By Sheila McLeod*

The Calgary Board of Education has been involved in the standard international activities over the past several years. We have actively

recruited international students to the tune of approximately 500 per year. We encourage students to take part in international exchange activities like Alberta Education International exchange program and Rotary Exchange. Our high schools regularly participate in international travel and study opportunities.

But something was missing.

The number of students coming in per year far outweighed the number of CBE students going out for significant language and culture experiences. This raised critical questions around how we would be able to help students to develop the sophisticated cross cultural competencies that are required in order to be successful now and in the future. The challenge was clear. We needed to find ways for students to develop a global mindset and intercultural competencies in innovative and creative ways.

One of our Board of Trustees Ends Statements on Citizenship helped to guide our work and develop a system wide Global Learning Strategy. This strategy aims to develop key skills and attributes of global citizens. The strategy is multi-dimensional and includes:

- Intercultural Studies 35: A locally developed course designed to support students going on international exchange.
- A CBE International Certificate that is a way of recognizing and valuing the significant contributions of an international nature that students make throughout their CBE journey. This personalized process is highly engaging.
- A rich interactive global resource including:
  - » A Best Practices document that will guide schools as they enter







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  - » External international opportunities for staff and students; and
  - » Opportunities to network with other professionals worldwide.
- A staff development focus that provides opportunities for CBE staff to acquire a global perspective through international experience including:
    - » An annual spring break study tour to China and Korea that aims to build understanding around two of our largest international student groups;
    - » A participatory research study program to India during the summer; and
    - » An innovative international Professional Improvement Fellowship that encourages teachers to combine a year of work and research in Korea and Macao.

This Global Learning Strategy is highly responsive to learner needs and interests and the requirements of our global world. With strong support from CBE Superintendents, the strategy is already taking hold in many schools. Principals and teachers recognize that students are demanding the kind of meaningful and authentic experiences that the Global Learning Strategy promotes. In the words of many students, "we can make a difference. Give us the opportunities". ■

*Sheila McLeod is the Director of Global Learning Services for the Calgary Board of Education.*



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# Globally Boundless:

## The Responsibilities and Risks That Come With Homestay Programs

By Eleanor A. Olszewski, Q.C. and Dana Nowak, MacPherson Leslie & Tyerman LLP

It's easy to see why school boards are attracted to international student programs. In addition to financial benefits (these programs are a multi-million dollar industry in Canada), the potential for international students to offer and receive high-quality, first-hand cultural enrichment is difficult to match through other programs. However, with these benefits come responsibility and risk.

This article will review the basic principles that are relevant to homestay programs, will address some of the potential problems, and will also provide some suggestions for management of risks.

### Negligence law and the duty of care

A person is acting negligently when he/she commits a civil wrong against another person. The law acts to fix this wrong

by awarding damages to the injured party, in an attempt to put the party back into the position as though the harm had never occurred.

In order for a person to be liable in negligence, that person must first owe a "duty of care" to the injured person. Second, that person must fail in meeting their duty of care, and therefore act negligently. Third, the negligence must cause injury to the affected party.

Foreseeability is a fundamental principle in determining the scope of the duty of care owed from one person to another. Liability can arise when the negligent party should have reasonably foreseen that a person (or

class of persons) could be injured by its actions.

### The duty of care

There is little question that school boards owe a duty of care to supervise and protect their students. School boards are expected to behave in the same manner as a careful or prudent parent. For international students, the same standard applies and a school board would be expected to provide these students with same quality of supervision and protection. For example, when a school engages in field trips or sponsors extracurricular activities, approval by the international student's parent (or custodian, if applicable) is required. The same risk management procedures apply regardless of where a student may come from.

However, additional requirements may accompany the duty of care owed to international students. For



example, schools may be expected to take further steps to ensure that international students properly understand the nature of and instructions for an extra-curricular activity, given cultural differences and linguistic barriers. Failure to properly do so can potentially trigger liability where an injury results.

Canadian courts have not directly dealt with the duty of care for school boards in the context of international students and homestay programs. However, a review of various Canadian cases as well as American ones leads to the conclusion that courts would most likely find that school boards who offer these programs do owe such a duty.

