

Valhalla Community School Charter

The Valhalla School Foundation, a body incorporated in Alberta under the Societies Act on Oct. 10, 2001, will operate the Valhalla Community School out of the building currently known as the Valhalla Elementary School in Valhalla Centre, Alberta. As of September 2008, it will deliver programs for rural children from kindergarten to grade six, with the consideration that junior high grades seven to nine may be added in the future. The Valhalla Community School will be governed under the *School Act*, the *Societies Act*, the Valhalla Community School Charter, and the Bylaws of the Society. The term of the charter will be set by the Minister of Education.

Vision and Purpose

The Valhalla Community School (VCS) aims to instil a readiness for leadership by equipping its rural students with both knowledge and skills that will enable them to make positive contributions at their future places of employment as well as in the communities or groups with which they choose to associate.

Guiding Philosophies and Principles

The Valhalla School Foundation (VSF) views **rural education as possessing unique and beneficial characteristics** with the potential to maximize student learning. In general, rural students approach life from an entrepreneurial perspective and have close, personal ties to members of their family and community. According to the work of Gordon Neufeld (*Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*, Vintage Canada, 2005) the connectedness of a community has a significant impact on the “parent-orientation” of a child and, by extension, contributes to their success in school. Similarly, multi-grade groupings contribute to an environment that encourages this same sense of community connection.

The VSF believes the unique aspects of rural education that distinguish it from its urban cousin, call for a diligent focus on **structured teaching practices** that maximize opportunities for all students in the rural classroom. In addition, direct community involvement will underscore the importance of civic commitment and participation for the students of VCS.

The VSF holds strongly to the belief that rural schools must provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for success in **both urban and rural settings**.

The VSF recognizes the **central role of parent and guardian in the life of a child** and therefore sees itself as a partner commissioned to foster academic success as part of the overall process of child development. In keeping with this, it is a priority that parents form a majority of the Foundation’s representatives.

The VSF recognizes that it is in the students’ best interest for the **Foundation to support its educators** by clearly defining all goals and expectations and in turn providing the means necessary for them to be carried out.

The VSF views **self-confidence as a product of competence**. With this in mind, it commits to student success in academics and leadership in an atmosphere of supportive encouragement.

The VSF holds in high regard for its students the **skills of memorization of both prose and arithmetic, mental calculation and dignified visual presentation of written work in the form of excellent penmanship** and recognizes the role of diligent drill and practice in fostering regular, automatic presentation of said mastered skills.

The VSF strongly upholds the skill of **critical thinking as an important part of child development**. It is a crucial tool for developing logic and the Foundation purports it is through the mastery of skills and the acquiring of knowledge that one formulates a basis for such critical analysis. As students advance, the focus on skills and knowledge can naturally lead to more opportunities for abstract reasoning, logic, and self-reliant thought processes.

Goals

With the intent of developing leadership skills in its rural students, the goals of the VCS are:

- A. To produce students who are excellent communicators.
 - 1. Students will communicate with intelligence, using grammatically correct language in both spoken and written word, by mastering the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic.
 - 2. Students will communicate with confidence on a broad range of subjects by developing a firm understanding of history, science and fine arts.
 - 3. Students will express themselves in an articulate manner while public speaking.
 - 4. Students will develop a measurable proficiency in a second language: either German or French.

- B. To prepare students for community involvement and leadership.
 - 1. Students will recognize the importance of community involvement by directly experiencing the efforts of community and municipal groups.
 - 2. Students in grades four and higher will participate in community and student groups by attending meetings and participating in relevant discussions at an age-appropriate level.

