



## A CHARTER SCHOOL IN VALHALLA CENTRE

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Valhalla Community School is a Charter school, one of 13 schools described by Alberta Education as “*autonomous non-profit public schools designed to provide innovative or enhanced education programs that improve the acquisition of student skills, attitudes and knowledge.*” Travelling west on Highway 59 through Valhalla Centre, one may pass by Valhalla Community School without realizing how unique it is – not only in the region, but unique in the province and indeed in all of Canada.

While Charter schools exist throughout most of the United States, Alberta is the only province in Canada to have Charter school legislation. The first Charter school legislation in the US was enacted in 1991 in the state of Minnesota, where today there are 149 Charter schools with approximately 35,000 students. In the US as a whole, there are presently over 5600 Charter schools with an enrollment of almost two million students.

Reasons given for the creation of Charter schools include research showing the success of independent schools, the need for innovation, and the possibility of offering choice to parents. Circumstances and legislation varies, but their autonomy and focus on innovative approaches to teaching and learning are common to all Charter schools, whether in the US or in Canada.

Alberta Public Charter Schools were created in 1997, with the rationale being to enhance both choice and innovation offered across the province. At present, there are 13 public charter schools in Alberta, most of them in or near the large urban centers of Calgary and Edmonton. They are described by The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools as offering innovative methods of instruction, opportunities for meaningful parental involvement and a safe, caring and responsive environment. Charter schools all have certified and dedicated staff and a dedication to excellence. Each charter school is independent, has its own elected school board, and has an innovative approach to teaching and learning.

Valhalla Community School is unique as a rural Charter school in the northwest of the province and is the most recent addition to the list of Charter schools in Alberta. VCS is independent of other schools in the region, but it is public and open to all. The particular focus of VCS is on Direct Instruction and Rural Leadership, which will be examined in detail in a future article. For more information, see the VCS website at [www.valhallacommunityschool.ca](http://www.valhallacommunityschool.ca).