Courts do not want to create indeterminate liability for school boards, not just for policy reasons but because this would also violate the principle of foreseeability. That said, in the Ontario case of *J.L.P. v. C.R.P.*, (2008), 89 O.R. (3d) 290, the court was prepared to recognize the potential for a school board to be directly liable to a party even though the negligent act was committed by someone other than the school board's employee.

This principle would likely apply where a school board offers a homestay program, especially if a student could show that the school knew or ought to have known that its negligence could result in someone else causing harm to the student. An obvious example of this would be where a school board failed to conduct a criminal check on an individual living at the host home when doing so would have revealed a number of assault charges.

Another informative case is *K.L.B. v. British Columbia* [2003], 2 S.C.R. 403, where two young children were abused while in the care of two different foster families. The prudent parent test applied in this situation, placing a high standard of care on the government to ensure that children are properly protected and supervised. The Court held that "it is reasonably foreseeable that some people will take advantage of the complete dependence of children in their care ... government must set up adequate procedures to screen prospective foster parents. And it must monitor homes so that

The school board was found negligent because it did not follow its own internal policies (requiring a careful review of all the details of the trip), the superintendent was never informed of the trip details and the parents were not given clear objectives of the activity.

any abuse that does occur can be promptly detected."

The principles in this case may extend to any organization that chooses to offer a program where students are placed in the private control of an unrelated individual. The organization will undoubtedly be held to the standard of a prudent parent, and failure to ensure the safety of that student may trigger liability.

*Beul v. ASSE International Inc.*, (2000) 233 F. 3d 441 ["*Beul*"] is an American case in which a 16 year old German exchange student was sexually assaulted by the father residing in the host home. ASSE International Inc. (ASSE) was a private organization that managed a homestay program. The Court of Appeal held that the relationship between ASSE and the family created an obligation of care for ASSE, despite the fact that the host family was volunteering. In the Court's view:

[Part] of ASSE's duty ... was to protect foreign girls and boys from sexual hanky-panky initiated by members of host families. Especially when a teenage girl is brought to live with strangers in a foreign country, the risk of inappropriate sexual activity is not so slight that the organization charged by the girl's parents with the safety of their daughter can be excused as a matter of law from

making a responsible effort to minimize the risk.

This is a position that could easily be adopted by Canadian courts in similar circumstances.

In addition to concerns about wrongful treatment of a student by a host family, school boards should be concerned with accidents that may occur while the student is in the care of the homestay family. If a student is injured, for example, in a car accident where a homestay family member was driving, that student and/or the homestay family may sue the school board. Notwithstanding that neither the guardian nor the school board acted in any that was substantively harmful, a student and/or homestay family could argue that procedural flaws in the homestay program contributed to the students' injuries.

A review of the Canadian case law is not particularly helpful. In *Parks v. The Board of School Trustees et al.*, 2003 BCPC 0003, a 15 year old student sued a British Columbia school board because it failed to prevent him from using a school's yard after hours for skateboarding, and he ended up injuring another student. The Court found that the school board could not be held liable for the injuries because it had met its obligations as a prudent parent. The Court said that people are not guilty of negligence simply because someone is injured.

In *Lunenburg County District School Board v. Piercey* (1998), 167 N.S.R. (2d) 68, a 14 year old student was rendered a quadriplegic while participating in an adventure camp organized by the school board. The school board was found negligent because it did not follow its own internal policies (requiring a careful review of all the details of the trip), the superintendent was never informed of the trip details and the parents were not given clear objectives of the activity.

We were able to find an American case dealing with student transportation. In *Travelers Indemnity Co. v. Swearingner* (1985), 169 Cal. App. 3d 779 a friend of a host family borrowed the host family's car to drive a visiting student to a school-related basketball event. En route to the



# School boards are expected to behave in the same manner as a careful or prudent parent. For international students, the same standard applies and a school board would be expected to provide these students with same quality of supervision and protection.

event, they were involved in a car accident and the visiting student was injured. The Court found a relationship between the school board and the host family, and stated as follows:

The prospective hosts were screened by school personnel and if the family was acceptable little explicit direction was provided concerning accomplishment of the hosting chores. Host students were told not to take the guests out partying, dancing or drinking. If problems arose with host families, the guests were removed and a new host provided. In past years host family status had been terminated and the host family stricken from the rolls when drinking problems had come to the attention of the school officials and once when a student assumed host responsibilities at a time when his parents were not in attendance at the home.

The Court assumed that the school board owed a duty of care to the host family and the student.