Goal and Outcome Measurement

A. To produce students who are excellent communicators	
1. Students will communicate with intelligence, using grammatically correct language in both spoken and written word, by mastering the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic.	PAT results CTBS results Percent of parents satisfied that students communicate with intelligence, using grammatically correct language in both spoken and written word.
2. Students will communicate with confidence on a broad range of subjects by developing a firm understanding of history, science and fine arts.	PAT results CTBS results Percent of parents satisfied that students communicate with confidence on a broad range of subjects.
3. Students will express themselves in an articulate manner while public speaking.	Percent of parents satisfied that students express themselves in an articulate manner while public speaking. Number of students who meet an acceptable standard of achievement in a public speaking event, reported by grade.
4. Students will develop a measurable proficiency in a second language: either German or French.	Percent of students meeting the acceptable standard of achievement in Second Language achievement. Percent of parents satisfied that students are developing proficiency in a second language.
B. To prepare students for community involvement and leadership.	
1. Students will recognize the importance of community involvement by directly experiencing the efforts of community and municipal groups.	Percent of students who identify the efforts of community and municipal groups in the school. Percent of students who identify the efforts of community and municipal groups in the community. Percent of parents who are satisfied that students identify the efforts of community and municipal groups in the school. Percent of parents who are satisfied that students identify the efforts of community and municipal groups in the community.
3. Students in grades four and above will participate in community and student groups by attending meetings and participating in relevant discussions at an age-appropriate level.	Percent of students in grades 4 and above who have participated in community and student groups by attending meetings, reported by grade level. Percent of students in grades 4 and above who have participated in relevant discussions at an age-appropriate level during the current school year, reported by grade level. Average number of meetings attended by grade 4 and above students, reported by grade level. Percent of parents of students in grades 4 and above who report that their son/daughter has participated in community and student groups by attending meetings, reported by grade level. Percent of parents of students in grades 4 and above who report that their son/daughter has participated in relevant discussions at an age-appropriate level during the current school year, reported by grade level.

Students who will benefit from the Valhalla Community School

As a community school, all students who attend VCS will benefit from the offered programs. Initially it will offer instruction to students from kindergarten to grade six, with the County of Grande Prairie Family & Community Support Services delivering preschool on-site. Consideration regarding the addition of the junior high grades will be addressed in the future.

Additional Curricula and Teaching Methods

Alberta's world class education system serves as a solid foundation on which to base the Valhalla Community School's rural leadership focus. With this in mind, the VSF considers its academic programs as a tool for stirring within each child the confidence, abilities and enthusiasm to rise up as a productive contributor in society. This will be accomplished through teaching methodology and further knowledge enrichment of the regular Program of Studies.

A. Direct Instruction

As explained by Siegfried Engelmann, direct instruction emphasizes the importance of small learning increments and clearly prescribed teaching tasks so as to minimize student misinterpretation and increase the pace of learning. It is a teacher-directed approach, requiring educators to adopt a style of lesson plan where knowledge precedes enquiry.

Sequential Mastery Learning: The success of direct instruction requires a philosophical embrace of sequential mastery learning, where students must have a foundational mastery of basic skills and knowledge before moving on to the next, more advanced, level. Critical to this aspect of teaching is timely diagnosis and diligent correction of student error and misunderstanding.

Explicit Phonics: As part of the focus of incremental and clearly prescribed teaching tasks, explicit phonics is used as the primary basis for teaching decoding skills for reading in the early primary grades.

B. Knowledge Enrichment

Sources:

Core Knowledge Foundation. (1999). *Core Knowledge Sequence: Content Guidelines for Grades K-8*. Charlottesville, VA: Core Knowledge Foundation.
www.coreknowledge.org

Post, Peggy. (2004). *Emily Post's Etiquette*. Toronto: Harper Collins Canada.

Robert, Henry. (1896). *Robert's Rules of Order*.

With the intent of training students to be able to competently embrace leadership opportunities as they arise, the VSF values its students acquiring a body of knowledge to enable them to function comfortably in a wide variety of situations in both urban and rural settings. Therefore, the VSF sees it as critical that students are able to converse easily on a broad scope of subject areas, develop a measurable proficiency in another language, have a keen grasp of the processes of organized group work in committees and civic arenas as well

as being able to present themselves with a level of decorum suitable to the various degrees of situational formality in which they may find themselves.