Based on the above cases, it is difficult to offer an opinion on whether a school board will be held liable for an accident that occurs while a student is in the care of a homestay family. This is because so much turns on the facts of the case. If a homestay family is participating in a foreseeable activity, and the school has failed to turn its mind to managing the risks of that activity, then it might be held liable. The opposite would likely be true for unforeseeable activities.

If school boards set forth homestay procedures that address the issues that prudent parents would have in placing their children in strangers' homes, and implement those procedures, then they will have gone a long way in meeting their obligations to the student and homestay family.

## Managing risk

A school board's first concern will be ensuring that the living environment is a safe place for the international student. As there is little or no guidance as to what factors might be important in that regard, it may be helpful to refer to the Alberta Government's legislative obligations regarding the placement of children in foster care.

These criteria include the following:

- A criminal record check on any adult living in the homestay family home.
- A reference from a physician concerning the general physical and mental health of the applicant.
- References from other individuals concerning the ability of the applicant to take in a student.
- Permission for the school board to conduct an assessment of the applicant.
- Requirement that the applicant provide evidence that the home is in compliance with applicable health and safety legislation.
- Requirement no more than two homestay students reside in a home at any given time.
- Requirement that the home is

equipped with a private room for the student with suitable furniture (bed, linens, desk, chair, lamp).

- Requirement that a member of the homestay family become the legal custodian of the student, if the student is a minor.

Once a school board has satisfied itself that an applicant is suitable for the program, it should manage the risks associated with the program by ensuring that certain contracts are in place for the duration of the student's stay.

## Contract law and the homestay program

A contract is a mutual agreement among parties on certain terms that parties will respect or fulfill. A contract can be created verbally, or by virtue of a written document, and once the parties agree to the terms and conditions, they are bound to honour the contract. Typically the terms set out in a contract relate to fundamental terms such as prices, dates and performance obligations. They can also contain certain conditions, regulations, restrictions and indemnifications, as well as consequences should either party breach the terms of the contract. Should a breach occur, the law may recognize the ability for the aggrieved party to recover damages as though the contract had been completed. In this sense, contract law is forward-looking.

Contracts can be used to control the risks created when two parties choose to interact. For the most part, courts are respectful of the terms and conditions to

which the parties choose to bind themselves, so long as the contract is reasonable and drafted in good faith.

Contracts play a vital role in establishing the parameters of the relationship between the school board, the student, the student's parents and the homestay family. The value of a contract lies in its ability to evidence the foreseeable risks associated with this type of program, and set out expectations, guidelines, regulations, conditions and indemnifications to manage these risks, as well as procedures on how the parties should govern themselves should a risk materialize.

School boards should ensure that students and their parents sign contracts setting out the terms that will govern for the duration of the homestay. Two contracts are recommended in this respect. The first is between the school board and the homestay family. The second is between the school board, the student and the student's parents.

In the first contract, between the school board and the homestay family, the basic terms of the homestay agreement should be set out such as payment for services, duration of the

homestay, conditions for student placement, and so forth. The contract should set out prohibitions, regulations and expectations. These can include the following with respect to the homestay applicant:

- Shall not inflict physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation or emotional deprivation, or deny any basic necessities to the student.
- Shall report to the school any incidents relating to any serious illness of or injury to the student, any serious change in the student's mental or physical health, any unauthorized absence of the student from the home, any commission by the student of an offence under an Act of Canada, or any other occurrence that may seriously affect the health or safety of the student or others.
- Shall maintain first aid certification.
- Shall maintain the home and grounds to ensure student safety.
- Shall provide three meals and two snacks daily.
- Shall practice emergency evacuation procedures regularly and will have and

maintain fire extinguishers and smoke detectors.

- Shall notify the school board of any significant change to the applicant's residence including a move, a change in who lives at the home and a change that alters the living space of the home.
- Shall maintain homeowner's insurance.
- Shall inform the school board if the family plans to be away for any period of time during the student's stay.
- Shall not initiate or participate in any sexually-oriented discussions or behaviours.
- Shall not permit the student to use any alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Shall not permit the student to operate any vehicle.
- Shall not lend to or borrow money from the student.
- Shall provide the school board with a calendar outlining all major family activities that the student may attend.

The contract should also provide that the school board shall have the right to remove the student from the home at the school board's sole discretion.

As above-mentioned, there is a risk of student injury while in the care of the homestay family. You may wish to include an indemnification clause shifting the risk to homestay family should the child be injured while participating in a family-related activity.

The second contract is between the school board, the student and the student's parent(s). It should also set out the basic terms of the homestay, including payment for services, duration of the homestay, conditions for student placement and so forth. The contract should also set out any applicable regulations and prohibitions, such as that the student:

- Shall obey the laws of Canada.
- Shall carry the required medical insurance.
- Shall not use any alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Shall not operate any vehicle.
- Shall not enter host bedrooms, private rooms or bathrooms when they are occupied.

The contract should also provide that the school board shall have the right to

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remove the student from the home at the school board's sole discretion.

These recommendations are not exhaustive; many contracts of this nature set out secondary guidelines relating to the success of the homestay experience.

#### Now what?

A school board may have done everything reasonable to minimize the risk of harm to a student in setting up the homestay, but it can still attract liability if it fails to properly monitor the student's home situation. Recall the American case in which the 16 year old German exchange student was sexually assaulted by the father residing in the host home. The court would not dismiss the case because in its view, the court could very easily find that the homestay company was negligent in failing to provide adequate personal visits and telephone calls to, as well as supervision of, the student.

We recommend that school boards have a resource person for the student; the student can be told that this person should be contacted if the student has concerns about

the homestay family or is uncertain about participating in a family activity.

This resource person should be in regular contact with the student, away from the homestay family. This individual should have or receive some training to ensure that they are aware of their duties and responsibilities and are capable of carrying them out.

#### Summary

School boards should address the following, if they intend to offer international student homestay programs, as discussed earlier:

- Comprehensive application packages for both the student and the homestay family.
- Two contracts; one between the school board, the student and the student's parent and the second between the school board and the homestay family setting.
- If the student is under 18, a member of the homestay family should assume legal custodianship for the duration of the student's stay.
- A requirement that the student maintain the appropriate medical insurance.


- Clear procedures for ongoing assessment of the student's well-being in the homestay residence.
- Ongoing review of the homestay program so that weaknesses can be identified and corrected.

There is sometimes a tendency to focus on documentation and paperwork, but risk management involves so much more than that. It requires forethought and contemplation of the possible ways in which a student's safety could be compromised. It requires the establishment of preventative measure, as well as procedures for dealing with risks if they occur. Finally, it involves the ongoing evaluation of these procedures to ensure that they continue to address novel challenges. Careful consideration of all of these factors will help to ensure that a school board's international exchange student program is a success. ■

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## Health and Benefit Tips When Working Internationally

*ASEBP is governed by five members from the ATA and five members from the ASBA. As a partner with the education sector, ASEBP is committed to developing and promoting resources that support individuals, groups and leaders in creating and sustaining healthy people, healthy workplaces. Working with the education sector has provided many learnings that they are pleased to share in their regular column of CASS Connection.*

**A**s a leader, it is exciting to approve one of your teachers for a teacher exchange. The following information is provided by the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) as a resource for you to share with the lucky individual as they prepare for this once in a lifetime opportunity. And while this information is focused on the exchange teacher, many of the tips apply to anyone traveling on spring or summer break.

Working internationally offers many exciting opportunities and adventures and with some simple steps in preparation, the travel experience can be filled with memories to come! While we acknowledge there may have many items on the “to do” list, don’t miss out on some important information to help keep health and safety top of mind during your time away from home.

### Make health a priority

Being healthy in a foreign country may maximize your exchange experience. Continue your healthy living practices which include good nutrition practices, regular physical activity and proper use of prescription medication. Before you leave on your travels, here are some points to consider:

- **Obtain a physical assessment/ medical clearance:** If you’ve had surgery, a stroke or heart attack, bone fracture or another significant illness, your primary healthcare provider will advise you when it is safe to travel and what precautions, if any, need to be followed. Take care of routine dental and medical matters before you go.

- **Update your immunizations:**

Immunizations are a safe and effective way to provide protection against a number of potentially serious diseases. In order to be effective, immunizations should be administered several weeks prior to your departure; contact ASEBP’s health information line (888-431-52785 or via email at [foryourhealth@asebp.ab.ca](mailto:foryourhealth@asebp.ab.ca)) for more information and to review recommended immunizations.