1. **Cultural Literacy** – Based on the educational philosophies of E.D. Hirsch, the VSF recognizes the important role of “**cultural literacy**”. In an effort to maximize student potential it has been named a priority to expose students to a variety of subjects and therefore broaden the scope of their awareness and improving their communications skills by enabling them to participate in a wider range of discussion topics. The Core Knowledge Foundation has published a sequence of learning for Language Arts, World History and Geography, Visual Arts, Music Mathematics and Science. The VSF intends to incorporate this body of knowledge into the student learning experience to the extent that it is possible **without placing time constraints on the delivery of the regular Alberta Program of Studies**. Much of it blends naturally as an extension of the already excellent provincial curriculum, providing supplementary classic literature choices for Language Arts; world history and geography references in Social Studies; and historical, classical listening and viewing selections in Music and Art.

It should be noted that the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, published in the United States, places a heavy emphasis on American History. The VSF recognizes it is in the best interest of its Canadian students to replace this emphasis with a similarly **enthusiastic focus on Canadian history** and commits to supply its teaching staff with resources necessary to instil a solid foundation of Canadian history in the students.

2. **Second Language** – Research has shown there are many solid learning benefits to the acquisition of a second language. The Valhalla Community School is committed to offering instruction in French and/or German to students beginning in grade one. Proficiency in a second language falls right in line with the VSF’s goal of improving the communication skills of the students while contributing to building community by improving understanding of groups with diverse backgrounds and cultures.

The German program will be an oral language program from grades 1 through 3 and then will use the Alberta Program of Study for German for grades 4 and above. French will be taught as an option to German from grades 4 and above using the Alberta Program of Study.

3. **Rural Leadership** – Part of what makes Alberta a competitive province on the global stage is the creativity and enthusiasm of its citizens as they involve themselves in projects that enhance community or municipal development or business opportunities. In particular, small rural communities depend on the willingness of their residents to involve themselves in community life. Such participation functions as a **lifeline for a community’s existence**.

As a result, the VSF places a high level of priority on including a **basic understanding and application of civic and community group processes** into its knowledge enrichment component. This includes the roles and responsibilities of basic board and committee positions, recognition of defining characteristics of charitable organizations and societies, and an age-appropriate introduction to portions of *Robert's Rules of Order*. In addition, the VSF constantly seeks to form partnerships with its municipality and local community groups to provide venues for students to apply their knowledge intangible ways, i.e. attending meetings; sitting as student representatives on applicable boards; dialoguing with school board, municipal, provincial and federal representatives.

- 4. Etiquette** – Involvement in rural leadership often takes people to settings outside their comfort zone. A resource-based economy requires the ability to **converse and interact with people in vastly different levels of formality**. Being aware of the various expectations and developing a skill set that enables students to enhance their ability to participate in Alberta's diverse society and advancing economy.

Teacher Support

Teachers are responsible for instructing the students in accordance with the *School Act*. Outlined as one of the VSF's basic philosophies, is the recognition of the importance of providing support to its educators. By providing the training and tools necessary to teach well and in a manner aligned to the school's primary goals, the Foundation intends to transfer a direct and positive impact on its students. As a result, the Valhalla School Foundation sets the availability of training opportunities for both teaching methods and resources as a priority when selecting resources and developing programs. Being located in Northern Alberta means there are added travel and financial considerations, yet the VSF commits to working creatively with its teaching staff to ensure excellent training and resources are provided whenever it is deemed necessary. When recruiting staff we will make every effort to attract the most qualified people for the available positions including provincial posting of teaching positions.

Communication Plan

It is the responsibility of the charter board to ensure that the school's effective practices and innovative approaches are communicated to stakeholders in order that Alberta's entire education system can benefit from its experience. Stakeholders include the Minister of Education, parents, staff, other educators, sponsors, and the general public. Communication strategies include publishing relevant documents on the school's website and the use of the school's newsletters, advertisements and feature stories in local newspapers. Access to the Three-year Education plan and the Annual Education Results Report will be available in print and on the school's website. School Council will be informed specifically by disseminating information during their meetings.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Charter Board

The charter board is responsible for the governance of the Valhalla Community School in support of the goals and obligations of the Foundation. The board is responsible for establishing, maintaining and monitoring policies concerning educational programs offered by the Valhalla Community School. The authority of the board is derived from the province, and the board is accountable to Alberta Education, the Minister of Education, and the public.

Roles and Responsibilities of Administration

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 Superintendent shall supervise the operation and management of the school and the provision of the educational program. The Secretary Treasurer is the Chief Financial Officer of the school and is responsible for the day-to-day financial operations of the school and carries out duties outlined in the *School Act* and in Board Policies.

The Principal is responsible for the management and operation of Valhalla Community School and reports directly to the Superintendent. The duties of the Principal shall be as provided by the *School Act* or as required by the Charter Board.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents

The Valhalla Community School recognizes parent involvement as of prime importance to student success. Both parents and legal guardians will make up the majority of the members of the charter board, and will be active on School Council. The School Council is a key vehicle for parent involvement and operates in an advisory role to the Board and the Administration in accordance with the *School Councils Regulation 113/2007*.

Parents will be expected to support the goals, philosophy and staff of the VCS, including the timely payment of school fees as required, providing support with homework, and volunteering. Parents will promptly raise concerns with the appropriate staff and work constructively towards solutions to those concerns. Parents and guardians are responsible for making decisions regarding their children's education and fostering a positive attitude toward learning. By being actively involved in their school, parents support their children in achieving their full educational potential.

Projected Student Enrolment and Grade Distribution

Year	ECS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total K-6	Total K-9
2008/09	10	10	9	9	7	10	10				65	
2009/10	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	10			65	75
2010/11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	10		66	86
2011/12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	10	70	97
2012/13	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	10	73	96
2013/14	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	7	76	101

Note: Projected enrolment numbers are based on a 5% population increase shown in the 2006 County of Grande Prairie census for our area. Preschool populations are significantly higher than in previous years. In addition, there is significant interest in the school from parents in the surrounding communities. It is expected that when the school is functioning we will draw several more students.

The Valhalla Elementary School has a maximum student capacity of 110 students and an optimal capacity of 93.5. Of the six classrooms in the building, one classroom is currently in use as the Valhalla Community Library and one is shared between the FCSS Playschool program and the Kindergarten.

Amending the Charter

Issues 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 the Valhalla Community School Bylaws, and is subject to the approval of the Minister of Education.

Charter Dissolution Process

Should the Board or the Minister of Education decide to dissolve the charter, then the Charter Board will call a special meeting (the “dissolution meeting”) of the Charter Board to determine the effective date of dissolution and to begin planning the dissolution process.

1. Within two (2) weeks of its decision, the Charter Board shall, in accordance with relevant legislation, give written notice to all stakeholders of the decision to dissolve the Charter. Stakeholders include the Minister of Education, the Society members, the Principal, teachers and other employees of the Charter Board, and the parents and students. Notice of dissolution shall provide the reasons for, the effective date of, and the proposed plan for dissolution.

The dissolution process shall begin immediately following the dissolution meeting and shall be carried out by the Charter Board. The Charter Board shall use its best efforts to meet financial and other obligations of the school throughout the dissolution process.

2. After providing notice to stakeholders as provided above, the Charter Board shall proceed to:
 (a) provide notice pursuant to any rental 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 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 to the Society any residual funds.

3. The Charter Board shall provide each registered student with a transfer of records form to be completed with information regarding the school to which records are to be transferred. Within seven (7) days of receipt of the completed transfer form, the Charter Board shall ensure that the student's records are forwarded according to instructions on the form.

The Charter Board shall remain responsible for the transfer of a student's records for a period of three (3) months from the date it provided the transfer form, thereafter, any remaining student records shall be forwarded to the Minister of Education. School records will be forwarded to the Minister of Education.