- **Be medication and medical alert savvy:**

Keep medications in their original containers, with typed labels and keep them on your person at all times. Pack more of your medications than you will need and get prescriptions filled before you leave as you never know when your stay might be extended. Be sure to wear your medical alert bracelet and to take a first aid kit with you.

- **Assess destination health risks:** High altitudes and severe air pollution may end up making your experience a health risk if you have high blood pressure, anemia, respiratory or cardiac conditions. Be sure to consult your primary healthcare provider for guidance on how to manage these conditions prior to leaving for your trip.

### Remember your health benefit coverage

If you are travelling outside Canada, you will need to:

- ☐ Take your ASEBP ID card
- ☐ Take your provincial health care card (Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan)

- ☐ Advise ASEBP of your teacher exchange plans at least 30 days in advance to ensure that necessary paperwork and coverage has been provided to you and your family.
- ☐ Check for any travel reports or warnings for your planned destination before you leave. Travel reports or warnings could restrict your ASEBP coverage. Visit [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/menu-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp) for more information.
- ☐ Review ASEBP’s Outside Canada Emergency Travel Benefits.
- ☐ If you have Extended Health Care coverage with ASEBP, then you also have Outside Canada Emergency Travel Benefits. This coverage is restricted to emergency medical treatment only, so you may wish to consider other insurance for your personal effects such as baggage and flight cancellation. Before you leave for your trip, refer to the ASEBP Benefit Handbook, available online at [www.asebp.ab.ca](http://www.asebp.ab.ca) or contact an ASEBP Benefit Specialist for further details about this benefit.

### Did you know?

Apple-a-Day, your online health information source, continues to be accessible to you even when you’re outside of Canada. To access reliable health information and various programs and tools at any time, simply log onto ASEBP’s website ([www.asebp.ab.ca](http://www.asebp.ab.ca)) and click on the Apple-a-Day icon. You will need to enter your ASEBP ID number and personal password.



- ❑ Check ASEBP's website or contact us for updates regarding your benefit coverage

### Think safety

#### Consider your new environment

If you're travelling over a long period, your health concerns may vary from those of the short-term traveller. You'll be more exposed to potential disease risks and you may have to take preventive medication, such as anti-malarial prescriptions, for a longer time. You may need to learn how to shop for and prepare food safely in your new location, and you may need access to health care services for yourself and other family members.

When you travel from a cold to a warmer climate, your body will need time to adjust to the heat. Start slow if you exercise at the beginning of your trip and drink plenty of fluids. For protection from the tropical sun, wear sunglasses, a hat and other protective clothing. Use sunblock (SPF 15 or higher) regularly, especially if you're taking certain medications as they increase the skin's sensitivity to the sun.

Travel to areas of high altitude poses special risks. Oxygen decreases as you climb higher above sea level, and rapid ascents to altitudes greater than 2,500 metres (8,000 feet) can cause altitude sickness, even if you're in excellent health. Symptoms may include light-headedness, headache, fatigue, altered perceptions and sleep disorders. The safest method for climbing is a graded ascent, taking your time to acclimatize at various altitudes.

#### Avoid disease

While some diseases can be minimized by immunization, others require additional precautions on your part to safeguard your health. You may need to take preventive medications and adjust your behavior to reduce your risk. Hand washing with soap under running water is one of the most important practices in preventing illness while travelling. Alcohol-based hand gel can be used if soap and water are not readily available, so keep some with you at all times.

Diseases such as hepatitis A and typhoid fever are transmitted when you

consume contaminated food or water. Other infections can sometimes be transmitted in public bathing facilities, including water parks. To protect yourself from contaminated food and water, follow the rule of "boil it, cook it, peel it or leave it." Avoid uncooked foods (especially shellfish) and salads. Fruits and vegetables that can be peeled are usually a good choice. Drink only purified water that's been boiled or disinfected with chlorine or iodine, or commercially bottled water in sealed containers. Drinking carbonated drinks are usually safe. Avoid unpasteurized dairy products and food from street vendors.

Avoid swimming in polluted or contaminated water and brush your teeth with bottled water. ■

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*For more information on benefit coverage, please contact one of our Benefit Specialists at (877) 431-4786 or [benefits@asebp.ab.ca](mailto:benefits@asebp.ab.ca). Sources: Apple-a-Day, Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, Alberta Health Services*

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